

Interview with **Mary Hightower**

Date: May 15, 1998

Interviewer: Judy Richardson

Camera Rolls: 2158-2161

Sound Rolls: 274-275

Team: C

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

Preferred Citation

Interview with Mary Hightower, conducted by Blackside, Inc. on May 15, 1998 for *Eyes on the Prize II: America at the Racial Crossroads, 1965-mid 1980s*. Washington University Libraries, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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 II*.

[camera roll #2158]

[sound roll #274]

00:00:12:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Let's see it. OK. Nice long one. OK. OK, John.

Camera Crew Member #2:

OK, the second sticks are coming up. These are hard sticks.

[slate]

Camera Crew Member #3:

Off side [inaudible]

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, let's let John clear. OK, Judy, any time.

00:00:30:00

Interviewer:

OK. Now as you're coming, back in 1972, as you're coming, driving up from Mississippi to Gary, what are your hopes for this, this National Black Political Convention?

00:00:40:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, as we left Mississippi and going to Gary, the, the whole, it was just the whole excitement of really getting prepared and getting ready and getting on the road and going to Gary to our first convention, you know, first Black convention. As a matter of fact, it was our very first convention at all. You know, we had never participated in one. But I guess it was mu-much more exciting to know that it was ours. And, well, getting there it was just a lot of anticipation of really getting there and, and get our place in the convention. It, it was just, we were just excited like going out, I guess, to our first show or going out for, just for maybe like even like high school prom. [laughs] But, but it was really very serious because we had put a lotta effort into getting people in our areas throughout Mississippi, and everybody was just excited about going to the convention, and—

00:01:54:00

Interviewer:

But what did you think was gonna come out of it? I mean, what was your expectation about what would happen at Gary?

Mary Hightower:

Well—

Interviewer:

Particularly for you was as a Mississippi person.

00:02:03:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, they, we expected once we got to Gary to really become organized and to, to ha—to get organized in a national convention. And from that convention would come our leadership to go back into each of our areas and to further organize and to hold elections or...and there's a number of things that we had planned to do, but the main thing was going to the convention was gonna be our beginning. And this is, this was what we were prepared and this was what we were preparing for, to go there to get our beginning at the convention.

00:02:46:00

Interviewer:

Now, you mentioned that a well-respected NAA—leader, whom you really respected, said that you shouldn't go. Why was that? And what, did you agree or disagree with him?

Mary Hightower:

Well, I disagreed because—

Interviewer:

Sorry. If you could just start with somebody in the NAACP.

00:03:04:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, after we had left and went to the convention, and once we were seated, we had a representative from Mississippi, one of our well-respected leaders to come there, and he, he opposed to our being there.

00:03:20:00

Interviewer:

I'm sorry, if you could start again but just say that someone from, a, a, a NAACP leader from Mississippi.

00:03:26:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. OK. After get—going to the convention and getting there, ***one of our N, NAACP con—leaders came to the convention and he opposed to our being there. And he was saying that we were separating ourselves, but we didn't see it that way.*** Going to the convention, we felt like this was really enhancing our chance of, of being, of, of aiding and assisting the existing party, because, to me, it, it, it's just like, you know, you have, if you have a, you may have a home and you, you make that house open, you know. I, I would say that you'd say, You're welcome to use of my home, I can just use anything in it. But to me it's a difference in having my own, because once I have my own home then you respect me and we can interchange and exchange. And this was the way we felt about the, the national party. Once we organized our National Black Party we could interchange and exchange resources, so we didn't feel like we were being separate, but we were being able to add to the leadership.

00:04:50:00

Interviewer:

Could you cut, please?

Camera Crew Member #1:

Uh-huh. Cut.

Interviewer:

That's nice, OK.

[cut]

00:04:54:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

I'm rolling. OK. Thank you.

00:05:01:00

Interviewer:

OK, could you give me a sense? Now you're coming from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, you've been fraught with all kinds of terrorism. What is it like again [car horn] saying that piece of it and coming into Gary seeing all these Black people with this [car horn] common purpose?

