Interview with **C.T. Vivian**
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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.*

00:00:32:00

[camera roll 387]

[sound roll 4001]

[slate]

INTERVIEWER: I'M GONNA START—WE'RE GONNA START WITH NASHVILLE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK. FALSE START.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: AND MOST OF IT WILL BE ON NASHVILLE, OK?

C.T. Vivian: OK.

INTERVIEWER: SO, WE'RE GONNA FOCUS A LITTLE BIT AND—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE'RE ALL SET HERE.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND WE'RE ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER: WE'RE GONNA START THE SHOW WITH NASHVILLE, AS A

TOWN, AS A PLACE TO LIVE IN ‘59 AND ‘60 THAT WHOLE PERIOD. SO JUST A NOTE, IN A FEW SENTENCES, HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE NASHVILLE IN TERMS OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY? WHAT WAS IT LIKE AS A PLACE TO LIVE?

Vivian: Nashville was one of the better places to live in the South. One of the reasons for that is because of its colleges both black and white. And because the image that it tried to portray it saw itself as the Athens of the South and had a three-quarter replica of the Parthenon. It was one of the more cultured centers of the South. It had three black colleges, two of them colleges and one of them a medi-a medical school. It had quite famous colleges such as Vanderbilt and Peabody, so that, and a number of other colleges. It was also a center of religious publications for both black and white. There were three major black publishing houses in that city.

00:02:02:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET ME ASK YOU A QUESTION IN TERMS OF—YOU SAY NASHVILLE WAS A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, ESPECIALLY IN THE SOUTH—WHY—

Vivian: A better place.

INTERVIEWER: —WAS IT SORT OF A PROGRESSTVE TOWN COMPARED TO OTHER SOUTHERN CITIES IN TERMS OF RACE RELATIONS? NOW, WHY DID IT HAVE THAT IMAGE?

Vivian: It’s, it's because the—see, that's because, see, given—

INTERVIEWER: START WITH “NASHVILLE.”

Vivian: OK. See given what I was saying about its religious centers of publications now, right? You have to understand that because there you have a better chance of getting your religious intellectual. You had divinity schools there, all right? Black and white, all right? You begin to think about those who try to purify their religion and give it a, a greater realness. Then the Parthenon—

INTERVIEWER: BUT WHY DON'T YOU START AGAIN WITH “NASHVILLE” JUST AS A, A, JUST SO I CAN GET THE SENSE THAT WE'RE TALKING ABOUT NASHVILLE. JUST SAY—

Vivian: Oh, I see what you mean. You want me to just start over again then?

INTERVIEWER: PLEASE, JUST START AGAIN, JUST—BUT—IN BRIEFLY, JUST LIKE ONE OR TWO SENTECES.

Vivian: Well, I thought your question was, it was going to give that, but you just give me the

question and I'll just start over. It's very simple.

00:03:03:00

INTERVIEWER: SO, WHAT WAS NASHVILLE'S IMAGE AS A PLACE TO LIVE AMONG BLACKS?

Vivian: Black—it was one of the better places to live—

INTERVIEWER: START—

Vivian: —Nashville was one of the better places to live—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: THE WORD NASHVILLE.

INTERVIEWER: PARODN?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: THE WORD NASHVILLE.

Vivian: Yeah, that's what you want. I, I'm sorry. Ask the question again. We'll start again.

INTERVIEWER: OK, JUST IN TERMS OF COMPARED TO THE REST OF THE SOUTH, ESPECIALLY, HOW WAS—WHAT WAS NASHVILLE'S IMAGE AMONG BLACKS?

Vivian: Nashville as, during that entire period, was one of the better places for blacks to live in the South. You—it had a number of, of schools of higher education. Had two black colleges and a black medical school, Meharry Medical School [sic], which was—and it had a number of white colleges, Vanderbilt, Peabody, and a number of other smaller colleges. Another thing that Nashville had that made it stand out is that you had publishing houses in Nashville. Three major black ones and most of the major white ones. There were, I think, eleven to thirteen different religious publishing houses in that city. What you're saying, at that point, is that you have religious intellectuals not just your southern religionist who is really a, a racist though he totes hiss Bible, right? You're thinking about people who try to purify their religion and think above it. You're thinking about educators that are not simply concerned about the normal segregationist and racist policies of education through the South, but are more inclined, more inclined, not necessarily purist, but more inclined to want to see the full development of education of everyone, right? Now with these tendencies within Nashville community made it a better place to live. Now let's look at another part of that too. It's because the very image that the city tried to give to tourists and to itself was that it was the Athens of the South. There's a three-quarter replica of the Parthenon, right? They tried to set a tone far different than most cities. They tried to set a tone of, of cultivation and, and of being civilized human beings.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET ME STOP RIGHT THERE.

Vivian: The rest of the South didn't necessarily do so.

INTERVIEWER: OK. CUT FOR A SECOND.

[cut]

00:05:25:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: HIT IT.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: LET ME GET SETTLED HERE. I'M SETTLED.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO NASHVILLE LIKE, LIKE '50s, WHERE COULD THIS AVERAGE BLACK HOUSEWIFE NOT GO? WHAT WAS NASHVILLE LIKE? STARTING WITH THE WORD "NASHVILLE."

Vivian: Though Nashville had an image and though Nashville was better than most places, in some respects, in terms of average lifestyle it wasn't that much better than the rest of the South. For instance, going downtown, my wife couldn't go to a bathroom downtown. That limited how long you had to be downtown, right? Seek out a place. Try to go into some black area off the edge of town as quickly as you could. You could not eat downtown, right? Your children would be with you and the child would be hungry. You, you couldn't stop to, you know, you couldn't take your child in and have a hamburger or share something with the child. And you would have to drag your child along while the child was asking, you know, to eat or why can't I eat? Or—and this child sees other people in there eating. Working you couldn't be a clerk in a store, you had to be a janitor. You had to have a lesser position. There was no, there was no role for a black in the downtown area except as consumer and even then you had to wait for others, whites, to be served first in most cases, right? And that was considered the norm. And, in fact, it was, it seemed as though many people thought that, it was a privilege to allow you to be downtown in that sense. Those were the kinds of daily, everyday problems that created the atmosphere under which most lives were lived.

00:07:30:00

INTERVIEWER: GREAT OK, AND ONE MORE QUESTION—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: STILL ROLLING.

INTERVIEWER: —ON THAT. JIM CROW, A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING AT THIS HAVE NO IDEA WHAT IT IS, CAN YOU JUST BRIEFLY—HOW WOULD, HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE JIM CROW PRACTICES?

Vivian: Well, you see, Jim Crow was segregation itself. And it meant that the signs were up. It meant that you that you had to drink at a colored fountain, and colored water as often was

said. There were white fountains. It also delineated white life in another way. Jim Crow meant that everything was truly separated and that given that separation blacks found themselves always in a negative role, seeing themselves as negative being treated as negative, until they saw themselves negative. The victim began to even blame themselves for being a victim.

INTERVIEWR: OK. THANKS. LET'S CUT.

Vivian: That's not what you wanted?

[cut]

00:08:32:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'M GONNA SHIFT A LITTLE BIT HERE NOW TO MORE STRICTLY MOVEMENT STUFF AND IN ANSWER TO THIS QUESTION, I WANT YOU TO SAY, I KNOW—I WANT YOU TO SAY OUT THE WORD "SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE," SO I—

Vivian: [coughs] Well, in that case, I'll say, "Nashville Christian Leadership Confer…"

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Vivian: You, you see what I mean? First it was the Nashville Christian Leadership, which was a branch of—

INTERVIEWER: THE QUESTION WAS, THE QUESTION IS THOUGH, MORE LIKE: "WHERE—

Vivian: Oh. OK.

