

Interview with **Casey Hayden**

May 15, 1986

Production Team: B

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Note: These transcripts contain material that did not appear in the final program. Only text appearing in *bold italics* was used in the final version of *Eyes on the Prize*.

00:00:01:00

[camera roll 401]

[sound roll 1347]

[wild audio]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: SOUND ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHAT BROUGHT YOU TO MISSISSIPPI IN '63 AND WHY, WHY DID YOU FEEL IT WAS IMPORTANT TO BE INVOLVED IN THAT WHOLE EXPERIENCE OF GOING INTO MISSISSIPPI AS OPPOSED TO ALBANY AND SOME OF THE OTHER PLACES THE MOVEMENT-

[slate]

[sync tone]

Hayden: I went to Mississippi in '63 to work on a literacy project. We were trying to develop a self-instructional method for adult illiterates to learn to read. Bob had gotten a grant, Bob Moses had gotten a grant for the project. There were six of us on it, I was the only white, I was the first white woman to come into Mississippi as a part of the SNCC group. I was sort of privileged I guess, I guess I felt privileged to be asked to do that, and I wanted to do it. And I'd been working in the SNCC office in Atlanta I wanted to be in the field, I wanted to be out where it was happening. And I wanted to work with Bob. I wanted to work, we were close and I wanted to work with him.

00:01:06:00

INTERVIEWER: DESCRIBE BOB MOSES AS, AS A LEADER, AND YOUR IMPRESSIONS OF HIM AT THAT TIME.

Hayden: As a leader, well he had this, he had a capacity to—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY TO STOP YOU, JUST INCORPORATE THE WORD BOB MOSES.

Hayden: Oh I see: we don't get your question.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Hayden: OK. Bob Moses at the time had a capacity to help people come up with what they really felt and really wanted. He wasn't a leader in the sense of getting out front, he was a leader in the sense of empowering people, he had a capacity to empower people. He saw beyond the material, I would say, he saw beyond, he was the big, he was a visionary, he saw in big strokes. So in his presence one could be that person, or if one thought one was that person [laughs], then there was a kindred soul there. So he was very comforting, it was very comforting to work with him. It was as though you were in the same psychic space with someone. And he could help all kinds of people feel that way. It had nothing to do with class, it had to do with an interior self that he knew about himself and could therefore relate to in other people.

00:02:38:00

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU GIVE ME A KIND OF A SIMPLE EXPLANATION FOR SOMEONE WHO'S NEVER HEARD OF A FREEDOM VOTER, WHAT THE WHOLE STRATEGY WAS FOR GOING INTO MISSISSIPPI AT, IN '63 AND WHAT THE FREEDOM VOTE WAS SUPPOSED TO DO. WHAT WAS—

Hayden: Well, because there were, because blacks were excluded from institutions, which is what segregation was, we were creating parallel institutions, that's what that was all about, so that a freedom vote, when blacks can vote, we were running parallel votes. The freedom schools were a similar strategy which we developed later. There was a lot of discussion of parallel institutions at the time for people who were excluded from regular, institutional functionings in the culture.

00:03:21:00

INTERVIEWER: WERE YOU FEARFUL ABOUT THE WHOLE THING ABOUT GOING INTO MISSISSIPPI AS A WHITE WOMAN OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN?

Hayden: Well, you know when I look back I can't believe the things [laughs] I did. I was

very seldom afraid and I tried lately to, I've been doing some writing lately and I've been trying to figure out why and I think it's because I was so naïve that I, I still, it was somehow as though because what we were doing was right there was some protection in it. It was sort of a children's crusade in a way, we were very young, and there was, it was as though there was this armor of righteousness that we were all clothed in or sheathed in, and amazing, you know when I look back on it. But I was very seldom really physically fearful.

00:04:09:00

INTERVIEWER: BUT YOU, WHAT ABOUT ALL THE BLACK DEATHS AND THE VIOLENCE THAT YOU HAD HEARD ABOUT AND HAD, HAD HIT, AFFECTED THE SNCC PEOPLE?

