

(crowd murmurs loudly)

- Where is (crowd murmurs loudly)

- About the sit-ins. I'm pretty sure a lot of people didn't know the song. It's called Ballad of the Sit-ins. It was written by Guy Carawan. Hit the chord, hit the chord.

- Hit the chord.

- Tell me if it's too high. ♪ The time was 1960, ♪ The place the U.S.A., ♪ February 1 became a history-making day ♪ From Mobile, Alabama to Nashville, Tennessee ♪ A time of (hums) at noon and take a seat with me ♪ Heed the call, Americans all ♪ Side by equal side ♪ Brothers, sit in dignity ♪ Sisters sit in pride, in pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride, in pride, ♪ In pride, in pride, in pride ♪ This is the land we cherish ♪ The land of liberty ♪ Our cans are made of many qualities ♪ The Constitution says we can and ♪ As Christians we should know ♪ That Jesus died that morning so all mankind would know ♪ Heed the call, Americans all ♪ Side, by equal side ♪ Brothers sit in dignity ♪ Sisters sit in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ No mobs of violence and of hate shall ♪ Turn me from my goal. ♪ No Jim Crow law or police state shall ♪ Stop my freebound soul. ♪ 3,000 Souix bound and dead ♪ Lift your heads and sing ♪ We are drawn to freedom ♪ Like songbirds on the wing ♪ Heed the call, Americans all ♪ Side by equal side ♪ Brothers sit in dignity ♪ Sisters sit in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ In pride, in pride ♪ Sisters sit in pride ♪ (applause)

- Charles Jones?

- I think he was there until a few moments ago

- Charles, is Charles Jones in the back?

- Oh there he is

- And Mr. McDew? The next panel today is about Ella Baker and the actual birth of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. And three of the people with us on the platform were there for the actual creation of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. I'm not going to say much except to introduce them. Our first speaker is Lonnie King who was the founder and head of the Atlanta Committee on human rights, One of the several student groups that came together to form the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Let's start with Lonnie King. (applause)

- Thank you very much Ms. Norman. Mr. Chairman. Chuck McDoo, my good friend Joyce, and my very good

friend Charles Jones, and Connie Curry and Sean Surod who was our first feel, unpaid feel. Secretary who created a revolution in this country by wearing blue jeans. A lot of you people don't realize that Charles Sherod was the first person to really start wearing blue jeans as work clothes because he had to go down to Alabama and Mississippi and other places to help us register voters. And I see Jim Foreman out there and a number of other people, and I have nostalgia about this whole weekend because I was in Atlanta two weeks ago for our 40th and Reverend Dr. Otis Moss ended his eloquent presentation by talking about the fact that it's been 40 years and I may see some of you again, and you may not see me again and because of that eloquent presentation, moving presentation, I agreed to come, to be very honest with you. Because we may not see one another again and the struggle that I have been involved in, that you have been involved in and I'm hoping that many of the young people will become involved in, continues. Background of SNCC, in 1960, as you already heard, on the first of February, four young men sat down in Greensboro, at Greensboro. The following morning, I was at Gates and Milton's drug store in Atlanta, Georgia at the AU Center and I had breakfast every morning there with a guy named Julian Barnes, and a guy named Joseph Pierce. I had met Julian in the registration line at Morehouse. I don't know how it was at your college, but registration was the longest, dang it was long. And you could tell your whole life story to the person behind you or in front of you. So when I came back from the war, after having served in the Navy for a tour of duty, I met this young man, skinny young fella, we spent about eight hours together talking. And we became friends and when it was time for, I guess for this movement to get started, I got the newspaper and I said Julian, Joe, look at what they been doing in Greensboro, we ought to do that here. And Julian said "well somebody's gonna do it" and I said "well why not us". And from that we went on and we started organizing on these different campuses. At the AU center. Then I got a telephone call, not a call, I got a personal visit from Dr. Maise's secretary, asking me to come to the third floor of the administration building at AU for an important meeting at three o'clock one afternoon. And I learned that all the rest of our leaders were also having to come to that same meeting. Uh oh. So we walk into the room, here were all the six college presidents, most of whom you read about in the history books, Maise and Clement and Manly, and so forth and so on. And we really thought that we was going to be put out of school because of what we were doing and all we meant to do. They tried to discourage us, but when they saw that we were not going to be discouraged, they then had one suggestion, they said well why don't you do this, if you're not gonna stop, why don't you set forth a petition for why you are attacking this system. For our historical purposes as well as putting the world on notice as to what you're all about. And so with that in mind, we wrote something called "An Appeal for Human Rights". Which many of you may have seen or read about in the history books. On March the ninth, it was published in all three major papers in Atlanta and the New York Times the following week published it for free for us, full page. But we set forth in there our petition which represented not only what we felt in Atlanta, but we felt this represented Georgia, the South, and the nation. And one of the lines that I want to bring forward to yall and that is that we felt that the time was out for African-Americans, or Negroes as we were called at that time, to continue to have our rights metered out to us one at a time, one at a time. And that the time for action was now, and that we were gonna use every legitimate, nonviolent means to bring about a change in this system in Atlanta and in this nation. And we moved forward six days later to attack several places in downtown Atlanta, Georgia, and we went to jail on that issue. While this was going on, Nashville was hopping and Knoxville was hopping, and Burmingham was moving, and almost in every, in almost every state in the Confederacy, former Confederacy, well I think I was right the first time. (laughter) In the Confederacy, where there were HBCUs, young people rose up. And what happened was that we were