INTERVIEWER: —IN THE YEARS, SORT OF '56 TO '60, AFTER THE MONTGOMERY BOYCOTT—

Vivian: I'm with you.

INTERVIEWER: —UP TO '60.

Vivian: I'm with you.

INTERVIEWER: WHERE WAS THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE—

Vivian: Good.

INTERVIEWER: —IN TERMS OF WHAT, WHAT WERE, WHAT WAS THE STRATEGY THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH IN THAT PERIOD? I WANT A REAL GENERAL, YOU KNOW—

Vivian: Oh, good. I'll give it to you. I'll give it to you.

INTERVIEWER: —FEW SENTENCES.

Vivian: See, because this really has two parts. It's one that was a strategy that was not, not officially and rigidly formed—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, COULD WE START AGAIN. JUST USING "SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFE—" THE WORDS.

Vivian: Good, well, see I—I was, I was really just talking to you then. All right.

INTERVIEWER: AND I WANT TO HEAR—NO FORCING AT ALL. YOU'RE YOU.

Vivian: OK, all right. OK. I suppose that SCLC had two strategies: one before the formal one. The one to get the movement message out, to get the ideas out, to encourage others to, to participate. See, following Montgomery, you had Tallahassee. Now you had that before you had a formal SCLC, but it was an outgrowth of, of, of Montgomery and the people of Montgomery and the Montgomery Movement and the great leadership of Martin, right? Now, once in Tallahassee, Florida, once C.K. Steel started in Tallahassee, Florida, right. Then, immediately, C.K. told me one time, within the next six or eight weeks, eight to ten towns had begun some form of demonstration. Now, the second phase—

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY—

Vivian: OK. Now I don't know those towns—

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Vivian: —and I wish I did. In fact, now—the next phase, the second phase of that was when Martin decided to formalize SCLC. He brought together lea—the leadership of various movements across the South. In Nashville Kelly Miller Smith represented us, who was our president and was the pastor of First Baptist Church and the natural leader in our town. And had kept a group of ministers, several ministers together over a period when it seemed like there was no reason for doing so. [laughs] And, and that group became the original SCLC founders.

00:11:06:00

INTERVIEWER: BUT WHAT—JUST VERY SIMPLY, WHAT WERE THEY TRYING TO DO IF IT WASN'T SIT-INS YET? WHAT, WHAT—BETWEEN SAY ‘57 AND ‘60 IT WAS, WHAT WAS THE GENERAL—

Vivian: Well, the idea was to understand the power of nonviolent direct action as it had been proven in Montgomery. Now, how do, how do you keep that alive? How do you make it real? How do you encourage other places to move? See what I mean? Those were the first steps. And, and those were its goals. Understood Montgomery as the—

00:11:38:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: —spearhead of a great nonviolent movement that could begin to eradicate Ap—Apartheid—I'm glad it stopped. Segregation. It, it had just, it had—

00:11:51:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 388]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND YOU CAN KEEP ROLLING AND MARK. MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHY DON’T YOU JUST GO AHEAD WITH WHAT YOU’RE SAYING. WHEN MONTGOMERY DID WHAT?

Vivian: See what, what must be understood—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: SIR, I’M GONNA HAVE TO HAVE YOU START IT OVER. I’M SORRY.

Vivian: OK. Is that Montgomery was the, was the proof of a method and a victory of that method and—but nothing happened for about a year. Now it was in the air, it was buzzing. People said, great victory in Montgomery. What does that mean for us? What can we do? All right. But they were also saying, we don’t have Martin King. We don’t have colleges and universities surrounding us, all right? What does that mean? Then, then in Tallahassee, Florida C.K. Steel started a movement. Within weeks of that time, all right, there were eight or ten other movements across the country. C.K. told me because he got calls from them, all right. Then it was on its way. It was off and running now. Every place in the country figured

that they could move.

INTERVIEWER: SPECIFICALLY MOVE ON WHAT?

Vivian: All right, now—

INTERVIEWER: JUST BRIEFLY.

Vivian: —and, of course, the main thing to move on was that where the greatest indignities were felt and that was in public accommodations. And there is no greater indignity beyond the buses themselves, you see, where you had to go to the back and people would drive away without you, take your money or you could be arrested or, or et cetera, having to get up, all those things. But the next thing was the matter of the lunch counters, because you couldn't eat downtown. Your wife, your children, you, all right. You were always watching other people be able to appreciate the natural consequences of a democratic society and you were not able to participate. Your money meant nothing. So even though you earned it, what could you do? All right. You were always behind. The matter of the bathroom you could not go to. All these public accommodations was in the face of everyone as the thing that, that represented the indignities the deterioration of any sense of, of self-esteem and self—and it deteriorating [sic] to self-concept. Now—

INTERVIEWER: OK, THAT'S GREAT. LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: LOOK'S GREAT.

[cut]

00:14:03:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I NEED THE MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE ARE SET.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I'LL MOVE ON TO WORKSHOPS NOW. REMEMBER IN '59, '60. WE'RE RIGHT IN THE NASHVILLE—THIS NASHVILLE NOW. YOU SAID OVER THE PHONE IN THE INTERVIEW WHILE BACK THAT—SORT OF NOTHING REALLY, REALLY MOVED IN A BIG WAY TILL REVERNED LAWSON CAME TO TOWN. CAN YOU JUST START WITH THAT AND EXPLAIN THAT, JUST BRIEFLY.

Vivian: Sure. In Nashville our natural leader, the person who had held about five or six of us together, understood the nonviolent was Reverend Kelly Miller Smith pastor of First Baptist Church. But it was just holding us together. I had demonstrations in 1945, but I couldn't move anything in Nashville nor was I trying that hard. [laughs] I was just trying to hold onto my job as editor. Kelly Miller Smith was the natural leader with people and yet—and all he

could do was hold us together. What to do—how to do something was the problem. How to get underway. ***When Jim Lawson came to the city he began to organize students right. And, most important to that for both students and we who were ministers, was that we had workshops. And the workshops in nonviolence made the difference. We began to***, first, understand the theory, ***understand the philosophy behind it.*** The great religious imperatives that were important in terms of understanding people. Then, finally, ***the tactics.*** Then, finally, ***the techniques. How to, in fact, begin to take the blows.*** Cigarettes put out on you. The fact that you were being spit on ***and still, still respond with some sense of dignity*** and with a loving concept to what you were about. To be hit and to be knocked down and to understand that in terms of struggle and in terms of reaching conscience. In terms of, of gaining the greater goals for which you sought. Now, we actually done [sic] that, I mean, we actually beat people to the ground. We actually poured coffee on people. We actually did the various things to people. Kicked chairs out from under them, all right. Came on them in a crowded situation so that they could begin to get used to it. How did they respond? So they could begin to understand respond not in terms of verbage [sic], but in terms of actuality. You see, it is in the action that ethics is tested and this is one of the great learnings of nonviolent movement.

INTERVIEWER: OK. I'M GONNA START—WE'RE THERE—YOU WANNA CUT?

[cut]

00:16:44:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT I'M GONNA GET—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —START TO GO INTO NOW IS SOMETHING I'VE ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT LOOKING BACK ON THIS. HOW DID STUDENTS, AS STUDENTS, GET INVOLVED IN THE WORKSHOPS? DID JIM DECIDE ONE DAY HE'S GONNA INVOLVE STUDENTS? I MEAN PREVTOUSLY IT HAD BEEN MORE OF AN ADULT MOVEMENT. IT IS NOW '60s AND YOUNG PEOPLE ARE COMING TNTO THE WORKSHOPS. DID THEY COME ON THEIR OWN OR DID JIM LAWSON RECRUIT THEM OR—

Vivian: Well, the idea was to reach students and that became the most important single factor for, for moving ahead in Nashville. [coughs] We began to recruit students.

INTERVIEWER: WHOSE IDEA WAS THAT?