00:05:16:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, ge-getting ready and going into Gary, first let me say it, it, I guess re-really realizing that we were now at the convention was coming into Gary and seeing all these signs that, that directed us to the convention center, and, and just, it was there at that moment it was just overwhelming. The kind of feeling that, you know, is almost indescribable. But we were just overjoyed and happy. But after getting and going into the convention and, and seeing, finding our place, because we had name tags for each of the states, this even added further to the be—to the reality of, of being a part of a convention. And once we got in there and we looked around and there was, I mean, just nu-numbers of Black people from all states as far as you could see. People were signing in, in and people were getting placed, and to me that, that moment was one of the greatest moment that I've ever experienced, yeah.

00:06:33:00

Interviewer:

Now, can you tell me that again but give me a sense that you're coming from working within the Mississippi Democratic—Freedom Democratic Party and, and the sense that you had been, you know, there'd—

Mary Hightower:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—been a lot of Klan activity? And, and then what is it like to see that?

Mary Hightower:

Yeah, well, after leaving home I'd say, and especially experiencing a lot of opposition to our trying to get organized local and a lotta opposition to electing people locally, we were really—

Interviewer:

Sorry. When you can, if you could just mention Mississippi.

00:07:06:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. Mm-hmm. OK. Coming from Mississippi and coming from Holmes County, Mississippi, where our area was and where we had been doing a lot of organizing, we had just a year or so elected our first Black representative. And even with that we were still experiencing opposition to organizing Black people or even getting Black people elected to office. And with putting in effort, even with that, we still were able to organize people from our areas in Mississippi to go to Gary and to really accomplish and really to make it to Gary, made all of that effort worthwhile because when we got there, they says, you know, this is the new hope. This is the new dream for us, you know, to, you know, here, at the convention. We are gonna be participating, we're gonna be finding a way to really overcome what we just left. And to go in there and to see all the people there and, and really get a sense of what we were there for, and to organize and to furnish leadership to each of us that needed it, this was one of the most exciting times that, that, that...for, for me, and for all of us. And to see that each of us in each of our local areas, you know, going, say for instance Mississippi, our delegation group there, once, once we got there and we had to register and we signed in, even then we, we thought we had really experienced excitement, but I guess the greatest time it was is when we had to answer roll call. And we got in and, and, to me, roll call says that, you know, we had made it, you know, we really did it, you know. This is, we, we are really here, we're really accomplished organizing this party.

00:09:17:00

Interviewer:

Now, you, you mentioned also that when you looked out you saw people, they were in dashikis, they looked different, they talked different.

Mary Hightower:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

Give me a sense of that, a sense—

Mary Hightower:

Did they—

Interviewer:

—of when you started really talking to one another you realized that they weren't that different from the people you just left.

Mary Hightower:

Yeah, well, this was true of all of the states, you know, and—

Interviewer:

Sorry, if you could just—

Mary Hightower:

OK, I'm sorry.

Interviewer:

—say [unintelligible] [laughs].

00:09:37:00

Mary Hightower:

OK, OK. After getting to the convention and, and really looking over the convention floor, there were people of all segment of life. I mean, all levels and all professions, and, and to see all of us there and we were all able to mingle and to communicate together, this was a, a, the, re-regardless of what level of, of the community we came from or what level of profession that we were, we were from.

00:10:11:00

Interviewer:

OK, before you, keep rolling, but if you could give me a sense that when you first saw them, they looked a little strange to—

Mary Hightower:

[laughs]

Interviewer:

—you. You know, those people look a little crazy, you know. [laughs]

Mary Hightower:

Which they did, they did, mm-hmm, yeah.

Interviewer:

So, talk, talk about that.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

And then you realized that [unintelligible].

00:10:24:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. After, when, after we, after I, we made it to the convention and we got there, being one of really our first time away from home and the first time participating in, in a convention of this, or a convention of any kind, and really we...I was a little skeptic and, and a little uneasy, but after getting there and seeing—

[rollout on camera roll]

[wild sound]

Mary Hightower:

—people, I mean, they were people of all professions—

00:10:56:00

Interviewer:

OK. OK. He's gonna just change camera rolls.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

[cut]

[camera roll #2159]

00:11:02:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, I'm rolling.

[slate]

00:11:10:00

Interviewer:

OK, if you can give me a sense of just how crazy some of these people looked and talked. I mean, they were talking about all kinds of philosophies. They looked all different kinds of ways. So, what was your first impression? And then tell me how that changed.