Hayden: Well the time, just, you know, if something specifically came up it was very frightening, you know, there was an instance when I had a reporter with me that I had taken up to Greenwood and people were running into the back of the car trying to run us off the road, you know that was very scary to have your car rammed into from behind. And sometimes driving back and forth, we lived in Tougaloo, I lived in Tougaloo, outside Jackson, so, you know, sometimes driving back and forth we'd be followed. That was scary when we were followed. But other than the times when it was specifically happening I wasn't really very fearful. I felt protected somehow. I just felt safe. We had one funny, actually it wasn't funny looking back it was funny. When we, we had this house at Tougaloo which was sort of like an R & R center, cause we had a, we were one of the few, we had a couch and we had chairs and a kitchen, it was a real house and so there were a lot of people sleeping I guess that was during the summer of '64 and there were just people crashed all over the place. And there were these shots outside the house and I thought, well they've found us, this is it. And we were all crawling around, none of us were dressed, we were all in night clothes or crawling around on the floor trying to stay below window level. And I kept, I was, I remember whispering to people, [whispers] "Try to get out the back, try to get out the back because they're gonna try, they'll come in and set the house on fire." And I was in a state of real terror and I was sure that this was, we were all going to die crawling around on the floor. And then it turned out it was some folks who'd come back from town a little looped and were just shooting off some guns, you know it was some of our own folks out in the yard doing this. And I can remember we were all, we were all sitting around on the floor just looking at each other kind of in this state of shock and it was very funny, you know we were laughing, and, hysteria you know, it was slightly hysterical, it was hysterical but it was very funny and, it's, so, that was fearful. But other than those kinds of things it wasn't, in between it was OK.

00:06:36:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING SPECIFIC THAT MIGHT ILLUSTRATE HOW A, HOW A WHITE PERSON IN MISSISSIPPI MIGHT RESPOND TO PARTICULARLY A WHITE ORGANIZER? REMEMBER THERE WAS TREMENDOUS HATRED AGAINST, ON THE PART OF MOST WHITE MISSISSIPPANS TOWARDS CIVIL RIGHTS PEOPLE FOR COMING INTO THEIR STATE AND THEY SAW IT AS AN INVASION. DO YOU REMEMBER ANY, DO YOU

HAVE ANY, ANY INTERACTION WITH ANY LOCAL WHITE MISSISSIPPIANS THAT YOU REMEMBER THAT THEY WERE, THEY MAYBE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND OUR JUST WERE AGHAST AT YOU AS ANOTHER WHITE PERSON WERE INVOLVED?

Hayden: Well I didn't do much street organizing I was in the offices, you know I was in the central office directing stuff by then. But I got picked up once by the cops in Jackson who couldn't, it was like they couldn't figure out what it, they couldn't figure me out. I mean I didn't look like a radical, you know, I looked real proper and I was like, obviously was a nice girl it was like, what, you know, does your daddy know you're here? What was, I didn't run into any direct not in Mississippi, I had previous experiences in southwest Georgia and other places with direct violence from whites but not in Mississippi.

00:07:52:00

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND.

[cut]

[wild audio]

00:07:54:00

INTERVIEWER: LET'S SEE IN JUST A, IN, IN A FEW COUPLE OF SENTENCES WHAT DO YOU THINK WAS THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF FREEDOM SUMMER-

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: -WHAT, WHAT WERE YOU TRYING TO DO AS A MOVEMENT WITH FREEDOM SUMMER-

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: FIVE.

INTERVIEWER: -BRINGING ALL THESE PEOPLE IN [LAUGHING] IT'S GOING TO BE THAT HILARIOUS? BUT SERIOUSLY THIS IS THE BIGGEST NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO WERE BROUGHT INTO THE STATE.

Hayden: What was the purpose of Freedom Summer? Well, let's see. What it was was it was segregated, which meant that-

00:08:31:00

INTERVIEWER: WAIT, WHAT WAS SEGREGATED?