Vivian: The, the SCLC group. The six ministers with Jim Lawson. Jim Lawson had come in from F.O.R., Fellowship Organization for Reconciliation, was on their staff, regional director, came in and started working with us. The reason he came in, because of us and because it was a college town. He saw that very clearly. And all of us began to recruit students. So I had a, a very close relationship to American Baptist Theological Seminary

because I had been a student there and I was an editor at the publishing house at the National Baptist Convention Publishing House. So I was recruiting students at the, at the seminary. Jim was recruiting students at Fisk where he had a very close re—thing. Kelly Miller Smith, because of his ministerial thing, was working through doctors and other people in the city and working on places like Meharry and et cetera. Tennessee A&I, probably all of us were working on it, but person like Bernard Lafayette was indispensable in that.

00:18:18:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET ME, LET ME JUST BREAK IT DOWN A LITTLE BIT. PEOPLE LIKE DIANE AND JOHN LEWIS AND BERNARD LAFAYETTE, MENTIONING—STARTING WITH, WITH THEIR NAMES, WHAT, WHAT WERE THEY LIKE WHEN THEY FIRST CAME TO YOU AS STUDENTS? WHAT WERE THEY, WHAT WERE THEY LOOKING FOR WHEN THEY WALKED IN THESE WORKSHOPS?

Vivian: The idea was to find out what was the meaning of everything that was going on. What did it mean? How could it be made to work, all right? Nonviolent direct action. How—because that of course, is what they were recruited around the understandings of nonviolent direct action.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, BUT WHAT DO YOU THINK BROUGHT THEM TO YOU ALL?

Vivian: Oh, you see, I think it has to be seen that, that every black person, with rare exception, has one agenda and that's how to get rid of racism because that's the central problem of our lives. Now, if there is some means whereby that that can be done, then, let's take a look at it. Let's find out what's in it. How do you do it? Is it possible? Will it be effective? If so, how effective? All right? What do you have to do then? And those are the kinds of questions that we all wanted to answer. And if one could answer those in the positive it would probably—it would win many of us.

00:19:35:00

INTERVIEWER: BACK TO DIANE AND JOHN LEWIS AND BERNARD—

Vivian: Yeah. Well, they were—Diane was at Fisk University at the time.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, LET'S START AGAIN. GIVE ME, YOU'D BETTER GIVE ME COMPLETE NAMES.

Vivian: OK. For instance, Diane Nash was at Fisk University at the time. Had come in from Chicago was over-awed by what she saw in the, in, in the South. Could not believe that segregation was that bad, kept thinking in terms of it, so that she had a very acute sense of what to do about it, all right?

INTERVIEWER: AND JOHN LEWIS—

Vivian: And, and John Lewis had co—exactly the opposite from a Diane Nash. John Lewis had come in from a little town in the back woods of Alabama who had seen the racism in all of its forms and wanted to do something about it. You had a very articulate person on one hand, from a northern city, and a, and a person who was trying very hard to articulate all of his feelings and understandings, and the other coming out of the, some of the worst kinds of racism in the South. And then from a small city, a small town, but all of them with the one agenda, right? You would see a Jo-a Jim Bevel, right. Who was from both north and south and interesting, Cleveland, Mississippi and Cleveland, Ohio, all right? Now those were his two centers of concern. Had seen both sides of it. Had time to think it through and seen his brothers in, brothers in Cleveland, Ohio free from some of the segregation he knew in the South. Watched his father suffer under it right there, this fine mind, all of these people philosophically and theologically oriented. That has to be understood, you see what I mean? Who were looking for meaning—

INTERVIEWER: STOP. OK GREAT, LET'S CUT.

[cut]

00:21:15:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW—GIVE TO ME THE FIRST REACTION TO THE—HEARING ABOUT THE GREENSVILLE SIT-IN—THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS.

Vivian: We were in line already per—standing in line to be refused a lunch counter in a department store in Nashville when the news came. We began to call other people. We were already involved in a ten point nonviolent process for opening the lunch counters. When we heard that they had already moved we were astonished, but grateful, thankful. Wondered how they would work out as well as how we would work out.

INTERVIEWER: OK, GREAT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE'D BETTER—

INTERVIEWER: LET'S STOP.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: —CHANGE. THAT'S GREAT.

00:21:57:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: ‘Cause that’s a new question for me, you know what I mean, very truthfully. Probably, probably, if I had to pin it, it would be Jim. And, and the only way we’d really know is ask Jim. But, I mean, if Jim said yes I would go with that, see, because I know that he came in. I mean he chose Nashville as a place because we were already organizing.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Vivian: Right. But, knowing Jim, he’d probably also is figuring on the fact of the college student as well as just we as ministers in our congregations. You see what I mean?

INTERVIEWER 2: WAS THERE EVER A DISCUSSION ABOUT—

Vivian: —Kelly Miller Smith and he died last year, you see.

INTERVIEWER: HE DIED LAST YEAR?

Vivian: Yeah. Oh yeah, he just died. Died of cancer. Just last—about—in fact, it’s exactly a year ago. Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: OH MY GOSH. WE BETTER HAVE A LOT OF FOOTAGE OF HIM.

Vivian: Oh, in fact, Kelly is a great soul, boy. I mean a great soul and not a finer preacher ever walked.

INTERVIEWER: REALLY?

Vivian: In terms of just fine preaching. I don’t mean, I don’t mean, I don’t mean Billy Graham. I mean just a fine preacher. And a great style, insight. You know what I mean?

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO I WANT YOU TO THINK BACK IN TERMS OF WHERE YOU WERE WHEN YOU BEGAN TO DO THE SIT-INS—

00:23:12:00

[cut]

INTERVIEWER: —IN MID FEBRUARY, 1960.

[slate]

[change to camera roll 389]

INTERVIEWER: —HOW DID ACTUALLY CARRYING THEM OUT SUCCESSFULLY THE FIRST WEEK CHANGE THE WHOLE, MOVEMENT?

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: THAT FIRST ACTION I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME A LITTLE FEELING LIKE YOU'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT IT FOR A LONG TIME AND PLANNING AND PREPARING THE DISCIPLINE. NOW YOU'VE GONE OUT AND FOR OVER A WEEK IT'S HAPPENED. SO TELL ME WHAT EFFECT THE ACTUAL SIT-INS HAD THE FIRST WEEK?

Vivian: [coughs] We had been working, planning, had our workshops, had recruited a number of students. Those students were going back into their dormitories, the ministers were going into their churches. Now, the thing that was important is as part of all that we began to have meetings with the merchants downtown. Perfect nonviolent movement, going through the process, all right? As we began to hear from them both negative and positively, we began to find within that group those who were adamant and who, who might not be under a different set of circumstances. And we began to then stand in to see where we'd be refused and because that's a part of it. You had to be refused. Now, as we were refused more and more people began to understand something can be done about this and something should be. Remember, this is all backed up by the movement that was going on everywhere the Montgomery experience, all right?

00:24:30:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU'VE HAD THE FIRST WEEK?

Vivian: Yeah. OK. Oh, we've had the first week? All right. And, and then, then as, as it exploded and they put people in jail that's when things really moved, right? Because people said—came forward to put up their houses as bail. A mass meeting started on a large scale. People flooded and filled the churches, whatever church we would be in, largely First Baptist, but any number of the others of those six ministers that were originally in things. And the movement was in full swing. The city made all the mistakes that people normally make in a nonviolent movement. They arrested Jim Lawson and didn't really have a reason for it and as Jim—as they were taking Jim out with his arm behind his back the sign at First Baptist said "Forgive them, Father." And they'd taken Jim out of a workshop that afternoon. The board said: "Forgive them Father." The news was carrying the message very, very clearly in terms of the pictures. They, they arrested our young people for demonstrating and then had them out in the snow shoveling and the day they went in they did not have coats on 'cause it was not cold enough. The next day or two when they had them out shoveling snow, they were without coats and the, and the city was angry. All of that fed into a movement. All the mistakes that were made.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT RIGHT THERE. HE SAID—

[cut]

00:25:59:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK I'M GONNA BACK UP JUST A TINY BIT. LIKE—

Vivian: Sure.