00:11:23:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, whe-when I first got to the convention and, and, as I say, all the different people from all walks of life were there, you know, I began to wonder, you know, just how I would fit into it and what I could get out of at, at the co—being at the convention, because we being locally, being from Mississippi, a lot of people there, a lotta lifestyle, a lotta dress codes or

hairstyles and all that we've never seen before. And people talking about the different kinds of leadership in each of their prospective area. We, you know, it was just confusing at first, you know, it was just like a state of confusion and, you know, you just wandered around and really tried to get a sense of direction. But once the convention was called together and everybody was recognized there, and then the true meaning of the le—the conference came out. In fact, the, the co, the convention was called to furnish leadership, and this was something that we all could relate to. You know, all of us were there seeking leadership and guidance, and at that point everything else ceased and we became a united body, you know, and so—

00:12:57:00

Interviewer:

And what did you think this national—

Camera Crew Member #1:

Excuse me. I need to stop just a second [inaudible].

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

It's going great.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

The kinds of things. I mean, you can say there were big afros, there were, you know.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

Give me just a sense of what you saw, yeah. So, walks of life, that's OK.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

But the physical, yeah.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

There were the dashikis, there were, I mean, people in long dresses, there were, you know, folks, a lotta Baraka's people were all in black. I mean, it was all—

Mary Hightower:

They were.

Interviewer:

—yeah.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

OK?

Camera Crew Member #1:

You rolling, John?

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK.

[slate]

00:13:30:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Thank you. OK.

00:13:33:00

Interviewer:

OK, give me a sense of what you saw, what you saw when you walked in there and the sense of confusion you had at first, and then what that developed into.

00:13:42:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. When I first went into the convention and I began to, you know, look at the different people that were there and, really, it was...I, I was stunned, [laughs] seeing people with, wearing dashikis, some wearing long dress with the headbands and, and seeing people with, you know, black outfits and so on. It was just something that we couldn't relate to because [laughs] we were, you know, in our areas people didn't dress that way. And, and, and as a matter of fact, we didn't have any people, you know, that even remotely associated to wearing an African hairstyle at the time, afro. And to go in, it really made you wonder, you know, if, if you were at the right place or, you know, if you, if I'm here, my being here, if it's really gonna make a difference. It, it, it was just a state of confusion right then. When you looked over the, over the room, looked over the convention hall and you saw all of these different people there and just saw all of these different dresses and coats, different, even talking different languages than we were, and, we began, I began to really wonder, you know, how I was gonna relate to this, you know, how, what am I gonna get outta this and even if I was gonna get anything to carry back home. But after getting through that point and, and really people getting organized, people getting signed in and, and identified at the convention, then the convention took on a whole different meaning. The true meaning of the convention came out and people began to address problems, problems that we all could relate to, not having Black leadership, not having a Black national party, and all these other things just seemed to cease. And it was at that point that we realized that, and I realized that, even though we were there different in appearances and even a lot in our languages and all, but we were all one in the same.

00:16:18:00

Interviewer:

Cut please. OK, thank you.

Camera Crew Member #1:

It was very nice.

Interviewer:

Was it? OK.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

And all you have to say is when Diggs miscalled the vote—

Mary Hightower:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—[unintelligible].

[cut]

Interviewer:

OK.

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, camera's rolling.

[slate]

00:16:39:00

Camera Crew Member 31:

Thank you.

00:16:40:00

Interviewer:

Now, when Congressman Diggs miscalls the vote, what did you think? Did you think it was gonna threaten the holding together of the convention?

00:16:49:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, when Congressman Diggs miscalled the vote I, I got really shaky and uneasy at, that that time because I felt like...mere fact that he did this, it was gonna create confusions and, and arguments in the convention that would really take away from the real purpose of the convention. And, which, in, in a sense it, it did in a little, you know, in, in a little sense it did create confusions, but even at that point I didn't lose hope in the convention, but I was really, really uneasy because I thought that this would really sk—steer us off in the wrong direction.

00:17:43:00

Interviewer:

What kept it going then? What, what held it?

00:17:45:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, people were really addressing it, you know, really gettin' on it right then and bringing to his attention and really getting the, the convention back on track. And, and this was really a good experience for us because we—people opposed him and, you know, I don't think that he expected the people, but, really, people, you know, they stood up then and, after opposing him and, and really making him realize that he had miscalled the vote. That gave hope to the convention again.