fighting the system concurrently all over the South. And the normal kinds of reactionary tactics that the guardians of the old order had used, did not work. Because even though they had put down that Lonnie King, 18 years of age or 20 years of age and put down my home address, my home address might have been in California, as opposed to there in Atlanta. So what happened is that the normal way of stopping a movement in the South, had been to kill off the leaders. Either to shoot them, or to make sure they didn't have any jobs, or so forth and so on. And so therefore, that particular tactic couldn't work against us. And so I think that was one of the important things that helped us succeed. I also want to tell you that the Atlanta movement said that we had a meeting and we decided that we could not fight this battle without there being some organization. And contrary to what you read in all the history books, I want to straighten out something for you. Julian Barnes, Mary White Eddimon, who I'm sure you've heard about, and I went down to see Martin King in late March, middle March, right after those sit-ins when he had just come over from Alabama, to ask him to call this meeting at Shaw. Martin King was reluctant, but we gotta put the record straight, Martin King was reluctant but he said I will get Ella Baker to do it after we argued with him about it. Because Ella was his secretary at that time, executive secretary, and Ella was a graduate of this university here, so she called and got this thing set up here at Shaw. The telegram went out and Charles, I think it had Martin's name and Ella's name on it, didn't it? To all the leaders that we could identify from newspaper accounts, we didn't really know all of you, we just read about you. And because the white newspapers were so good at putting your names down, we knew who to call. (laughter) And so that's how you got here in 1960. Now once you got here, well before you got here, let me also say this to you, that was a little bit of a discussion. Some folks thought that we shouldn't organize, and I won't get into all of that. But we felt in Atlanta that there had to be an organization because if you were gonna battle this system, you couldn't do it with unorganized troupes. Let me tell you what was happening, briefly. Virginia passed the first Anti-trespass law, and within a matter of a few weeks, almost every state had passed the same, almost identical, word for word law. Which meant that if you went into a lunch counter and the manager asked you to leave, and you didn't leave then the John Damme, the police could come in and take you away. Now that kind of system was there. So there was a need for SNCC, you may not have called it SNCC, but there was a need for something where we had some coordination and Tim Jenkins just showed me the first issue of the Student Voice, which I'm sure he'll tell you about later on. And in that Student Voice it talked about all these things, most of these things that I'm now talking to you about. But that's history and Tim had a part of the history back then. When I came here in 1960, I don't know which building we were in, but it was a little bigger than this one I think. It was a very large place and I met lifelong friends there. You came to Atlanta to start your headquarters there, Ed King, James Denbridge, Connie Curry, Ella Baker, my good buddy Donna McGinty. We all were there during that time and trying to make these things go. Let me give you my concluding remarks about the birth of SNCC and the idea and why did it come about. I'm about to finish a PhD in history and I'm, after having read all this history now over the last four years, I'm really beginning to get a better appreciation for what we did. You see, we were so busy in 1960 we didn't have time to think about the historical significance of what we were doing because we were so busy trying to get it done. But when you go back and you take, you flashback over history you will find the significance of that movement and let me just quickly say it to you. There have always been some movements in America, ever since African-American, or Africans came over from Africa, to try and get out of bondage. Contrary to what you've read in some of these early history books about we were all happy and happy-go-lucky and loved being in slavery, you know that really wasn't true. But what happened was that we did something that the historians call slipping the