Hayden: The whole scene was segregated, which meant that they had two cultures, and so blacks couldn't go anywhere, do anything in the white community, so people kind of

generally know that but the implications of that were a, a really rigid caste system that was based on violence and oppression. So to keep that intact it couldn't be talked about, because if it started getting talked about publicly, it was gonna start to break open, and what we wanted to do was break it open. So it was kind of a blitzkrieg, I mean the way I think of it is we had been previous to that weaving, we'd been weaving, trying to weave, a network or a community of people who could work to change the system. But it was so slow, and so many people were getting picked off one by one by one, of local leaders were getting murdered or people were being evicted and the white power structure was so strong that it really seemed like we needed an enormous amount of outside support to punch a hole in the whole system of segregation. So that's what it was about, it was getting the outside support, basically, I mean there was a lot else to it but, I think that was, and also, the whole movement was very much working with what was available, and we had available a whole lot of northern college students who were willing to come do something, we didn't have much money, you know I mean I can remember a lot of nights we didn't have gas to get home, I slept in offices an awful lot of times because we didn't have money to get gas to get home. We were eating off the generosity of local res- black restaurateurs, who was feeding, you know, I mean the resources were very, very slim and there was this huge pool of resources, is what it was, and we needed all the help we could get, so if they would help, fine, use them, you know, use whatever we could get, so it's like that.

0:11:06:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, WELL, BOB MOSES NOW-

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I THINK WE BETTER RELOAD THE CAMERA HERE.

INTERVIEWER: OK, YEAH, LET'S CUT.

[cut]

[slate]

[change camera roll to 402]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO GIVE ME AN IDEA-

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: SIX.

INTERVIEWER: -SORT OF THE UNDERLYING THEME, OF, OF BRINGING WHITES INTO THE COMMUNITY.

Hayden: Then another aspect of Freedom Summer was that we wanted to try to create, on a human level, actual human interactions between blacks and whites, which was impossible

with the social structures it was in the state, just to break it open on a personal level in local communities.

00:11:52:00

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU REMEMBER SOME OF THE VOLUNTEERS TALKING ABOUT THEIR REACTIONS TO BEING IN A BLACK COMMUNITY AND, YOU KNOW PROBABLY FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Hayden: Not in Mississippi, we'd done some, we'd done this on a smaller scale in southwest Georgia the year before, and I was, at that time I had a lot of, I was really in touch with the new people who'd come down, whites from the North but in Mississippi I was more in touch with our staff. I was doing a lot of coordinating of the staff and was less in touch with the volunteers.

00:12:25:00

INTERVIEWER: IN ALBANY WHAT WAS THE, WHAT WERE SOME OF THE REACTIONS YOU DID GET THOUGH FROM THE, CAUSE THEY WERE THE SAME TYPE OF KIDS BASICALLY, RIGHT? I MEAN THEY WERE COLLEGE KIDS—

Hayden: Well, it was, you know, a lot of culture shock, just culture shock. It was and people were impacted by this sort of disorganized style of the black community, by the poverty, by the heat, a lot of talk about the heat. I think they were impacted by the different, I don't think they expected the various kinds of emotional receptions they received, people expected a warmer reception, there was, there was a lot of hostility in the black community toward whites that came out, toward volunteers. There was a lot more warmth than they expected too, I think the extremes of the kinds of receptions they received impacted people, fear.

00:13:29:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT THE FEAR? HOW DID PEOPLE DEAL WITH THE FEAR OF LIVING DAY TO DAY UNDER TREMENDOUS PRESSURE KNOWING MOVEMENT LEADERS HAD BEEN SHOT ONCE?

Hayden: Well we got a lot of R & R folks as they say at the house at Tougaloo, you know, folks would come in a party, and just, you know party down a little bit or just hang out or, people were very tired, there was a lot of fatigue. Sometimes they'd just come in and sleep. Tougaloo was this little sort of safe area because it was an all-black community so we saw a lot of folks coming in just wanting to fall out for a few days and eat. The diet change was a big item, you know people wanted to eat stuff they were more familiar with, we couldn't always supply that, we were living a lot on what we call "commodities" which were surplus food.

00:14:29:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. WHAT DO YOU THINK THAT THE SUMMER VOLUNTEERS GOT OUT, ACTUALLY LEARNED, FROM, FROM THE, THE SUMMER OF WORKING IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY AND DOING VOTER REGISTRATION, FREEDOM SCHOOLS, DO YOU THINK AS A GROUP YOU CAN SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT THEY GOT OUT OF THAT SUMMER?

Hayden: No.