00:18:24:00

Interviewer:

OK, cut please. OK. All right—

[cut]

00:18:29:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Rolling.

[slate]

00:18:37:00

Interviewer:

OK, I'm gonna ask you another question again, which is, and if you could mention that you were working with the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

And then talk about coming into the convention and just seeing all those Black folks. And if you could mention that you were, you know, under siege. You don't have to go into specifics about elections or anything—

Mary Hightower:

OK, mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

—but just sensing, you know, you had been under siege by, by White people in Mississippi and then coming into this gathering.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

But mention MFDP—

Mary Hightower:

OK. [laughs]

Interviewer:

—Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. OK.

00:19:04:00

Mary Hightower:

Right, yeah, OK.

00:19:06:00

Interviewer:

OK. So, what, again, coming in from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, what was it like coming into that gathering?

00:19:13:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, having been working with the Freedom Democratic Party through—in, in Mississippi and really experiencing a lotta opposition, a lot of intimidation, whatever, from the White race there, leaving and coming to the convention, leaving that situation and going to the convention, we re—I really had a lot of high hopes of going convention and, and just, and being able to find a way to eliminate what we had just left. And even though the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, you know, was furnishing leadership for us there, but to go to Gary to a national Convention, Black Convention, to me this was, was gonna be the beginning of a new hope, a new leadership, a new direction for us to take back home to Mississippi.

00:20:22:00

Interviewer:

So now, and you said that somebody from the NAACP, a leader whom you respected from, from Mississippi said that you shouldn't do that. What did, what did he say? And what did you feel about that?

00:20:33:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, first of all, the NAACP leader from Mississippi, he came to the convention and we, we thought he was coming there in support of, but he came opposing our being at the Gary convention, and he say that this was separate, we were separating ourselves from the National Democratic Party, the Mississippi Free—the Mississippi Democratic Party, and that this was, that we were segregating ourselves, that was the word he used. But to me and to others there, this was not so. We felt, by the Gary convention, as a person would owning a home. The Mississippi Democratic Party being the, having their home, and we as Blacks wanted to have ours too, you—and coming to Gary was creating our own home, and by us having ours and, and the Mississippi Democratic Party theirs, we would be able to add to and to offer resources and offer the kinds of leadership that just one party there being. And one

party that I might add that we had been left out of, this was giving us an opportunity to contribute, and we didn't see it in, in the manner that our leader, NAA-NAACP leader see it.

00:22:12:00

Interviewer:

OK, now let me ask you, when—

Camera Crew Member #2:

I'm gonna roll out.

Interviewer:

OK. That is lovely. [laughs]

Mary Hightower:

[laughs] OK.

[cut]

[camera roll #2160]

[sound roll #275]

Camera Crew Member #1:

And mark.

[slate]

00:22:29:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Thank you.

00:22:31:00

Interviewer:

OK, give me a sense of what was at risk. You say that the national eyes were on you, and then the local eyes were on you too. Give me a sense of that.

Mary Hightower:

We knew that going to Gary that there was a great risk. Once we, you know, if we had failed, going back home would, would've been very—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. If you could begin and just say "if we failed" and not "had failed" 'cause you're still in time.

Mary Hightower:

OK, all right.

Interviewer:

Yeah, OK.

Mary Hightower:

OK. If we failed it would be—

Interviewer:

Sorry, just start all over.

00:23:04:00

Mary Hightower:

OK, oh, sorry. OK. When leaving Mississippi and going to Gary, we knew that we were taking a great risk. I mean, not only to, a risk of not being able to accomplish anything, but also the risk of going back and maybe even getting stronger opposition and, and facing a lot more problem than we had before we left. But...and, and, and if we had failed, we, we would not have been able to go back and to participate or even to ha—just even get the respect of local people, the local Whites or the local Democratic Party. We, we would've, we wouldn't have been able to...ge—to, to participate or, or anything because they would've, I would've, I felt like they woulda say that if we failed, you know, as a body, then we couldn't expect them to respect us and to open their doors to us, so we, we, we had no choice but to succeed. And we, we did.

00:24:20:00

Interviewer:

That is a perfect answer. Now I'm gonna ask you to do it one more time, just mention that the eyes of the nation and your own communities were on you.

