

Interview with **Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth**

November 7, 1985

Production Team: A

Camera Rolls: 538-545

Sound Rolls: 1517-1519

Interview gathered as part of *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*. Produced by Blackside, Inc. Housed at the Washington University Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection.

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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*.

00:00:02:00

[camera roll 538]

[sound roll 1517]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: OK, CALLIE, IT'S ALL YOURS.

00:00:11:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, REVEREND SHUTTLESWORTH, LET'S START OUT BY ASKING: WHEN DID YOU REALLY FEEL A PART OF A MOVEMENT, THAT THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE OUT THERE BIGGER THAN YOU, MORE THAN AN INDIVIDUAL?

Shuttlesworth: That's difficult to say when; you always feel as if you ought to be doing more than you're doing, particularly when conditions are wrong, I guess. I felt that way beginning in '54, '55. First the need to vote in Birmingham, Alabama was very crucial, and we were working with the civic clubs, trying to get ditches covered, lights in Negro areas—we call ourselves Negroes then—voting, getting our church people as well as our community people to vote.

00:00:59:00

INTERVIEWER: [unintelligible]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: YEAH.

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: FLAGS.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: OK, IT'S ALL YOURS.

00:01:12:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, WHY DON'T YOU PICK UP WHERE YOU LEFT OFF THERE, REVEREND SHUTTLESWORTH?

Shuttlesworth: In this way, I became known working with the communities and so forth. And in '54, I believe, the biggest thing blacks had at that time was Emancipation Day, and since I had become very active in Birmingham and Jefferson County and working with the civic groups and, and clubs, I addressed this NAACP Emancipation Day Progress. We had, as I recall, that's one of the biggest crowds at 16th Street Church. That's the church where the children were later bombed and killed. And, so I was elected NAACP Membership Chairman. And this was the position I was served in when the injunction was served on NAACP in Alabama. But we were trying to get Negro policemen, not to arrest whites, but just to police Negro areas. And whites at this time ran a lot of juke joints and dives in Negro areas. It was, it was a terrible situation. Black on black crime, white on black crime. It was, it was, it was a situation where you felt the need to do something. Then the Supreme Court decision came in 1954 and I remember that that was almost like getting religion again. I was, I walked by the Federal Courthouse there in Birmingham, on 5th Avenue, and I saw the US Supreme Court outlaw segregation, and I felt like now we have arrived. Now, you know, we're going to get somewhere. And most of us, I think felt, most blacks, thought that the time had come that we could be accepted in this main stream. It wasn't to be so. But I do know that, at that point, I think it instilled in people the will to do whatever was necessary in a right way, to go forward. I think the Supreme Court decision itself, as critical as that was, was one of the most crucial stepping points. In this, you must remember, the Supreme Court reversed its Dred Scott-, Dred Scott decision, and so that this decision was a projection forward. Of course, it started nullification and interposition and so forth and so on, and I think the biggest mistake was made there was that the court didn't really didn't take direct charge and go ahead and order desegregation, appoint a special master and set up the mechanics by which desegregation could've been accomplished without whites running out, without the South

having three or four years to organize legally every low road block against progress. And, so we find ourselves never reaching our goals because we don't really move. The master goes we say.

00:04:29:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME FOLLOW UP ON THE, THE 1954 DECISION. WHEN YOU FOUND OUT ABOUT IT, WERE THERE ANY MEETINGS PLANNED AROUND THAT, OR WAS IT JUST TOO MUCH OF A SURPRISE? I MEAN HOW DID IT, WHAT KIND OF IMPACT DID IT HAVE ON THE BIRMINGHAM COMMUNITY ITSELF?

Shuttlesworth: Well, I think it had an impact on the community all over. All over. It certainly gave those people who were, let's say, designed to have some leadership ability, or some intention of trying to move the people, a great impetus to move forward. And, and as I said, it, it sort of set a mark beyond which nobody could really say we're going back. Everybody was designed to move forward at this particular time.

00:05:17:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT EMMET TILL. THAT WAS ANOTHER FAMOUS CASE HAPPENING AROUND THAT AREA AT THAT TIME. DO YOU REMEMBER THAT, AND HOW DID THAT PERSONALLY AFFECT YOU?

Shuttlesworth: In a, here again, the fact that a young man could be killed, his young body floatin' in the river, was I guess, just set in concrete your determination to do something about it, and we took—

INTERVIEWER: COULD YOU DO ME FAVOR? START THAT AGAIN AND PUT EMMET TILL IN THE SENTENCE SO THAT PEOPLE KNOW, 'CAUSE REMEMBER THEY DON'T, THEY WON'T BE HEARING MY VOICE.