yolk. Have ya'll heard of something called slipping the yolk? Alright and what essentially meant was that we found a way, hundreds of years ago, to try and escape the bullet. To try and escape the whip, to escape the kinds of oppression that we knew the plantation owner was going to put on us. So that's what we did. So we weren't really happy. Even though we might have been singing, we weren't really joyful, but we were conning the man. However, while some of us were conning the man, some people planned revolutions. I'll just mention two for you and then Imma move on. Denmark Visi in this next state down, organized a really strong insurrection in the 1820s in Charleston. And he was a free man by the way, free Black man, but he was betrayed and he was executed along with some of his friends. And you know, as they call co-conspirators. Then from 1830 to 1833, Nat Turner also, in Virginia, next state over, organized a revolution, and he too was killed, as you know. And in almost every instance, in history, we find that the people who try to organize a way of getting out from under this bondage, they were killed. And I won't go too much further on this end, except to say that in 1909, the NAACP was organized with DuBois and a number of other people there in New York. And they embarked on a legalistic approach. Now why did they do that? Because it was safer to do that. If we had the mass movements, we found that the Billy clubs and the guns were drawn and we would be killed. Whether it was a hundred, a thousand, it didn't matter. Kill the people who were trying to be the insurrectionists. In the 1920s, after African-American men battle in the first World War, as DuBois said, let's fight abroad so we can have some democracy at home, our men came home, and they came home some were killed in uniforms. And especially in the state of Texas, really bad on African-Americans who came back from the war. So there was this thing, we cannot afford to actually confront this system the way it should have been confronted. But then a man named Mortecai Johnson, who was the president of Howard University, Joyce's school where she had it, decided in 1922 to 1923 that Howard University ought to become the law school to train African-American lawyers on how to argue constitutional cases on behalf of Black People. Dr. Johnson's position simply was that white lawyers are well intended, but when Supreme Court justices are asking them questions about how does it feel to be denied these rights, many of them somehow or another flunked the test, because they'd never been denied. So he asked Justice Louis Brandeis, would he help him form, move Howard from a night law school to a day law school, to train Civil Rights lawyers. Justice Brandeis told him I will do it on one condition, that you not tell anybody about it until after I'm dead. (laughter) So they formed this union, and they put together Howard University Law School as a prime law school, day school, and you know the rest, Judge Hasties, Spotser Robinson, you can call off a number of people, Thurgood Marshall, they went through there. So the NAACP was prepared for this legalistic approach, and it was gonna take about a century to get us free, folks, we still be fighting. However, along comes the second World War, and at this time, if you ever get the chance, I'm gonna digress, if you ever get a chance to go to the Library of Congress, go and look at the NACP files over there. They have millions of letters and correspondence over there. But look at what happened in the 40s. I just looked the other day while I was there. There are letters from African-American soldiers complaining about how they were being treated. One man talked about how he was shot in the leg by his commanding officer because he had a minor disagreement with him. Another man was in a traffic accident down in Opalacka, Alabama with a white man, they took him to jail in uniform, beat him up, kept him in jail for six months, took off his uniform. The man had to, he literally had to escape in order to save his life. And I could go on and on and on about the kind of things that happened during the second World War, but I did find through most of those letters though, was that the African American soldiers kept talking about the big dichotomy of fighting for a democracy overseas, while we're being denied a democracy in America, even in uniform. Having said all of