Mary Hightower:

OK. OK.

Interviewer:

That was a perfect answer.

Mary Hightower:

Good. [laughs]

Interviewer:

[laughs]

00:24:32:00

Mary Hightower:

[laughs] OK. In going to Gary and leaving Mississippi and leaving our homes, the local, our local community, local eyes was on us, as well as the national eyes was on us to see if we were gonna succeed or fail. [siren]

00:24:58:00

Interviewer:

I hate to do this, but you're gonna have to do that again.

Mary Hightower:

OK. [laughs]

Interviewer:

[laughs]

Mary Hightower:

I figured.

Interviewer:

Yes, right.

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

Are we clear?

Camera Crew Member #2:

Not quite clear [unintelligible].

Interviewer:

OK.

Mary Hightower:

Can still hear. [laughs]

Interviewer:

That was a beautiful answer, by the way. We're gonna do this again. [laughs]

Interviewer:

We're next door to—should we

Camera Crew Member #1:

Yeah, I'm gonna stop.

Interviewer:

Should we cut?

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah? What do you say?

Camera Crew Member #3:

Let's, let's break.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

In particular given that the national eyes and local eyes were on you.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Sound's rolling.

[cut]

00:25:24:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Camera's rolling.

[slate]

00:25:33:00

Interviewer:

OK. Talk again about what was at risk with the national and local eyes on you.

00:25:39:00

Mary Hightower:

Leaving Mississippi and going to Gary, we knew that there was great risk in going because all local eyes was on us from our communities, from many at local Mississippi Democratic Party, and then national eyes was on us, you know, to really see if we were going to succeed or fail. And we, we had no choice, you know, we had to succeed because if we had failed, if, if we failed to accomplish what we set out to, we couldn't expect to go back and, and expect a local party, the Mississippi Democratic Party to open their doors to us. To me, they woulda felt if we couldn't succeed there, then we didn't have anything to offer them back at home.

00:26:37:00

Interviewer:

Nice. OK. Now I want you to tell me also about another moment when you thought it might all disappear, and that's when the Michigan delegation walks out. And if you just talk about seeing them walk out and then this "Nation Time."

Mary Hightower:

OK.

Interviewer:

OK.

00:26:55:00

Mary Hightower:

Ne-nearing the, the end of the convention the Michigan delegation walked out. Well, at, at that time we thought the whole delegation had walked out. And, and it was sad, you know, because if—with any state delegation getting up and leaving, you know, to me there was a sense of failure. But to see a part of them still remaining and, and saying that they were staying, you know, it was really great, you know, and, and we were all cheering [laughs] and, and just, it, it, it gave a new momentum to the convention.

00:27:35:00

Interviewer:

Did you ever feel that, during that time, that you might not, that it might collapse on you?

Mary Hightower:

Well, at, at the door, before we realized that all the dele-the delegation had not, we did because, one—

Interviewer:

Sorry, if you could just mention you did believe that, yeah.

00:27:51:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. We, we, during the time that, you know, that part of the delegation walked out, well, before we realized that it was only part of the delegation, *we felt like*...I did and I, and I later found out a lotta others felt that *once the Michigan delegation walked out, others were gonna walk out. And we was, you know, it was, we were really afraid. You know,*

everybody was just, like, standing there dumbfounded for, for a while, you know, really realizing what's gonna happen next. And, but when a part of the Michigan delegation remained, you know, everybody, you know, just cheered. It just brought out a great, you know, cheer. And I don't think they was just cheering for Michigan, that part that remained, but we were cheering that, you know, we, we haven't failed. You know, we didn't break up, and, you know, that the de-delegation is still here, you know, the, the convention is still here. And that was a, that was a great victory. [laughs]

00:29:00:00

Interviewer:

OK. Tell me what you felt like. The convention is over. What did you feel like going home? What did you feel had been done?

Mary Hightower:

Well, it was at...I, I felt like a new person going back.

Interviewer:

Sorry, if you could say "Going home after the convention..."