Shuttlesworth: The fact that people all over was concerned about progress, *and the fact that Emmet Till, a young black man could be found floating down the river in Mississippi, as indeed many had been done over the years, just set in concrete the determination of people to move forward. And I think, we said back there, that really only God, only the books in heaven can know how many Negroes have come up missing and dead and killed under the system in which we lived.* I think only God's book can show that. But it's, it, it set us forward on a move we couldn't go back from. We had to challenge.

00:06:39:00

INTERVIEWER: I WANT YOU TO, YOU WERE, STARTED AT IT, BUT I WANT YOU TO GIVE ME A LITTLE BIT MORE CONCISE, BRIEF WORD PICTURE, IF YOU MIGHT ABOUT WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE IN THE 1950'S FOR BLACK FOLKS PARTICULARLY. AND IF THERE'S SOME ANECDOTE THAT COMES TO MIND THAT MAY PARTICULARLY ILLUSTRATE THAT, THIS IS THE TIME.

Shuttlesworth: Well, you must remember that we were two societies. Blacks and whites couldn't play together, couldn't sit together, couldn't go down the street together. In 1948, in Birmingham, Alabama, United States Senator Glenn Taylor was arrested for sitting in a church, same church with the black children were killed in '63, with Negroes. Bull Connor was the epitome of segregation. And Bull Connor had a saying, blacks and whites are not going to segregate together. [laughs] A misnomer, but he said it. And even in the mass demonstrations he said, Birmingham may become a dead city; it will never become an integrated city. And when the—

[cut]

[wild sound]

Shuttlesworth: —massive struggle began and somebody went to him and said, now, Mr. Connor, this is a law-abiding country—

00:08:05:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: OK, HOLD ON.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: WE HAVE RUN OUT.

[cut]

[camera roll 539]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: WE'RE BACK.

00:08:17:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. I'M GOING TO LET YOU FINISH YOUR SENTENCE, AND I CAN'T REMEMBER QUITE WHERE YOU WERE AT—

Shuttlesworth: During the massive demonstrations, when somebody was saying to Mr. Connor, but this is a law abiding country. He said, damn the law. Down here, I'm the law. So that showed you the conditions we lived under. And of course you must remember that there were bombings between '36, I guess and, and '50 there'd been, it was, over 35 or 40

bombings in Birmingham, Alabama. We thought about changing the name to "Bombingham" instead of that. We always said that Birmingham's heart was hard and black like the coal is mined, hard as the ore and the steel is made. It was a magic city, but it was a tragic city. So many disadvantages that blacks had to put up with. Actually, they had not too many rights that whites had to respect. And to put a black in jail for no reason at all was nothing. Many charges were brought up. For instance, the police would, a white used to behave drunk or something around a bar or something and they'd beat him with billy clubs around the legs and send him home. Wouldn't even beat him over the head. But a black would be thrown in jail with multiple charges, and some of that still exists in the country now. So, it was an almost unthinkable situation, yet, we lived it and we survived under that. There had to be a change. There has had to be.

00:09:51:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT DID YOU THINK ABOUT THE IMPACT OF THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT?

Shuttlesworth: It was the first actual massive uprising. You must remember that there had been boycotts in, I believe Tallahassee, Florida, and Baton Rouge, Louisiana before Montgomery. But here in Montgomery, I say all the elements came together. There was the idea, there was a man, then there was God's power, and all these come together. And then it's time for a movement. There was Martin Luther King, a new young, a new man out of Boston University had come to pastor Dexter Avenue Church. There was a need, there was, from '54 up to now, the moving and musings in people's hearts, and so Montgomery protest sparked the opportunity for a movement wherein Negroes could rise up actively and challenge the system without violence. And I think one of the very important things that must be said here is that *Dr. King spoke with a new voice. Not only was it a new movement, but it was a new voice, that you must love, you must not hate. The people who hate, or who act like they hate you, you must, and the best thing to make out of your enemy is a friend. So, this was a, had a very profound effect upon not only blacks, but whites at this time.*

00:11:29:00

INTERVIEWER: THAT SAME IMPACT THAT IT HAD ON THE BLACKS IN MONTGOMERY, DID IT HAVE IN BIRMINGHAM? HOW DID THE BLACK COMMUNITY IN BIRMINGHAM RESPOND TO THAT BUS BOYCOTT?