INTERVIEWER: —WHEN THE KIDS, THE STUDENTS FIRST GET ARRESTED. TWO, THREE SENTENCES: WHAT ABOUT THE WHOLE THING ABOUT GOING TO JAIL? I MEAN THESE ARE KIDS FROM GOODS HOME THEY'RE NOT, YOU KNOW, THERE'S A TREMENDOUS STIGMA, DANGER TO BE IN JAIL. WHAT WAS THE REACTION OF THE—FIRST THE STUDENTS BEING IN JAIL FOR THE FIRST TIME AND THEN THEIR PARENTS.

Vivian: In fact jail was quite a different thing for everyone. The idea of going to jail was itself difficult for many people to handle. For had it not always been used as the way to stop people from doing anything and—but we'd already interpreted, you see, jail as quite a different experience. Instead of being a stigma, it became a badge of courage. It became the means whereby that you could be liberated and free or that one had to pass through the jails into a Promised Land. That the society had to be turned upside down to be turned right side up. The new definition. Now, parents, of course, of these students, everywhere, had different reactions. Many of the parents were afraid. Many of the parents thought that their children's lives would be destroyed forever because of what would be on their record. Many telephone calls were coming from everywhere. Pressure was on, on the colleges, in particular, on, on the presidents and the vice-presidents and staff and et cetera. There was pressure everywhere. But students made up their minds what they were going to do. It was a great point of their own development and decision-making for their lives. Now once we began to win it all the parents were really happy and thankful that their children were involved. Now a few children were taken out of school and brought home. There's no doubt about that either, but that was such a small group.

INTERVIEWER: OK, GREAT, CUT.

[cut]

00:28:00:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: I WANT TO GO BACK A LITTLE BIT, JUST S0—THAT SORT OF

FIRST, FIRST WEEK OF ACTUALLY DOING THE SIT-INS ONE REPORTER OF THE TENNESSEEN DESCRIBED THE SCENE AT WOOLWORTHS AS A SLOW, BUILDUP OF HATE BY THE CROWD AT HEADQUARTERS. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE OPPOSTTION OF THE SIT-INS RIGHT IN THOSE LUNCH COUNTERS?

Vivian: Sure. The students were prepared in Nashville to go in and sit-in the lunch counters. They came down the street grouped together. They came in. They waited in line for their chance to sit at the counters. They began to sit on the counters. As they began to sit on the counters. People began to leave or stiffen. Occasionally, someone would smile because they, you know, they really were shocked but, but thankful. You had all of this, but by-and-large it was a buildup of the opposition. A buildup of, of, of disdain, but not knowing what to do. And the normal southern thing was simply to attack, right. It was to beat any black. And more and more blacks came in and sat down at the counters. The waitress, waitresses didn't know what to do. The management didn't know what to do. They eventually closed the lunch counters, at first. Trying to avoid it. We came back day after day, but then the opposition began to get ready for us too. The young thuggies [sic] types in town, the Klan types in the city, all right, began to also come into the lunch counters where we would be and, then, that's when our training proved to be most helpful. Because they began to attack. Put out cigarettes on people. Jerk people off of, off of, off of their stools and beat them and et cetera. Pour things on people, right? Our students were ready and they sat there and they were prepared for it. Of course, that brought on the police when we were not defeated by it. Then the police came in, naturally, the police were on the other side.

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

[cut]

00:30:09:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

INTEVRIEWER: OK—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND IT’S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER: —WE, WE LEFT OFF WITH THE POLICE BEING BROUGHT INTO THE SIT-IN
THING. GIVE ME—STARTING FROM THAT POINT WHEN THE POLTCE GET INVOLVED IN THE SIT-TNS, WHICH IS AFTER ALL A COUPLE WEEKS INTO THE THING, HOW DID THE POLICE REACT, AND THEN, HOW DID THE CTTY AND THE STORE OWNERS REACT TO THE SIT-INS?

Vivian: The, the police knew who they were working for. The police knew that they

represented the city. They represented the merchants. They represented the thugs more than they represented us. Yet, and here again is the importance of nonviolence, is that they were reached. They did not want to appear too demanding, too brutal. They wanted to stop us, but when we would not stop, then they had to begin to work on the thugs, because the thugs will bring out the worst of segregation in a racist society. That it even shames the people who are themselves racists and who keep the system going. And they were caught in that dilemma and they were waiting for their orders from the businessmen. The businessmen were caught, they did not quite know what to do. And they thought, however, that they could beat us down if the police and the thugs both moved on us, things would change. The police left. The way the police did it was by being passive and allow us to be beaten, right? And then they would come in at the end and push the others back and arrest us, right? So that it was the victim being arrested. And they figured that would stop it, but that only intensified it, because the whole city could see, black and white, but whites were passive though they didn't like it. Blacks, on the other hand, were not passive at all, but very active in relationship to what was happening. As a result, they came to our support and the mass meetings grew larger and larger. The support became more meaningful, more people came forward to mortgage their homes to pay for bail and, and et cetera.

00:32:22:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. CONTINUING ALONG WITH THAT THOUGHT. WHAT ABOUT THE CITY FATHERS? MOST—ALL OF WHOM EXCEPT FOR, I GUESS, LOOBY ON, ON THE COUNCIL ARE WHITE. WHAT'S THEIR REACTION, AS A BODY, TO THE SIT-INS?

Vivian: They see their image—the, the, the City Council itself, the city fathers themselves, see their image being destroyed. They don't quite know how to handle this. They have within their midst Attorney Looby, who was also president of NAACP, who was one of, probably, one of the only lawyers in Nashville regardless of color with a doctorate in law. Looby was a, a very forceful spokesman you had, however, also two or three other outstanding lawyers. The—when the cases came to court that's when our, our group of lawyers came to the front. And two or three others, besides Looby, were as outstanding and far—and very, very effective. Enicks. [sic] Attorney Enicks was very effective in delineating the problem in the cl—in the, in the Courtroom.

00:33:28:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT THE CITY FATHERS AS A WHOLE? HOW DID THEY REACT TO THE STT-IN?

Vivian: And, and, well, and see what they were doing was stan—the city fathers themselves had to see their relationship to the businessmen. Businessmen saw their relationship to profits. And, and, and the people, black people in that city, were beginning to respond all over, what to do. The boycotts start, right? So that—to force the businessmen to deal with the issue. And, and as one of the businessmen put it—says, nobody came downtown. Says blacks wouldn't come downtown, whites were afraid to come downtown, so the only people

downtown were green people and there weren't many of them, [laughs] all right? As a result, they began to lose money and they began to ask for a change.

00:34:15:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: Remember though, we were meeting with them. We were talking with them.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: JUST RAN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: STOP RIGHT THERE. OK.

Vivian: We were interpreting them, meeting with them, sharing with them, trying to get them to understand. You see, all the time.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT.

Vivian: Right? So it wasn't the matter that they were left in the vacuum. To think for themselves or react without our presence.

[sync tone]

Vivian: See.

INTERVIEWER: THEY WERE CONSTANTLY—

[sync tone]

Vivian: They were constantly negotiating with them, right.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE BASIS OF THE TRU—

00:34:43:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 390]

Vivian: —dynamic sort anyway. She's pretty endynamic [sic].

[sync tone]

Vivian: That's a great combination bar [sic]. [laughs]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK WE'RE, WE'RE THERE.