INTERVIEWER: I MEAN, NO? OK. WHAT, WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER WAY AROUND THOUGH WHAT THE LOCALS GOT OUT OF FREEDOM SUMMER AND THAT WHOLE IMPACT OF HAVING THAT MANY PEOPLE COME INTO THEIR STATE AND SHOWING ACTIVELY THAT THEY WANTED TO CHANGE THE WAY MISSISSIPPI WAS, WHAT WORKED ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS?

Hayden: I don't know see it's hard for me, it's so personal it's hard for me to, it's sort of guessing at what volunteers—

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DO, WELL WHAT DO YOU PERSONALLY, I MEAN YOU WERE IN THE MOVEMENT AT THAT TIME, AND THAT'S SOMETHING THAT YOU HAD HELPED BRING ABOUT THIS WHOLE, YOU KNOW, GETTING PEOPLE DOWN THERE AND SEEING, RUNNING THE PROGRAMS AND SO FORTH, WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY THINK WAS THE, WHAT DID YOU THINK HAD CHANGED BY THE END OF THE SUMMER?

Hayden: What did I think had changed by the end of the summer?

00:15:29:00

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, IN MISSISSIPPI I MEAN WAS THERE ANY, ANYTHING YOU CAN LOOK AT AND SAY EITHER THE WAY PEOPLE THOUGHT OR IN CONCRETE CHANGES. DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHAT I'M GETTING AT OR—

Hayden: By the end of the summer, you mean as a result of this influx of white kids coming in? Like the impact of numbers of white kids on the scene. The pi- What I was close to the SNCC staff. I could talk about that in terms of the SNCC staff, I don't think I could talk about it in terms of the state, the black community in the state or the white community in the state. I think probably the white community in the state had a sense that they were not going to be able to get away with it. You know, I mean I think we felt there was that kind of change, that there was enough attention now that they weren't this little isolated place anymore, I think we felt that. The impact of the Freedom Summer on the internal, I mean sort of on the core of the organizers of the, you know organizing impetus of the movement, was real complicated. Do you want me to—I could talk—

INTERVIEWER: LET'S STOP FOR A SECOND—

Hayden: —about that, if you want me to—

INTERVIEWER: LET'S CUT.

Hayden: –talk about that.

INTERVIEWER: AND GIVE ME AN IDEA OF WHERE YOU–

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK.

00:16:55:00

Hayden: Well I think that in terms of the impact on the country as a whole from the summer, the peop—the kids that were down, and they were kids then, they were college kids went back radicalized. They had seen something that whites in those numbers had never seen before, which was the internal black community of the South. And that had never happened before. And the implication of that in terms of their worldview was that they never quite saw it again strictly from the superior point of view, that is the point of view of the people on top, cause they had a glimpse of what it was like from underneath. So it had wide effects for well people went into labor organizing from there and into you know I think a number of people changed their vocational direction people learned to think in new ways about themselves I mean and a lot of the roots of the feminist movement are in that summer and in subsequent, you know, developments out of the summer. There was a lot of strategic thinking going on which volunteers, in terms of long range social change which volunteers got to lesser or greater degrees, depending on where they were and who they were around, what black organizers they were working with on a day to day basis. I don't know about the immediate change in the state. It was pretty, well a lot of groundwork was laid for future black organizations in the, a lot of political organizations in the black community, a lot of groundwork was laid by all that energy.

00:18:59:00

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU GO ON INTO SOME OF THE, THE EXAMPLES WHERE YOU SAW THE SEEDS OF BLACK POWER THAT WAS GOING TO EMERGE SORT OF CLEARER LATER. NOT HERE BUT–

Hayden: Well that's really after the summer.

INTERVIEWER: MMM.

Hayden: I mean, do you want to do that?

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, LET'S GO INTO THAT.

00:19:14:00

Hayden: After the summer we had a series of staff meetings, SNCC staff meetings, there were a lot more people around, the relationship to SNCC wasn't clear. People had come in in all kinds of support roles, lawyers, doctors, people had come in and set up radio systems for us in the cars so we could radio to base when we were out in the field. Security system people were around, people were, there were just a lot of people hanging around. Some of them were on SNCC staff. There were some blacks who had stayed, new northern blacks, a lot of these people were white. There were a lot of people. We brought in people from other SNCC projects and the Mississippi staff, and we were all meeting together trying to figure out what to do. There was a lot of the black staff people who were indigenous to the area, who were sort of the backbone of the thing, really, were impacted real heavily by the summer dealing with white intellectuals, young white intellectuals, who didn't know their way around and had a lot of skills that they didn't have, that is, that the staff people didn't have. The Freedom Democratic Party challenge at the convention—

00:20:47:00

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY,

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: LET'S BREAK.