that then, those men had children. I'm one of those children. So when they came home, they talked about some of this stuff. And so by 1960 I ended up at Morehouse College, and I was like thousands of other young Black kids around this country who's daddies, who's uncles, who's brothers had served in the military. And they came home talking about this dichotomy. Now there's nothing that one man said on Earth more power than an idea who's time has come. And the time had come, in 1960, for African-Americans to change the way they were trying to get their rights. No more metered out one at a time. You had to get a movement together and bring in as many African-Americans and whites. Bring in people of good will who wanted to change this country. And then if you look at this movement, you will see that change, as Anne Braden said, not just this country, but this movement changed this world. You can look at almost any discipline, whether sociology, whether it's public administration, whether it's history, psychology, you name it, 1960 has been a watershed for reexamination for that particular discipline. Why is that? Because we caused people to think, re-think, and take a second look at what are we doing. Let me conclude by saying that we had this meeting in Atlanta, Georgia two weeks ago and only 30 students came. 30. Now we published a second appeal for human rights two weeks ago, full page ad in all of the newspapers, updating where we are today. And what we found when we did the research is that forty years ago, 99% of African-Americans, or Negroes as we were called, were in the same situation. 40 years later, over half of our people, are still in grinding poverty. The same situation, either the same people, or their descendants. What have we done though, what has Martin King done for them in the last 40 years? I made a lot of money, I've gotten some more degrees, moved into the suburbs, so forth and so on. But I have not done what I should have done over the last 40 years. And what I'm saying to you is that we all need to think about what it is that we can do as we go forward. But let me go a little further. Our universities, Shaw University, Morehouse College where I went, our colleges have not kept faith with the movement. The young people who came through there 40 years ago, revolutionized them too, but I think that they had the responsibility for the institutional memory, to some extent. At least to the history department, to begin to say to the people coming through, that you have two responsibilities. One to yourself, to get the very best possible education that you can, to repair yourself. And two, to give something back. And the second back, to give something back, is what's missing. (applause) My final point, final, final point, we were so moved by this paucity of people in the audience who did not have gray hair, and so we decided that we are going to organize the communal appeal for human rights which is what our group was in 1960 until 1980. Non-profit corporation and we're going to go and ask the AU Center schools all of them down there that you know about, to let us then begin to teach African-American history, to every freshman class from now on ad infinitum. (applause) WE believe that we can do this, and we all, a lot of us have academic credentials so the Southern Association is not gonna be upset, we have got enough PhDs and MDs and Masters in all these different areas. So nobody's accreditation is going to be hurt by it. But we need to go back and recognize that benign neglect has not worked for the last 40 years. And we were young enough when we started this movement for us to still be available and one more time, thank you. (applause)

- Our next speaker will be Charles Jones, who already introduced himself to you, one of the first field secretaries for SNCC to enter some of the most dangerous places in the South and he's gonna tell us more about the birth, the actually coming together of SNCC. (applause)

- A very gracious good morning.

Audience: Good morning.

- And in the spirit as I stand here I want to give all of the respect to Ruby Darsis, to Ella, to Steptoes, I want for a moment, to radiate and reflect those giants. Who, when faced with the possibility of being here, stood tall. I want to honor that because I know that only on their shoulders, only on those shoulders do we now stand, and while my emotions will communicate the depth of my respect and appreciation and love, I make no apology for these tears, I haven't cried for Ruby Daris yet. I haven't done. I haven't cried for many of our brothers and sisters, I was too busy surviving the trauma of a war where people were shooting at you, physically and otherwise. I'll never forget Charles coming down the doors and after the Klan had shot up the house. I was by myself, I don't know if I told you this, but it was about two o'clock in the morning, and somebody shot at the car, and at that point I didn't know and I had to call on whatever it was we call on, Charles. Grandma, who told me, "Boy, don't you, don't you sit there and apologize for no man for who you are". I had to come to grips with that man who was gonna. If he had been in front of me, he would blow me away, and that's my confrontation with nonviolence in a most spiritual way that came with when I had to deal with what would happen when he was standing in front of me and I was standing there and my grandma was telling me what to do. And I have to tell you, I'd have taken him out in a heartbeat. And I have to say this to you because of this, my grandmother would not have allowed me to have someone destroy her hope. You mothers know what I'm talking about. Grandmothers, that, is he gonna be the one? And Chuck I never said this and maybe it's a confession, but given that intellectual and actual confrontation, I made a choice that as for between him and I, I knew that if he was gonna kill me, I couldn't let him do it. And we wanna brought America's Georgia and all of that, I don't know how I kept from being confronted by it, but thank God. Alright, but I want to honor now, all of those people. You all know them, you walked the backroads with them, you motivated people who were scared as hell, and who stood up and got beat and shot. You know that pain. Thank you Chuck for that movie man, telling a story, man. I was just as proud to tell you, I hope ya'll saw Freedom Song. It was an accurate composite of our effort. And 40 years later, seeing it on my television, with some of my neighbors watching, I stood tall I felt like all of the gods who had come, perhaps sacrificed, but I don't want us to lose, as we talk about these people that have gone on, particularly Ella, Ella is still in my spirit so totally, I can remember when we were, Diane and I, we were, and Marion, we were, talking about it, and Ella would sit back calmly, hear each of us, but would not let us turn each other loose. Until we had come, not to a majority, one more than, but until Diane and Charles and Chuck MacDoo, and Tim, and felt a common community. We would not go forward. So of the uniquenesses that that period brought, this sense of the beloved community, and Charles I was thinking of this when Jim was talking. Charles Sherod and I were in jail down in Rock Hill, South Carolina, we had chosen to go in at that point when the sit ins had taken place throughout the South, and we thought we needed a focal point to organize the efforts of the students, and to dramatize that we needed to work together, and to keep it going. And Charles and I had been conducting devotions. I see my brother still doing that, bless you man. Bless you. And we got put in solitary confinement because we were having devotions and at that point there was a white section of the jail and a black section of the jail. But it was a big compound. So we'd be up singing and praying, Charles you know still does that so well, thank God. And it so infuriated the guards, there at the place, who were charged with not only keeping us prisoners, but keeping white prisoners and Black prisoners apart, and somehow maintaining some kind of difference, of deference to the white