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'M GONNA ASK YOU ONE QUICK QUESTION JUST SORT OF AN IMPRESSION. WHEN YOU FIRST MET THIS BUNCH OF STUDENTS BACK IN THESE WORKSHOPS BEFORE THE SIT-INS REALLY BROKE OUT. WHAT WAS YOUR IMPRESSION OF, OF THEM AS A GROUP? WHAT WERE THEY LIKE? WHAT DID YOU THINK, YOU'RE, YOU'RE A MTNTSTER, YOU'RE OLDER THAN THEY ARE AT THAT POINT, WHAT DID YOU THTNK OF ALL THESE STUDENTS COMING IN?

Vivian: See, I was a minister and I was a little older and I was editing, but on the other hand, I had just been out of seminary two, two years myself, all right? So I had an immediate contact with student life. I was, in fact, really still related to the seminary in many ways. So that I was not separate from either, I was really right in the middle a relation—a relating to both, in fact—

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WERE THEY LIKE, THOUGH, AS A GROUP?

Vivian: As a group? Well, let me just give you reflections. One, a very curious group. The kind of people that would be committed if they were going to be. First impressions when I first saw them, right? People that there were no doubt about wanted to do something about the system of segregation and racism and would if they believed they could. Quick-thinkers, creative people all of them, all right? With rare exception and those helped modify the situation.

INTERVIEWER: STOP RIGHT HERE. OK.

00:36:26:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: IS THAT A CUT?

INTERVIEWER: OK. NO NOT A CUT, I WANT TO GO RIGHT NOW—JUMP AHEAD A LITTLE BIT TO THE EASTER BOYCOTT. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF, OF THE BOYCOTT AS A WHOLE? WAS IT JUST TO DESEGREGATE THOSE SIX STORES OR WAS IT JUST TO CLEAR SEGREGATION OUT OF ALL DOWNTOWN NASHVILLE OR—TALK ABOUT THE EASTER BOYCOTT.

Vivian***: We saw the Easter boycott as a chance to get over many ideas of nonviolence*** and to be most effective for the entire city ***and help create a reconciliation of all the forces in the city.*** Number one, we never really talked about boycott. With us it was an economic withdrawal. Theologically understood that those resources that God gave you could not be used to perpetuate an evil. So to put them in the hands of merchants who were perpetuating the evil of racism would be against God and a misuse of that which was given, number one.

Number two, it gave everyone a chance in that city, black and white, to show where they were in regard to our economic withdrawal and to our desire to be a full part of the city. It allowed, it stopped many people from buying. ***Easter was a most important time for buying. All blacks had to have a full brand new outfit at Easter no matter how poor you were, all right? You may start three months ahead of time paying for that Easter outfit and you may be paying for it for three months later.*** Now it sounds like a lot of money, but not then, right? Because the, the difference in white and black income was so great and the little money you had for extras was so great that you could be paying for six months. Just like at Christmas, again, it would be the same thing. Now Easter was a time, 'cause Easter was the time of the cross. Easter was the time of sacrifice. So we interpreted it that way, right? Easter was a time then that people found they did not need new suits, new clothes, new shoes, new anything. There was plenty of things. This one woman said, I looked in my closet and found I had fourteen pair of shoes, and I said, I am so glad for the movement 'cause I don't need to buy anything. All right? And I remember a number of men saying that for the first time they were solvent after Easter. That people began to understand and we began to put things in economic terms and Vivian Henderson, who was an economist at Fisk University at the time, would give weekly reports on what was happening downtown. It was destroying the economy downtown. What they'd counted on, they could no longer count on. Money they had spent for Easter, they could no longer count on getting back. Many of the places that overcharged blacks began to realize it wasn't going to work anymore. Everybody, then, in that city began to realize that there needed to be a reconciliation. The merchants, because of the money lost. People in that city because it was being interpreted in terms of the cross and it was a religious city with all those, publish [sic] houses and churches and et cetera. So that, so that everyone was affected from their base of values and that made the difference, you see. As—and as they were affected there, they began to interpret the movement not simply as, as, as a group of blacks who were dissatisfied, right? But in terms of the evil in the society and, and how badly fractured we were as a city and what could happen then in terms of a vision of the possibility of a true democratic city that could fulfill their understandings of the Athens of the South that was worthy of a Parthenon.

INTERVIEWER: OK, CUT.

[cut]

00:40:10:00

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: JUST ONE VERY BRIEF QUESTION ON THE BOYCOTT. A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY THE BOYCOTT GENERATED A LOT OF FEAR IN THE CITY THAT, YOU KNOW, THE MOVEMENT WAS REALLY CALLING THE SHOTS. HOW WOULD YOU RESPOND TO THAT?

Vivian: The demonstrations created, in many white people, a fear of what was possible if blacks united. The first time that had happened. Naturally, because of their own racism, they were afraid of anything that blacks did. Because they were oppressors, they were always

afraid of the oppressed, all right, which created a dynamic in the city. But you see, here's where nonviolence saves us again, because no matter what they said the oppressed were moving against the oppression with nothing in their hands with which to destroy, but something in their heart for a now relationship, right? So, because there was nothing in our hands they could not then react to us in the ways that the old South normally did. They either had to accept this new loving black man and woman or, in fact, reject themselves. Now, they were caught in that kind of dilemma. Black people, on the other hand, had found a method whereby they could rejoice and yet not have any attempt to destroy the other, but only open up the society fully to everyone.

00:41:40:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. LET ME MOVE ON TO SOMETITING SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT. WHAT ABOUT MEMBERS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY WHO CAME OVER TO YOUR SIDE?

Vivian: In, in fact, this was the winning thing. Now we have to see, is that, and I suppose its best symbolized. Those white persons who began to come to us. The first ones were rudely and badly treated. Then those in power began to come our way. The best symbol of it is a white student from Peabody and Vanderbilt who came to our side, worked at one of the churches ‘cause he was a seminarian, right? And what happened to him is he was immediately taken away from being with students, placed back in a room to play films only. And when I say “students,” I meant he was working at any given church in the city. They wouldn't let him have contact with white stu—white parishioners anymore. Then he was completely pushed out. Out—

INTERVIEWER: TO WHITE SOCIETY?

Vivian: —of, of white society.

INTERVIEWER: I'M SORRY, COULD YOU GO BACK, JUST—

Vivian: Yes, I know what you mean. ‘Cause I did that poorly.

INTERVIEWER: JUST A LITTLE BIT.

Vivian: An excellent example of what I’m talking about is a person I remember very well, who marched in that first march with us to City Hall. He was a seminarian at Vanderbilt. He had his assignment at one of the local churches, one of the large southern Baptist churches in the city. They immediately took him away from any contact with white parishioners and with young white people, in particular, and had him showing films in a back room where he would not be seen, would have no contact, and then, eventually, he was dismissed and pushed out and pushed out away from any contact with the white community. Then, then you had others like a, a young man who joined us on the line picketing who was beaten by the thugs. Those who joined us, white, were particularly picked out for misuse. Because it was proof that this myth of solidarity was broken. That it was not a monolithic structure. That all white people

didn't, didn't hate black people. That we could live together and did here.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET ME JUST STOP RIGHT HERE.

Vivian: Yes, I know, ‘cause I'm really—

[cut]

00:44:03:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: AND MARK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: FULL START.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, ATTORNEY LOOBY’S HOUSE IS BOMBED. WHAT DID THE BOMBING OF HIS HOUSE MEAN TO BLACKS IN NASHVILLE AT THE TIME? NOT NECESSARILY MOVEMENT PEOPLE, BUT JUST THE WHOLE COMMUNITY? HOW DID THEY VIEW THE BOMBING?

Vivian: I suppose that because of everything that happened before, see, a movement builds. Because of everything that happened before everybody in that city was now united, all right?

INTERVIEWER: SO LET'S START AGAIN, LET'S TALK ABOUT THE BOMBING, SAY “BOMBING” THIS TIME.