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, OK, LET'S CUT.

[cut]

[sync tone]

00:20:52:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHY DON'T YOU START WITH THAT AGAIN JUST RESTATING THE TENSIONS.

Hayden: Well there were there were tensions between blacks and whites by now in the project. The, the local black staff who were sort of the backbone of the Mississippi Project had had been dealing all summer with a lot of white, young white people who were intellectual and moneyed, you know they were college kids, middle class, who had a lot of advantages and a lot of skills and to some extent the black staff I think were threatened by them at some level and to some extent they were frustrated by having to put up with them all the time and be put in danger because of the visibility these people brought onto the scene. So it's sort of a combination of fear and, I don't know, maybe jealousy and also sense that this isn't quite what we wanted to be happening. That came out in staff meetings around questions of, I mean it was ver-verbalized just like that, people were saying those things. At the same time though, you had the, the national SNCC organization which was—

[wild audio]

Hayden: –I think threatened by what was going on in Mississippi–

00:22:16:00

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S CUT.

[cut]

[slate]

[change camera roll to 403]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: ROLLING.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: NINE.

00:22:24:00

INTERVIEWER: JUST RECONSTRUCT, YOU'RE MANNING THE PHONES WHEN THE FIRST REPORTS COME IN THAT, THAT THE GUYS ARE, HAVEN'T CALLED BACK.

Hayden: I'd come down from Oxford, came down on the bus with a bunch of volunteers, remember I was sitting at the front of the bus with Mindy Sampstein who I did a lot of work with, and he and I were in the office in Jackson, we were in the, the Freedom Summer office which was a storefront, somehow we had gotten a storefront together back during the freedom votes and for the summer we'd put in a lot of telephones and a lot of desks, we had these cubicles, it was real hot, it was super hot, we didn't have any fans. I remember somewhere later in the summer we got fans, which was a big deal. So it was very hot, the, you know the phone was ringing, people were calling in with reports and we got a call from Philadelphia, I guess I took the call that these guys had gone out and hadn't called back. We had a system where people were to call in every half hour or to call in at appointed times, and if the call-in didn't come, then within fifteen minutes, whoever was receiving the call-ins was to call the Jackson office. And we had a security system we would then put into operation which involved calling the FBI and calling the Justice Department, calling the local police and in this case calling backup to Oxford where people were still training. So we did that and we asked the people to call back in half an hour, let us know what was happening. And they did, nothing was happening. And at that point, Mindy was in the office and at that point we assumed that they were either in real danger or dead. And we got the folks in Oxford on the phone and said "Well, it's almost an hour now and we really think that, you know, this is real trouble." And Bob at that point, I unders—you know, started trying to do what he could and they—then they sort of took a lot of it over from Oxford and started calling Washington and

trying to put pressure on the FBI through Washington to send some people out to check it out. And—

00:24:51:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID YOU PERSONALLY FEEL WHEN YOU HEARD THAT GOODMAN, SCHWERNER AND CHANEY HADN'T CALLED BACK?

Hayden: Well when they hadn't called in I felt that I remember thinking well this was a little quicker than we expected them to react. I remember thinking it was, the whites, I mean we had anticipated that there would be violence, but I remember thinking, "Boy, they're really quick, you know." And we had a lot of fear, you know, I remember talking to Bob and at that time and saying you have to tell people to be very careful, everybody has to be very careful and I remember hearing the way I sounded and thinking that this is so silly it doesn't matter how careful they are you know so I guess that was really, well you know, upset, it was, you know, there was an edge of desper—there was nothing you could do, you know, there was just nothing you could do. It was all going down and there was nothing we could do.

00:26:01:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT APPEALS TO THE FBI AND FEDERAL—APPEALS TO FEDERAL PEOPLE?