prisoners, and trying to deal with us. But at any rate, Charles and I got put in solitary. Four or five days wasn't it. No blankets, on the concrete floor. We did have some of the brothers though slipping us food under the door, I remember eating up. I remember several of those folks. And Charles and I lay there and talked about how we were going to the theological basis, he was in divinity school. I was too I guess. The theological basis, and when I saw, when we talked about Gandhi. When Charles and I were in solitary talking about Gandhi, not only was it a practical, tactical approach, but he and I felt that the only way we could change the South, the only way was to change it through the force of our very commitment embodied, but also with the force of love. We believe that. So when we left and the guard, the main guard, came up and spoke to us. What he say, "you boys did pretty good" or "good luck to you". This was the guard at the Rock Hill, really it was the Yaw County chain gang, who had been such a racist, aggressive person, who because of this energy, came over and shook our hand actually, didn't he. And I think that, to me, is one of the essences of how approaching this thing from a much broader spiritual context Jim and I totally appreciate and I read again our calling statement, at the preamble. That issue we wrestled with, and I do remember, I remember the session, I remember the words. You know and so when I read them again the other day, I said wow, and much of that was your own seasoned development of the concept. And I understand you also spent some time in India so that this was not just an academic concept, you saw some of that happen. So as I give these honorings, particularly to Ella, who helped us grow up, who helped us come to a point of understanding that the only way you're gonna do this is by respecting the very individual person, and if that took you some time then darn it, you stood there, and you did it. I also want to honor my grandfather, and great grandfather, and mother. I came to this in a little different context. My father who is the youngest of 11 children, he was born in 1910, all of them graduated from college. Hear me now. Because you hear all this stuff about how Black people are this, that and whatever. My father's family, his father had come, was born a slave, married my grandmother, who was born a slave. Both were teaching at something like 12 and 13 years old because they were the only ones who had learned how to read in the community. They came to South Carolina, set up a church, set up eight parochial schools, we are in 1870, 1880, 1890. Eight parochial schools, our pastor is incidentally my grandfather, I was a student pastor at two churches my grandfather set up. So all of my uncles, finished Johnson Smith, my Aunts finished Barbara Scosha, so by the time I came along, I mean I didn't have much of a choice. My family looked at me and said of course you're going to contribute. My grandma told me " boy, yeah you the one". So for me, coming to the meeting here, for me coming to the lunch counters, I was just trying to say Ella's, hey I'm here. I know I have no choice, I know I must keep the faith as you did. Through the middle passage, through the earlier part of slavery, through all of it. They kept the faith, they survived, they taught us how to survive. Of course we're gonna go pick up a gun and take on a preacher. How absurd. But we had a source of power so much stronger. And I, now, sitting her 20 or 40 years later have you any idea how nurturing this is for those of us who didn't know what we were doing but stood there man. I tell you. Who wrestled through, jumped off the cliff and learned how to fly on the way down, didn't know if we were gonna crash but goddanit our brother, our sister was there and we were going to get there. There was no discussion, no articulation of anything about why am I here, why me? We learned to fly on the way down. And landed really rather gracefully. Chuck does that so well he's still going down. So I come here as a continuum of the struggles of human beings, not only for their own dignity, but to assert it. Not in an arrogant, but in an extraordinarily strong way that says that you will deal with me. Because really I am the best of you, you haven't discovered yet. Right, and I could not set my bar to be equal to you. I had to set my bar much higher, because the manifestation of your behavior not only with slavery,