Vivian: OK, sure. One morning we were—students and ministers who were leading the movement have—having a meeting at a Methodist church, Reverend Anderson's church right off of Fisk University campus. And we heard, we had heard this huge bomb blast before we came and we began to think through what that meant. And when we left we left deciding to have a demonstration because we felt as though, that the, that the bombing of, of Looby’s home could set off a great deal of violence in the city, on one hand. On the other hand, it should have reached the conscience of the city fathers and made them realize something had to be done in that city. It was, ***it was such an outrageous act that it would, that it would, it could be very useful to a nonviolent movement then to move, OK? It was a uniting of the city, but the outcome would be decided by how we, in fact, channeled that energy, right? And we then had the first major march of the movement***, OK? And, and—

00:45:49:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: —evidence is that we started at city limits—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I'M SORRY WE HAVE TO—

Vivian: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: HAVE TO RELOAD.

INTERVIEWER: WE GOT THAT WHOLE—

Vivian: Yes. In fact, march of the movement, and you could let it go at that, right. 'Cause you got that march of the movement in there didn't you?

00:46:00:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 391]

INTERVIEWER: I DON'T KNOW SOMEBODY WHO—IT'S BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT, BUT YOU DON'T HAVE A SENSE, OF—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —WAS THE SINGING EVERYWHERE ELSE—THEY'RE SINGING A DIFFERENT STYLE?

Vivian: Yeah, I'm with you.

INTERVIWER: SO, SO, REALLY, THE QUESTION IS—

Vivian: When it was what and when it wasn't what?

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT. DESCIBE THE MARCH THAT TOOK PLACE IN RESPONSE TO, TO THE BOMBING, A LOT OF PEOPLE SAID WAS A CRUCIAL TURNING POINTS—

Vivian: It was.

INTERVIEWER: —AND ALL WE HAVE IS PICTURES. SO DESCRIBE AS VIVIDLY AS YOU CAN, WHAT WAS THAT MARCH LIKE?

Vivian: The march in Nashville, Tennessee was a turning point of everything that we had worked toward and would, in fact, make the difference in all negotiations—

INTERVIEWER: SORRY, LET'S, LET'S JUST START OVER. RIGHT THERE.

Vivian: OK. The, the march in Nashville, Tennessee was, by the way, the first march of the movement ever and it was a turning point. It was what in many ways, we'd been leading to without knowing it. It was—it would decide a good deal of all the negotiations that followed it. We began at, at Tennessee A&I. For we had left the church where we'd been thinking that morning together and we scattered out all over the city, mainly to the schools, to talk to students, to put the messages on the loudspeaker system as Bernard Lafayette did so well at Tennessee A&I. And Tennessee A&I was the out reaches of the city. It was city limits. And it was on Jefferson, the main street of black, of black Nashville. And, and right after the lunch hour ***people began to gather.*** And we started the march there ***and we began to march down that street, and students came out from the lunch rooms, and they came out from being on, on the campus grounds and they joined. And they came out of buildings and dormitories*** along the way right there at the beginning and down the street we went. And, and that group of people who had been leaders of the movement were up front. So that everyone knew them and the symbols of them. They knew that this was serious and they joined. And we started down and by the time we got to what was a, a, a very important corner for everyone to gather people had begin [sic] to join us in small numbers. When we got to eighteenth and Jefferson, which is the corner it was called, that's when Fisk University students joined us. They were waiting and they fell right in behind with those that were there. When the, the, the next block was seventeenth and Jefferson and students from Pearl High School had walked over about four blocks and had come up because they, normally, cut across to Seventeenth Street and they joined in behind that. And the Pearl High School students were, were enthusiastic as everyone else, but there was a certain silence, a certain seriousness, but the camaraderie and the sense of purpose is what pervaded everything that was going on. And we marched down the street and pretty soon you could hear the feet, all right. And then that was taken over by cars coming and joining us along the way, as people came out of houses or people were in cars. And I remember seeing a, a man get out and join us and his wife drove the car on by. There were—and then cars began to join us as we came down, moving very slowly so they could be with us as we moved. ***We filled Jefferson Avenue. It's a long, long way down Jefferson.*** And the more, and, and, at first, there was—***after a while there was a certain bit of singing and as we came closer to town it was merely the silence of the feet.*** A good deal of, of—right off of downtown had been cleared away for urban renewal and that sort of thing and you could see across an expanse and here we came. And I remember what, ***one of the things that stood out in my mind as we walked by a place where there were workers out for the noon hour. White workers. And they had never seen anything like this. And here was all of four thousand people marching down the street and all you could hear was their feet as we silently moved. And the, and they didn't know what to do, and they moved back up against the wall and they simply stood up against the wall just looking. There was a fear there. There was an awe there. And they did not know what to do, but they knew that this was not to be stopped, this was not to be played with or to be joked with.*** And that sense pervaded everybody was there. We marched on and, and made a, a cross to City Hall and we started up the steps at City Hall and we gathered on a, a plaza in front of the building. It was very clear.

00:50:33:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 1: WAIT A SECOND. I GOT A LITTLE SHIFTY [sic] AROUND THIS AND THIS—OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER 2: "PLAZA."

Vivian: We gathered on the plaza in, in front of—was a part of City Hall itself. The Mayor knew now that he would have to speak to us. We all gathered there and the leadership came up front. People came up behind them. Kelly Miller Smith was there. Andrew White was there, who was one of the editors and one of our leaders in, in the movement among the ministers, ministers were there and students were there. People were gathered all out in front. There were some four thousand people there: the first march of the movement. It—we didn't know what it was going—how it was going to come out. The Mayor came down, he was standing there and then I gave him a short speech.

INTERVIEWER: WHAT'D YOU SAY?

Vivian: I don't remember the words now, and I, you know, the idea was that, we have come here before you, all right? We are outraged that this could happen in our city. We are tired of the fact that segregation and racism has ruled our lives. We do not think it's necessary, either.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: JUST—

Vivian: We do not feel its necessary either for us to live for this way or you to be oppressors of this sort. All right?

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID DIANE SAY?

Vivian: Then, then following, following that Diane read a statement. I do not remember the statement, but it was read. It was written out and she read it. It—but it was a challenge to the Mayor as to what he was going to do. And this was what we were doing: I laid out the situation, she challenged the Mayor, and the mayor—

00:52:08:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: STOP. I'VE GOT TO HAVE YOU SLIDE OUT A LITTLE BIT THIS WAY.

Vivian: Oh, OK, this way.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: KIND OF.

Vivian: Is that it?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: YES, THAT'S IT. YOU'RE GOOD.

Vivian: And, and the Mayor was listening. I remember very clearly that the Mayor, I felt, that the Mayor wanted to answer with the normal political talk. The question came: are you against the segregation? Are you for what is happening in this city?

INTERVIEWER: DIANE SAID THAT?

Vivian: Yes, those were the kinds of questions asked. He looked out across that expanse of four thousand people that had covered the street in front of the plaza as well as the plaza. He looks in the other direction and people in fact were still coming on the plaza and we did not know that at the time, all right?
And, and he said: no, no. I'm not for it. Right? I do not think that racism and segregation is right, or one or the other. I do not think racism is right, I think is what he said. And, and we, then, asked him the question: would he work to end it? You know, or words to the same effect. And he said, yes. That he would bri—and, and he did. And one—

INTERVIEWER: LET'S STOP RIGHT THERE. SORRY—

[cut]

00:53:17:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, THIS AND THAT—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —AND IF YOU COULD GIVE ME JUST MAYBE THREE, FOUR SENTENCES, NO MORE.

Vivian: OK.

INTERVIEWER: MOST SPECIFIC.

Vivian: On—

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID MAYOR BEN WEST'S STATEMENT MEAN AS FAR AS ACTUALLY SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF DESEGREGATING NASHVILLE? DID IT GIVE A LEAD TO THE CITY OR DID IT-WHAT WAS ITS WHOLE EFFECT ON THAT?