00:29:18:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. After the convention was over and we were all getting ready to go home, I, I felt like a completely new person, different person. And the, the excitement from the convention, it lasted all the way home. [laughs] You know, just, I think it was about five of us in our car, we drove up, and it was, you know, we carried the convention back home with us, and the excitement, the, the, the whole, I guess the at—the attitude, the atmosphere. And everything that was spread and, and, and, and exchanged at the convention, we carried it on back to Mississippi with us. And I felt like that was a new beginning for us in Mississippi because once we got back, we were able to take that spark that we got from the convention and to spread it out. [laughs]

00:30:26:00

Interviewer:

What, what do you think, is there anything that you most remember in terms of a magic moment at the convention?

00:30:36:00

Mary Hightower:

There was, I guess, two or three different...during the convention there was two or three different, I guess, exciting and, and magical times. And I think the first one was when we had to answer roll call, and each state had to stand up and answer to the, the name of their delegation in their state, and to me this is a magical moment. It was really exciting. And to hear people answering to the, the, the roll call throughout the, the convention and, and answering with excitement, and, it was, this, this was really magical.

00:31:23:00

Interviewer:

OK, let's cut please. OK, that's nice. You just—

[cut]

Camera Crew Member #1:

OK, marker.

[slate]

00:31:35:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Thank you.

00:31:36:00

Interviewer:

OK, why did you think the national Black agenda was important in terms of a common agenda for, for Black people nationally?

00:31:43:00

Mary Hightower:

Well, we needed to call this convention together to, to furnish national leadership and to form a structure for Black people nationally. But even more important than that, we needed a, a body or, or a structure that would be...create a beginning for, a future for Black people in the, you know, United States, nationally. And this is why it was important. Our, our future was at stake. [laughs]

00:32:23:00

Interviewer:

Do that one more time and just say, yes, just keep going. If you could start again and just end with "our future was at stake."

00:32:31:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. We needed, in going to the convention, we needed the convention to come together to, not only to form a structure for Black people, but we also needed the leadership, we needed the future leadership for Black people. And as a matter of fact, coming together, we saw this as being our future, the future of the Black people.

00:33:01:00

Interviewer:

That's fine. OK. We can cut. Yeah.

Camera Crew Member #2:

Yeah, I'm just—

Interviewer:

Yeah.

[cut]

[wild sound]

Interviewer:

Got me all excited [unintelligible]. [laughs]

Mary Hightower:

[laughs] Yeah.

[cut]

[camera roll #2161]

00:33:16:00

Camera Crew Member #1:

Mark it.

[slate]

00:33:24:00

Interviewer:

OK. So, give me a sense of the state caucuses meeting and talking, this kind of activity day and night.

00:33:30:00

Mary Hightower:

After the convention would end, or when we would have breaks, different states would caucus and this, it increased, you know, day after day. And in it, this was another exciting time, you know, waiting for the convention to break or to end so that we could begin caucuses, and we created a lot of leadership, or a lotta communi-communications between states caucusing together.

00:34:02:00

Interviewer:

And what would you talk about at these caucuses?

Mary Hightower:

How we're gonna, well, we would—

Interviewer:

Sorry, if you could say—

00:34:06:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. We would talk about in the, in, during the caucuses we would discuss how we're gonna vote and what issues we were gonna vote together on and we, we would, you know, carry this out. But this would be our politician', you know, as we got out of the convention.

00:34:27:00

Interviewer:

And one last question on, again, give me a sense of somebody who's coming from Mississippi and all the terrorism that you'd met with and why the Black agenda, national Black agenda is important to you.

Mary Hightower:

Well, after leaving Mississippi and going to the convention, leaving there confused and leaving with very little hope of what we, what we left behind, going to the convention was—

Interviewer:

I'm sorry. Rather than the hope, if you can just give me a sense of the intimidation and that kind of thing.

00:35:08:00

Mary Hightower:

OK. In, in Mississippi, during the, the time that the convention was organized, we were experiencing a lot of intimidation, we were experiencing opposition to our registering to vote and opposition to our electing Black people to office. And leaving all of this and going to Gary, we were, I was in hopes that we would find a way to alleviate this when we get back to Mississippi, and to get at Gary, a new sense of direction, a new leadership, and new directives to go back home and to really face this and to overcome it.

00:35:53:00

Interviewer:

Let's cut. OK, is there anything that we have—

Crewmember:

I'm sorry, I cut. I thought you said—

Interviewer:

No, I did, I did.

[cut]

[end of interview]

00:36:05:00

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