sexism, you know it all, but if I'm only striving to be that, Jim, then what do I bring to the discussion. So that's what we struggled with. To bring the best of the human experience, the human capacity to each and every confrontation we had. And God knows we stumbled from time to time, but I tell you there were times we stood so tall, I'm proud of that. So I'm honoring all of those people, who came before us. All those folks who walked with us. Those of us who are here, but all of those who didn't make it. In your own spirit, honor, honor that. Because this was rough this is bad, this wasn't just a nice intellectual discussion, we were dealing with the power, the total political and military power of this country. So we fashioned a way to survive it. Tim Jenkins. Let me put a quick context of 1960. Tim and I had been working through the United States National Student Association. Tim was a national officer. Indeed he was. And these were the bright minds. The presidents and vice presidents of the student governments throughout this country. I put myself in nomination for the chairman of the Carolina Virginia region against a fellow from Wahlfort, and won the thing. So I was the first chairman of the Carolinas Virginia region of the National Student Association. Tim did you go to Europe? I went to Europe in 59. Tim and I went to Cuba in 59. And attempted to organize and work with students there. But by the time 1960 came, we had had some communications with a lot of other of our peers. I was actually I was asked by the House Committee on UnAmerican Activities to come as a friendly witness. And the reason for that was that in Vienna, Austria in 1959, I guess it was, I had been in attendance to an international conference where the Soviet Union was trying to say to emerging African countries and third world countries, we the man, we the one, ya'll don't worry about the United States, we're the people you need to go with. And I went with about 300 students from the United States. And found myself from time to time, I guess debating, was a good word, with Paul Rosen Jr. about not only what was happening in this country but also positive things, slave rebellions, other parts of the picture. So the House Committee, remember asked me to come, because they knew I was one of their boys. And I heard something, the chairman said "Mr. Jones, don't you agree that we are better than the Soviet Union because they indoctrinate our children to, their children to believe in Communism?" And I said "With due respects, my brother, it is easier to be anti-communist than it is to be pro anything, but particularly pro-American. I see you as anti-Communist, I haven't heard you say anything about my interests. So let's discuss". And for the next two and half hours, all them Ls and oh I'd love to get a copy of that. One of the things that I've done is not to read much of what happened during that period. And I'm not sure why that is. I'm beginning to do it now. Joanne, thank you for Ella. All of you folks that have done this. Thank you so much. Who have, I've chosen not to read much of what happened. Might just be an ego thing. Maybe I want to remember my own experiences and perhaps if I can be honest with them, that is as an accurate, if not more-so expression of what went on than many of our historians and there are a lot of folks who have written good stuff. But there are also stuff out there that is absolutely no resemblance to what I remember in being there. So now I think we probably gonna start writing stuff. Ms. Davis with Ms. Smith, Ms. Bumgardner Davis is gonna help us perhaps put something together and I appreciate that, I do appreciate that. So I'm gonna do that. But Tim, it was once I was coming back from this session. And my paper covered, Charlotte Observer covered, both when we were in Europe, "Colored Boy Does Good, Defends Democracy". And we, were coming, the mayor, I ran into him on the street, he said "Mr. Jones, we're proud of you man. You're a credit to your race, and you did a pretty good job for the rest of us too". I was coming back from the House Committee's testimony. Four o'clock in the morning, up here near South Boston. And I heard, "Today, four students went down to Wolsworth at Greensboro, sat at the lunch counter and did not move". And I said "Yes!" (laughter) Finally there was a handle for all of us who were trying to figure out, how we gonna deal with this monster.