Vivian: I think by the, by the time that we had the march—the bombing and the march that by that time our nonviolence had reached the city. I think the merchants had been reached by the economic withdrawal as well as by our courage. I think people in that city were thinking and knew the fact that we were negotiating and talking with people made the difference. And when Ben West said that he would join that, at least, caused the city to think that the City Council were ready for some positive response that would allow them to make that move. When Ben West then worked with them, it gave the new initiative that was needed. And that

new initiative allowed City Council to make that move. And within a week, exactly a week to the day, every—all the lunch counters in that city were open.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OH GOOD.

00:54:23:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: WAS, WAS THE MARCH ALL BLACK, BLACK STUDENTS?

Vivian: No, but practically all, and there was very few white students. [coughs] The only white student I really remember is the one from Vanderbilt I was telling you about that, you know, the—that's the only one I really remember. There were probably, there were probably three or four others in there though.

INTERVIEWER: CAN YOU GIVE ME JUST MAYBE TWO, THREE SENTENCES ON—TO GIVE PEOPLE AN UNDERSTANDING THAT, WELL, I THINK WE CAN GO STRAIGHT TO SOMETHING ELSE THEN WE BACKTRACK. I WANT TO MOVE NOW JUST TO SNCC AS AN ORGANIZATION. AND I KNOW THIS IS, THIS IS SORT OF A DIFFICULT THING BECAUSE IT DIDN'T HAPPEN AT—

Vivian: Yeah.

INTERVIEWER: —THE DATE. BUT THE QUESTION IS, IS JUST HOW—

Vivian: Yes, yes, well it sort of did really, but I know what you're saying, if you put it that way, then I know what you mean.

INTERVIEWER: KNOW MORE ABOUT—

Vivian: Right. About the student, about the development. The student buildup.

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT. OK, ROLL ON IT. THE QUESTTON IS: HOW DID SNCC START TO—

00:55:22:00

[cut]

INTERVIEWER: —EVOLVE—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —FROM YOUR POINT OF VIEW AS A LEADER AND SCLC. HOW DID SNCC BEGIN TO DEVELOP AND WHEN? HOW DID THAT WORK?

Vivian: Students were an important force in the early movement. In fact, it was made up basically of those people who were not dependent upon white economic structures. Black ministers and black students, right? Now the students saw themselves as a very powerful force, the mass that was necessary and they were. Often time, they wanted to move in ways that we sort of modified because we felt the necessity of the overall movement moving. Some students felt a little difficult about—constrained by that. But that wasn't largely in Nashville that was lar-

INTERVIEWER: WHY DON'T YOU TELL ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT SNCC THOUGH? AS A DIFFERENT MOVEMENT, HOW DID—

Vivian: OK, but, OK, I'll try to get to that right quick though, all right? Now, well, let me put it another way for you. In Nashville, there was an excellent relationships [sic], but there was still that kind of feeling. Across the country, however, there were many places where ministers were not moving at all,
were not really organized. Students were doing it all and/or almost all of it and, and they were often catching a good amount of negative language from leaders both in civil rights organizations in various smaller towns and places, right. They felt the need to organize themselves and move that—so the movement in Raleigh, in Raleigh because of those that came to that meeting—

INTERVIEWER: WHAT MEETTNG?

Vivian: Oh—a meeting—oh sure. A meeting in Raleigh upon which the student movement students came to a meeting in Raleigh to begin to decide what they were going to do as students, right? Now, the—

INTERVIEWER: BUT YOU WEREN'T THERE.

Vivian: Yeah.

[cut]

00:57:21:00

INTERVIEWER: LET’S TALK A LITTLE BIT—WHEN, WHEN—

Vivian: Yeah, yeah. When he turns the camera this way.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: ALL RIGHT JUST ONE SECOND. LET HIM JUST FOCUS.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S GO.

Vivian: Students began to organize SNCC at the time that they felt that, number one, that they were being—their activity was being modified too much by adults that were leaders in various communities. And by the fact that they felt that they needed a movement of their own to think through and move as they wanted to move, all right? SCLC was very helpful in that. Dr. King at the meeting in Raleigh where they were organized, made it very clear that we were not going to stop them, it was a decision for them to make. Other people like Jim Lawson made the same kind of statement.

00:58:04:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: Students often looked to us because we'd been leaders, but they knew that they could move as they choose.

INTERVIEWER: OK, CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GO AHEAD.

INTERVIEWER: OK. FIRST QUESTION IS: A LOT OF PEOPLE SAY THAT THE PERIOD IN PARCHMAN, MISSISSIPPI—

00:58:17:00

[cut]

[slate]

[change to camera roll 392]

INTERVIWER: —IN JAIL KIND OF CONSOLIDATED THEM AS MEMBERS OF THE MOVEMENT AND I WANT YOU TO MENTION SPECIFIC, SNCC, OTHER PEOPLE—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —OLDER PEOPLE. HOW DID THEY DO THAT?

Vivian: Parchman Prison was a national action. In the fact that now we were challenging

states rights. We were challenging the laws across state lines and people came from all over the country and that's the first time people had come from all over the country into a major movement. The treatment, the atmosphere, the police, the nature of the prison all of that was proof to them of how negative everything was there. Parchman Prison, the guards were all so very poor and backwards and et cetera as well.

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'M GONNA CUT YOU RTGHT THERE. LET'S CUT.

[cut]

00:59:09:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND LET ME GET SETTLED HERE FOR ONE SECOND. OK, WE'RE SET.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO DESCRIBE THE FEELING.

Vivian: The feeling of people coming out of the jail was one of, of that they had triumphed. That they had achieved. That they were now ready. They could go back home. They could be a witness to a new understanding. Nonviolence is proven in their, in their respect. It had become a national movement and there was no doubt about it for common people in many places in the country. And there was a new sense of, of a new cadre of leaders.

INTERVIEWER: GREAT. CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GREAT.

INTERVIEWER: WONDERFUL.

[cut]

00:59:45:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARKER.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: SO THE FREEDOM RIDERS ARE NOW IN PARCHMAN. DON'T JUST GO INTO THE SONG JUST TELL ME A LITTLE BIT.

Vivian: It was the Freedom Rides in Parchman where we created new songs as well as sang freedom songs. The joy of the place was there as we sang. Guards and so forth did not

understand it. I remember making up songs one Sunday morning as we created our own, own Sunday service in jail. And "keep your eyes on the prize, hold on," was a song that had really—Guy Carawan had given us in Nashville. We brought to the prison. And in the prison like first century people, we made up songs. For instance, I stayed in jail, "it's the only thing that we did right is when we started in to fight, and the only thing that we did wrong, when we stayed in the wilderness a day too long." We made it up and sang it, all right? There was the singing of songs, but there was the making up of songs. There was a sense of creativity. A sense of joy, all right? [sings] "The only thing that we did wrong, we stayed in the wilderness a day too long." [resumes talking] I can't sing. All right? I can't do that at all, but the point is, and I'm no good at that but, but we made those up, all right? And we sang them among us. We created our own church services, all right?

INTERVIEWER: OK, I'M CUTTING.

Vivian: Yeah, that's—cause that's all you need—

01:01:06:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: —from that. You don't need—from another place and I can't think of the guy's name. But he was a minister right outside of Nashville. Who, who is—last time I heard was in the Bronx. Pastor in the Bronx. And he came back with "we stayed in the wilderness a day too long." All right, you know, it just, it just, it was all just so right, you know, and, and you could feel the excitement of it, you know. And it made me—it made many of us who were seminarians, I think, understand the history of the Acts because here was—where, why would the disciples sing in prison? What did they sing? Did they have any songs? [laughs] They made them up. The same as we were doing.