Shuttlesworth: Well, you must remember that all the South was in, was against moving forward, basically. Even marginal areas like in Tennessee and some other places, there wasn't a whole lot going. But here was direct action, you must remember, this is the beginning of quote, direct action against segregation. In Birmingham, Bull Connor, as I said before was, Mr. Segregation himself. We said that Birmingham was only six inches less than thousand miles from South Africa. Johannesburg. We determined that the protests in Birmingham, in Montgomery, must have some counterparts in, in Birmingham. Now, I say God always has somebody to do. It's a man of faith that gets God's contract to do work. So there I was in Birmingham, and we are determined to move to assist in the Birmingham, in the

Montgomery protest. You must remember that our wires were tapped. Dr.—When I, they would arrest me in Birmingham. When we started protesting, and the wires were tapped, Dr. King sent his whole board up one day to talk to me. I was in jail and Bull Connor's people came out to my house threatening to arrest my wife and all of those. And whenever something would happen, people would call from New York, any place else. The call would come through the Birmingham Police Department. But we determined that since this is Klan country, all the Klansmen shouldn't be in Montgomery when the decision came down. We knew it was coming down. My secretary, Nelson Smith, and I were at the TV station when the tele—it came over the teletype. Here's how I guess I got into history, projecting the history, famous or otherwise, infamous. Whatever they call it. We determined that we had to, to, create a diversion in Birmingham, and since Birmingham was a tough city, we had to take some tough action. We decided that we would urge the City Fathers in Birmingham, which is the commission form of government then, three Commissioners, to rescind the laws in the light of the Supreme Court decision, which had not come down on the wire. That wasn't planned between Montgomery and us, that was just my decision, because the Negroes at this time followed me. You must remember that since I had been building up a lot of momentum and I was known all over. So that, we say that if you don't rescind the law, we're going to ride the buses anyway, which was an implied threat. They didn't do it. The Ku Klux Klan saw to it that I wouldn't be around to ride the buses. So we were going to ride the buses, I believe it was the night after Christmas, but on Christmas Night in '56, the Klan set about sixteen sticks of dynamite right at the head of my bed, the corner of the church, the corner of the house, and I was in the bed at the point of the blast. And this dynamite went off about 9:15. ***It blew the wall between my head and the dynamite away. It blew the floor out from under my bed, space of I guess, fifteen feet. The springs that I was lying on, we never found them.*** There I was lying on the mattress. I knew the relevance of Moses' statement when he said, underneath the, the everlasting arm. The roof came down, all that dust. The house was about 60 years old, dynamite dust and blast was, smoke, other things were there. This is a strange thing, I, I knew that the bomb was meant for me, I knew what it was, and instantaneously, at the same time I had a sense of presence that I wouldn't get hurt. I knew that. You can know something you never read. And I, I might say to you that, at that moment, all fear was taken from me. I never feared anything since that time. Might be interesting to note that before that bomb blast went off that night, I would not have gotten on a plane on the ground for a million dollars. And now I hate to be preaching, I hear a plane fly, I get up, ***'cause you got to understand that God is with you, that God can take care of you, and that this is God's way and you are there to do it. I think that's a sense of drive. That's what many people don't understand about what happened back in the Deep South. That, that here I am, that this is my duty. I've got to do something. And God is with me, and if God is with me, how can you lose leaning on everlasting arms?*** So this non-violent projection that Dr. King gave, which ought to be preached everywhere in churches, because that's religion, you know, helped us. I lived and walked out of that movement. ***I walked out from this instead of running away from the blast, running away from the Klan. I said to the Klansman police that came, he said, Reverend, if I were you, I'd get out of town as fast I could. I said, officer, you are not me. You go back and tell your Klan brethren that if God could keep me through this, then I'm here for the duration. I think that's what gave people the feeling that I wouldn't run, I didn't run, and that God had to be there.*** And I think that's what helped build the Birmingham movement.

00:17:33:00

INTERVIEWER: LET ME ASK YOU ABOUT WHEN THE SCLC WAS FORMED IN, IN 1957. WHY WAS IT FORMED AND, AND WHAT WAS ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE RECENT VICTORY IN MONTGOMERY WHEN THE SUPREME COURT RULED IN FAVOR OF THE BOYCOTTERS?