Hayden: Well—

INTERVIEWER: WAS THERE ANYTHING—

Hayden: Nothing was happening, you know, nobody would, was budging much, there at first. You know it was all, it all went down within the first few hours and we knew that, see we were sitting in Jackson and we knew that it was all going down right then. And nobody was moving.

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU TAKE THE DEATHS OF THE THREE TO MEAN THAT, THAT THE POWER STRUCTURE IN MISSISSIPPI WAS JUST, WANTED EVERYONE OUT OF THE STATE, I MEAN THE DIRECT MESSAGE THIS WAS SO CLEARLY SINGLING OUT LEADERS. JIM SCHWERNER HAD BEEN THERE A WHILE AND CHANEY WAS KNOWN LOCALLY.

Hayden: Well, we anticipated that there'd be violence in response to what we were doing. We anticipated that there would, you know we had security systems and call-in systems and radios and telephones and we anticipated violence. People, the white, rural, Mississippians traditionally were driving around with rifles on their rifle racks, which they would do when they went hunting, you know they had their rifle racks in the back of the pickups. But now they were driving around with rifles on the racks all the time, everybody had their rifles on the racks all the time. You know, there were clues like that that people were armed, that they were armed and we anticipated violence. We were surprised it came so quick. I remember

being surprised it was so immediate.

00:27:41:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT THE FACT THAT SOME SAY THAT THE KILLING OF GOODMAN AND SCHWERNER REPRESENTED THE NEW ACTION BY THE RESISTANCE BECAUSE UP TO THAT POINT BASICALLY ONLY BLACK LIVES HAD BEEN TAKEN IN MISSISSIPPI ANYWAY. DID YOU, DID, DID PEOPLE SEE THAT AS AN ESCALATION, THE FACT THAT, AND— THERE'S A LOT OF CONTROVERSY ABOUT THE RESPONSE BECAUSE NOW, NOW THAT TWO WHITES WERE DEAD, THE WHOLE NATION HAD GOT CONCERNED ON A DIFFERENT LEVEL. WHAT ABOUT THAT WHOLE QUESTION?

Hayden: Well part of the thinking part of our thinking in doing the project was that the white press didn't consider black deaths as deaths. I mean, you know, when a black person died it wasn't exactly a death, it just wasn't, it wasn't as significant as a white death, that's the way the press was. That's one of the major changes that's come out of the movement, is that when a black person dies now it's a death, the same way it is when a white person dies. So, you know, part of our thinking was well if we get a lot of white kids down here who have connections, personal and impersonal, to the white press, the coverage will be different, and in fact that was the case. And it sounds cold blooded but that's the way it was, and if those had been just black Mississippians who had been killed it would not have attracted that attention, it wouldn't have led to the kind of social change it led to. So just we had anticipated some of this before it happened.

00:29:22:00

INTERVIEWER: AS SOMEBODY WHO'S SORT OF A VETERAN AT THAT TIME OF BEING IN THE FIELD AND CIVIL RIGHTS AND, AND A FIELD SECRETARY OR A SOMEBODY WHO'S MANNING THE OFFICE DID YOU FEEL, YOU MUST HAVE FELT A TREMENDOUS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE VOLUNTEERS, YOU'RE ASKING THEM TO TAKE ON THE SAME DANGERS THAT YOU'VE TAKEN ON. WAS THAT DIFFICULT—

Hayden: Did I feel responsible for them? No, they wanted to come. I'd been—

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU START WITH VOLUNTEERS?

Hayden: OK, the volunteers, the volunteers had wanted to come down. I'd had a lot of contact with northern students previous to my work in Mississippi 'cause I'd been doing fundraising for SNCC out of Atlanta in what was called Northern Coordinators so I handled all the correspondence with northern college students that came out of the office. And they all wanted to come to where they action was, you know. I mean, what was happening in the South was so dramatic and heroic, I mean you got to remember this was like early sixties we were still coming out of, kids on college campus were reading the existentialists, you know, and these, the black students were like heroes, they were like existentialist heroes and people

wanted to get close to this. It was exciting, and it was very beautiful, it was beautiful, it was happening, it was beautiful. And it drew white intellectuals, it was real, it was more real or more profound than most anything else happening and they wanted to get close to it. So I didn't feel particularly responsible for them. I mean I felt privileged to be there and they should feel privileged too that they can get into it, you know.