01:01:44:00

[cut]

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: GO.

Vivian: It was necessary—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WAIT ONE SECOND.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S GO.

Vivian: It was necessary to keep speaking back to Jim Clark because I was reaching his

questions. I was responding to his statements. It was a statement for people, black and white, to understand the meaning of what we were doing. We had a right to be there, we had a right to vote, and here was the evil force that was stopping that. It becomes very clear that we can never allow evil to destroy the forces of righteousness even when beaten down. I had to get back up because otherwise people would have been defeated by violence. We can never allow violence to be defeated by nonviolence. There can be no questions unanswered. The depth of the human consciousness must be probed.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET ME STOP IT RIGHT THERE. WHY DIDN'T YOU JUST GO BACK AND PRAY OR SOMETHING, I MEAN WHY DID YOU—

Vivian: Because it does not do that. You are engaged in—

INTERVIEWER: SPECIFICALLY AND GIVE ME THAT CONTEXT OF YOU AND JIM CLARK.

Vivian: OK, is that—

01:02:43:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

Vivian: —***with Jim Clark, it was a clear engagement between the forces of the movement and the forces of the structure that would destroy the movement. It was a clear engagement between those who wished the fullness of their personalities to be met and those that would destroy us physically and psychologically. You do not walk away from that. This is what movement meant. Movement meant that, finally, we were encountering on a mass scale the evil that had been destroying us on a mass scale. You do not walk away from that, you continue to answer it.***

01:03:13:00

[cut]

Vivian: It does not matter whether you are beaten that's a secondary matter. The only important thing is that you reach the conscience of those who are with you and of anyone watching, both the so-called enemy and those who are preparing the battle, and anyone else who may be watching.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT IT RIGHT THERE.

[cut]

01:03:32:00

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARK.

Vivian: You do not allow nonviolence to be destroyed by violence.

INTERVIEWER: OK, CUT.

[cut]

01:03:42:00

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: FOCUS FOR JUST A SECOND.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I'M ALL SET.

INTERVIEWER: OK, GO AHEAD.

Vivian: You do not let violence destroy nonviolence.

INTERVIEWER: OK, CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GOOD.

INTERVIEWER: THAT WAS—

[cut]

01:03:53:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: LET ME GET SETTLED IN HERE.

INTERVIEWER: GET SET.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WHEREVER. OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO GIVE ME THAT SHORT BIT ABOUT YOU'RE, YOU'RE

LEADING THAT MARCH.

Vivian: We had gathered then to, to protest. We'd gathered in Brown Chapel Church basement where the clergy gathered all the time. I was in charge of clergy during summer. And we organized our demonstration. Came up out of the basement, started down the street, and a normal we expected to—it—not to be stopped, or if at all stopped, we'd be stopped by Clark downtown. No sooner had we gotten out of the church good and we were stopped by Baker and a whole group of his posse who was across—of his of—not posse really, of his, of his regular policemen. And they were across the street and they wouldn't let us go. We tried to cut across the street and they would not let us do that. They, they hemmed us in and, and then that began the Selma Wall as we stopped there, because we were—the forces were meeting eye to eye. And, and we later called it "the Selma Wall."

01:05:04:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS THE VIGIL LIKE AT THE SELMA WALL?

Vivian: It was all night, it was in the rain. It was a day, it was a, a day after day. It was in the rain all night. People joined from all over, it be [burps] it became the place to be. I'm sorry. It became the place to be and because it became a symbol of the forces meeting each other eye to eye not in anger, but in an understanding. It was a way, a way to show the love and concern that we later see in the peace movement with flowers and the guns.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT.

[cut]

01:05:34:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: HOLD ON ONE SECOND, OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO WHAT WAS IT LIKE?

Vivian: One of the things that characterized Selma was what was called the Selma Wall. The Selma Wall was when people began to demonstrate. As they started downtown they were met by police forces and where they met was called the Wall. In fact, the police even put some wooden horses in between us at one point and we stood there across that line looking at each other, sharing with each other, talking with each other. The policemen hardly talked, but we were making our statements to them and trying to make them understand what we were doing. But that place became the Selma—we stayed in it night after night even in the rain we were at the Selma Wall.

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT THERE.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GOOD.

[cut]

01:06:20:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: ONE SECOND. OK.

Vivian: The agreement was made between the local leaders of Selma and SCLC. And then Martin came in on January the 2nd symbolic of Emancipation Proclamation Day. It was a celebration and in the midst of a tremendous speech Martin commits himself and SCLC to Selma until the end.

INTERVIEWER: CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GREAT.

INTERVIEWER: GREAT.

[cut]

01:06:53:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, MALCOLM IS—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AGAIN, AGAIN PLEASE.

INTERVIEWER: I'LL START THE QUESTION. WE WANT THREE, FOUR SENTENCES ONLY. JUST MALCOLM'S IMPACT ON PEOPLE—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I'M SORRY. ONE MORE MARK. HANG ON. ONE MORE.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —IN SELMA. AND WE'LL GET SETTLED HERE AND THEN.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK. OK.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Vivian: There was no great impact on the people of Selma by Malcolm. They hardly knew Malcolm in the first place and they felt they were the only ones doing anything and what they were doing through nonviolent direct action and the means they were using was getting results. They were passing bills in the legislature. They were creating the voting rights bill. They were changing the very nature of race relations, it was not being done in New York or Chicago and it was not being done through that kind of conversation.

INTERVIEWER: OK, CUT. THAT'S FINE.

[cut]

01:07:42:00

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: YEAH, THAT'S IT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: LET ME GET SETTLED.

INTERVIEWER: WE'VE GOT THE REST OF IT ALREADY.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK. WE'RE FINE.

INTERVIEWER: OK, READY TO GO?

Vivian: But what was remembered from Malcolm's visit was his conversation with Mrs. King where he clearly states that he wanted America to understand that there was another alternative. If they did not listen to the nonviolence of Martin King, there were other alternatives that the nation would have to face.

INTERVIEWER: CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GOOD.

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S FINE—

01:08:14:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: DO YOU WANT TO START THERE OR BACK UP A LITTLE?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: I THINK YOU NEED, AT MOST, A SENTENCE ON THE SETTING. JUST A GROUP OF YOU, YOU WERE ALL TOGETHER AT, AT A HOME IN SELMA.

Vivian: Sure.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK? AND I HATE TO TELL YOU THIS, BUT WE HAVE ABOUT THIRTY SECONDS IN WHICH TO DO THIS.

Vivian: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: AND THEN WE ARE, LITERALLY, OUT OF FILM.

INTERVIEWER: OK, SO JUST—YOU, YOU HAVE IT IN YOUR HEAD—

Vivian: Sure.

INTEVRIEWER: PRETTY WELL?

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: OK AND—

01:08:39:00

[cut]

INTERVIEWER: LET'S ROLL.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: WE'RE ROLLING AND MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: HOLD ON ONE SECOND. OK, IT'S ALL YOURS.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

Vivian: I remember very clearly when we heard LBJ give that famous speech. We were at the residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson—Dennis there. And ***we were all sitting around together and Martin was sitting in a chair looking toward the TV set,*** and when Mar-***, and when LBJ said, "And we shall overcome," we all cheered. And I looked over toward Martin, and Martin was very quietly sitting in the chair, and a tear ran down his cheek. It was a victory like none other. It was an affirmation of the movement.*** It was guaranteed us as much as anything could that we would vote and that millions of people in the South would have a chance to be involved in their own destiny. It was really the final breakup of

segregation and—as we knew it, in the old South.

01:09:39:00

[cut]

[wild audio]

INTERVIEWER: OK, LET'S CUT. GREAT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GREAT.

INTERVIEWER: LET'S CUT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER: GOOD.

Vivian: Yeah.

[cut]

[end of interview]

01:09:45:00