Obviously we can't take up arms, obviously we can't, what can, and when they sat down and didn't move, I said, "okay" Party's on, let's jam, let's put it together. And I got home, went to a meeting of the student council, announced that I was gonna go downtown the next day. And I thought that maybe there would be a core crew. There were 322 JCSU students waiting to go down and party. (laughter) And when we got on the street, interestingly enough, the guys at Greensboro had not said anything. They had done, they knew the press was reporting. What and how and when, but no one was saying anything about why. I ran into the mayor, the first day. The same mayor (laughter) I must tell you, he kind of looked down and walked out a side street. I spoke to him, Brother Al, how you like me now? IT was that liberation of a spirit penned up by all the history of my generation, we were ready, we just didn't know how and the sit ins and ice cream so from that moment on, totally convinced that Gandhi as I read him, was a saint. I wasn't quite sure I could always turn the other cheek, but I felt the soul force, the force of the power of the spirit to stand in front of the bullets, to stand in front of the machinery, to put your body in the machinery, and I said wow, good stuff. So we went about putting our body in the machinery. I had met Ella, I am pretty confident, at a YMCA gathering before 1960. I'm sure I had. And there was something about this woman. Always had a big pocketbook, always had a hat, very quiet. There was something about her quiet confidence. You know Ella, you never got the feeling Ella didn't know how it was gonna end. You know, I mean you always had the feeling that she was going to help us pull it through. And when we stayed up all night at Highland. Was it Highland when we were trying to Diane and the Nashroots group, the pure nonviolence, as it was called then, and the voter registration together, and there were all these, Ella made us stay up and I said made, just her quiet presence. Made us wrestle through that night. Marion was arguing big and strong but before the dawn was come, not only did we look at each other and smile, not only did we embrace each other after some of the most vigorous discussions and disagreements, but we came out of that loving each other a lot more. So that by the time we really got into the reality of McComb Mississippi, well McComb said what distinction between direct action and voter registration. All ya'll going down. And we voted over fifteen dollars a week, if we had it, a person. Ten a week if we had it, a person, living off the land, Ella gave us this capacity to respect the dignity of each person, whether we like them or not was irrelevant. And because of that, I suggest to you that SNCC in its beloved community, mean that, mean that from the bottom of my heart. We mean that we want a community where everybody, all of God's children are respected, are loved, protected, and we'll fight for your right to be. And I am still at this point, at 62, so blessed to have that total concept in my guts. That's how I live with all the conflicts. So by the time we got here, Smith did its thing, we were February eighth, the lunch counters I think were open in July of that year. I don't know the other timeframes of the other places. I know Chuck was down in Greens in South Carolina. Gerard was up in, still up at Virginia, in Virginia, Biesburg. So we didn't know each other. But we knew the energy, and we had a point of reference of knowing what that person had had to do and all the, to still be alive, number one, and had successfully carried that movement. So when we came here, when I walked in, Charles doing his devotions, I walked out I felt that same sense of power, here's some of these guys, girls, young ladies, wow, this is some good stuff. I wonder how I would relate to, how I'd fit in, but there was this embracing, that was this embracing. So we had been given from all of the elders, the wisdom of how to survive, the wisdom of the basic love and respect, though strength you are, somebody, and don't you let anybody, I remember my grandma so well she's right in her she said "don't you let anybody" make you apologize. I remember several times, we were faced with, middle of the night, police officers when we had to say "yessir" probably the roughest thing I ever did. I did once, between Albany and Atlanta that night when we got stopped, whoever

that was. The police officers enjoyed humiliating us you know. And I remember, "Boy, is this your car?" Uh yes. "Yes? Yessir!" And my grandmother's spirit was standing up saying I'm telling you that was the roughest thing I ever had to do Chuck, because my grandmother was saying don't you do that. But I knew if I didn't tactically, we'd have been strung out wherever, and what would've happened. And so I said yessir. And I know you all did that too sometimes, we ain't gotta have no public confession, but if that was the only thing we had to give up, what the heck. So we came to this meeting here, Ella representing the best of all of the elders. And I think the fact that she was a woman and didn't bring a certain amount of that ego baggage that us men tend to. With having to win, I think because she was a woman, she understood intuitively, something that we hadn't even come to understand yet about life. I think because she was a woman, she brought the other side of the mothers who saw their children separated during slavery, and who yearned and who were in pain, having lost some of their children, she was the embodiment of all those mothers that you don't read about through slavery, but I want some of us to do this, who are above all fault to keep their families together, even when they were being sold away and even when they were sold away, kept in touch with their children and family. Alright? Ella brought all of that in a quiet, cognitive, dignity and strength. And I remember quite well, and still do, that she nurtured us into adults who were prepared, and did take on the beast. And for a moment in history, there were possibilities. The Kennedys picked up on it, incidentally. Remember all them rhetorics and all them. Johnson picked up on it, heck, we had. But I want to say to you that I think I have been not only blessed, but seeing each of you in your faces and picking up your spirits again now, and of course it's a celebration, of course it's an honoring of us, and then the rest of us who evolved from that. Because but for key decisions you know we would have been bogged down. Getting you out of a cone cellar. So I simply come as a conduit, as a continuation, of the human spirit. The African side, the European side, determined not only to survive, but absolutely blessed to continue these relationships. God Bless each of you and in your quest, keep all of this alive, keep the faith. God Bless. (applause)