00:31:07:00

INTERVIEWER: DID YOU KNOW, LET'S SEE, WHEN DID YOU FIRST NOTICE, I'M SORRY LET'S CUT FOR A SECOND I WANT TO BACK UP A LITTLE BIT.

[cut]

INTERVIEWER: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: TEN.

[sync tone]

00:31:18:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHEN DID YOU FIRST BEGIN TO NOTICE SIGNS OF RESENTMENT TOWARDS WHITE PARTICIPATION IN CIVIL RIGHTS UP IN MISSISSIPPI AND WHAT WERE SOME OF THOSE THINGS?

Hayden: I don't think I can really answer that.

INTERVIEWER: OK. WELL MAYBE WE CAN COME BACK TO IT. WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE SUMMER? WHERE, DID ALL THE VOLUNTEERS JUST GO HOME OR DID SOME STAY? JUST GIVE ME A LITTLE BIT AN IDEA OF, YOU KNOW, FALL OF '64 AFTER THE SO-CALLED SUMMER PROJECT WAS OVER.

Hayden: Yeah, some volunteers, after the summer of '64, some volunteers went home and some were just kind of hanging around, some got officially put on SNCC staff and some were just living there. It was a very sort of incoherent situation.

INTERVIEWER: WHY?

Hayden: Well, the projects had folded in terms of formal activity but there were lots and lots of workers still there, you know, both old SNCC staff and new staff and lawyers and doctors and all kinds of people were still sort of hanging around trying to figure out what to do next.

00:32:35:00

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU JUST GIVE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: I THINK YOU BETTER BE CAREFUL. I THINK WE'RE-

INTERVIEWER: REALLY? LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: -CUTTING A LITTLE CLOSE HERE.

INTERVIEWER: OK REALLY?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: FIFTEEN FEET.

INTERVIEWER: FIFTEEN'S A LITTLE CLOSE, THANKS [LAUGHS]. THAT'S GOOD.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: YEAH, LET'S GO AHEAD AND CHANGE THE-

[cut]

[slate]

[change camera roll to 404]

00:32:46:00

INTERVIEWER: WHY WAS MISSISSIPPI IN FACT SO DIFFERENT FROM-

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: ELEVEN.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OTHER PARTS OF THE DEEP SOUTH? WHAT WAS IT ABOUT MISSISSIPPI THAT HAD SUCH AN AURA ABOUT IT FOR THE VOLUNTEERS? WAS THAT-

Hayden: I think the reason Mississippi had an aura for volunteers was that um, that's were we decided just let 'em come. I mean if we decided to let them come to Alabama, Alabama would have had an aura right? I mean they didn't know part, a lot, part, part of it was probably Bob, you know, I mean he was, he had a genius for facilitating events.

00:33:24:00

INTERVIEWER: WELL WHY DID THE MOVEMENT PICK MISSISSIPPI?

Hayden: well SNCC chose to work, to focus on Mississippi because we had a pretty good framework there. We had a coop—we had a cooperative working relationship with a number of other agencies that were working there and Bob was there, you know.

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S, LET'S CUT A SECOND.

[cut]

[sync tone]

00:33:56:00

INTERVIEWER: WHERE IS THE LEADERSHIP, WHAT, WHAT'S, WHAT ARE SOME OF THIS SORT OF VETERAN SNCC LEADERS FEELING AT THIS POINT IN TERMS OF FRUSTRATION AND BEING EXHAUSTED AND AFTER THE SUMMER'S OVER WHERE—

Hayden: Well, after the summer was over there was of course the question of what to do next. It was difficult to talk about what to do next 'cause the, the central office of SNCC was wanting some organization of all these people who were there ready to work. So there were a lot of debates about whether to talk about hierarchy and structure, talk about what to do next. We talked about hierarchy and structure and set one up and kind of never got to what to do next. And part of what had come out of the all that frustration of what to talk about and what to do, included in that was the frustration that a lot of black staff people had felt in working with unknowledgeable whites who were sort of actually a little bit in the way and who might have been threatening or who might have been dangerous to be with, so that a lot of, of, of feelings of hostility towards whites which were always there in the black community but had been subsumed and sort of uplifted by the nonviolent movement and the sense of spiritual superiority which the nonviolent movement and Dr. King embodied those feelings surfaced around a sense of, you know black movement, you know, black power developed around communities. And the convention challenge had a big impact on that of course too.

00:35:38:00

INTERVIEWER: HOW?

Hayden: Well we had been organizing all summer to send people to Atlantic City and they were legitimate delegations I mean people had risked their lives all summer all over Mississippi going to these caucuses in these little counties and getting turned away or beaten up or whatever happened and they were legitimate delegations, you know it wasn't just a show, they had actually done this and organized a party and gone there and gotten turned down. So it was like well if you won't let us in have your own, we'll do our own thing, you know. That made a big impact and—

INTERVIEWER: HOW DID THAT LEAVE YOU AS A, AS A WHITE PERSON? WHERE DID THAT LEAVE YOU AS AN [sic] WHITE ORGANIZER IN MISSISSIPPI THEN?

Hayden: Well, I went to Chicago the next summer, I sort of muddled about for a year figuring out what to do. And then I went to Chicago and worked with SDS on a local

organizing project organizing lower class women into a welfare recipients union.

INTERVIEWER: HOW DO YOU THINK, SPEAKING MORE BROADLY, HOW DO YOU, WHERE DO YOU THINK THAT WHOLE GROWING DEVELOPMENT OF BLACK POWER AND SORT OF THE SEPARATIST PART OF THINGS LEFT THE WHITES WHO HAD TAKEN PART THE SUMMER BEFORE AND, YOU KNOW, FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS PEOPLE LIKE BOB ZELLNER AND—

Hayden: Well, it was real hard for southern whites to quite know what to do next. I think most of us took a stab at white organizing of some kind. But for a while there we were all a part of a, a visionary community which really transcended race and really was integrated, which this country probably won't ever see again the way we experienced it. And it was, it was loss, you know, to have that community dissipate was a great loss from which many of us are just now recovering in my view. On the other hand that direction put people in touch with themselves. And the idea of organizing for themselves so it spun off toward anti-war organizing and women's movement organizing and so on.

00:37:49:00

INTERVIEWER: LET'S SEE. WERE THERE ANY, ANY KIND OF LIGHTER SIDES TO, TO ANY OF THIS?

Hayden: It was a lot of fun.

INTERVIEWER: I MEAN DO YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING THAT WAS REALLY JUST SILLY OR INVIGORATING OR JUST—

Hayden: It was all a lot of fun. I mean we were all out there doing whatever we thought up to do, you know. I mean, we were like totally self-directed people. Very few people have that experience, you know, people were giving us money to be out there, and that's where we were. It was great. We didn't have very much, but everything we had was shared and we were, you know it was patience, I think I said this to you earlier, it was patience and spirituality were the long suits of the southern black community. And we picked up on those and learned to be like that so that we'd have these massive staff meeting that would last for days and days, you know. And we'd sit around giving each other complete attention to these inane things that we'd come up with about what we should all do next or what was gonna happen in the culture or political theory just anything and we all had each other's complete attention. And it was, it was great, I mean it was great. There was a lot of love, you know, and a lot of fun, and we, we did a lot of partying and a lot of singing and we had access to you know those little black rural church meetings were probably about the highest thing happening on the continent. And there we were. I mean these people were marching, the energy that sent them marching was from somewhere else. And in a way, I think black power was tapping into that, I mean people wanted to know where that came from, I mean where did, you know, particularly I think black northern intellectuals wanted, wanted that, and it came from Africa. It came from somewhere else, and that was part of it, that was part of the black power thing came out of that I think. It was all a lot of fun we had great times. I

remember driving, you know, we used to, driving from Atlanta, we used to do a lot of back and forth, Atlanta to Jackson and with, either the blacks or the whites had to be under the blankets in the back seat of the car, you know on the floor, and whenever we'd stop for gas and it was like, it was, it was like a party to us, you know it was funny to us.

00:40:28:00

INTERVIEWER: OK LET'S CUT. GREAT, I THINK THAT'S IT.

[cut]

[end interview]

00:40:34:00

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