Shuttlesworth: Well, it's always good to have people who are doing a little something here, a little something there, a little something there to come together and coordinate in so far as possible what they're doing. For instance, SCLC was organized around the issue of just asking, not protesting, not rioting in the buses, but asking for bus desegregation. In the light of the fact that the US Supreme Court had already spoken. And in the light of the '54 decision, you see, *we thought that you could just shame America, so now, America, look at your promises, and look at how you're treating your poor Negro citizens. You ought to be ashamed of yourself. But, you know, segregation, you can't shame segregation, you can't—Rattlesnakes don't commit suicide. Ball teams don't strike themselves out. You got to put 'em out.* And I remember that we organized, I think the first conference, if I recall, was to redeem the soul of America. We thought you could just, you know, America's soul was good at heart. And all of our songs, “God Shed His Grace on Thee,” “Crown Thy Good with Brotherhood,” all of our—

[cut]

[wild audio]

Shuttlesworth: —songs, all of our slogans—brotherhood, justice, equality—lead to the idea that we are really a righteous, good country.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: WE'RE JUST ABOUT TO RUN OUT.

Shuttlesworth: OK.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: WE JUST RAN OUT.

[cut]

00:19:16:00

[camera roll 540]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: SOUND. MARK PLEASE.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: JUST WANT TO TAKE ONE QUICK ONE AND I'M OUT OF YOUR WAY.

[camera clicks]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: ALL RIGHT.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: IT'S ALL YOURS, CALLIE.

00:19:27:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE FINISHING—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: BETTER HAVE, YEAH, YOU BETTER HAVE HIM JUST FINISH WITH THE IDEA OF THE SOUL OF AMERICA BEING RIGHTEOUS.

00:19:32:00

INTERVIEWER: RIGHT. [laughs] THAT'S WHAT I WAS GETTING READY TO SAY, WHAT JOHN JUST SAID. YOU, I WANT YOU TO FINISH THAT UP BRIEFLY AND ALSO TELL ME WHY MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS CHOSEN AS, TO LEAD THE SCLC AT THAT TIME.

Shuttlesworth: Well, we were talking about the soul of America. We found out it wasn't righteous, and if it was to be made righteous, we had to bring people together from the different areas—Tallahassee, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, Montgomery, and some other places, very few other places. I believe there were ten states involved—and, and work on the south of America. Dr. King was chosen because he, more than anybody else, represented the spokesmanship. He was qualified, he was, he was the only black at that time, that had a Ph.D., and not only that, but the, the Montgomery protest had given him, had projected him into national prominence. And so, he was the man, more than that I think God had chosen him to be the spokesman for the movement.

00:20:40:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE IN MONTGOMERY DURING THE TIME OF THE BOYCOTT. CAN YOU DESCRIBE THE KIND OF COMMUNITY SPIRIT THAT WAS GOING ON, THE MASS MEETINGS, THE—

Shuttlesworth: Well, it was something new and, I believe—

00:20:50:00

INTERVIEWER: START AGAIN. WHAT WAS SOMETHING NEW?



Shuttlesworth: It was, it was, it was something new that you could stand up and challenge, that there was a possibility of victory. See, segregation had sort of painted walls like a prison. You can't get out. There's no help, there's no hope, and you just in forever. But here was something we could do: We could stay off the buses, you know, and we could hit the system, we could challenge what was killing us. And here was Dr. King's eloquence, his voice, his personality and, and, and, and, and I remember being at Holt Street that night when they first organized. You couldn't get to the church. And, naturally, my being from Birmingham, I had a chance to speak, and others had a chance to speak, and we pledged community support. I believe Lauer was there from Montgomery and many other people the night that they all organized. But Birmingham pledged its support and indeed we did try from Birmingham to give Montgomery Improvement Association any help we could.

00:21:53:00

INTERVIEWER: AND THAT NIGHT AT HOLT STREET BAPTIST CHURCH, WHAT WAS THAT LIKE?

Shuttlesworth: It was like an electrifying revival. Several people spoke, as I said, I spoke and many other people. But then Dr. King got up speaking about non-violence in his beautiful rhetoric that had become, was becoming and was, was to become the, the, the, the language of the movement. Non-violence, we must not hate, we must do this and that, but we can do something, and that to do nothing is a worse sin than to do wrong trying to do it. And so, it seemed to me that this was God speaking through Martin. And through the other voices of us who were projected into leadership.

00:22:40:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT MARTIN LUTHER KING'S ROLE AS LEADER OF THE MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION—THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT MOVEMENT, I'M SORRY—AND RALPH ABERNATHY'S ROLE AS WELL?

Shuttlesworth: Well, they were two bosom buddies, I think. We called them the twins, you know, later on they became, we became known as the Big Three of the Movement, because I had the Birmingham Movement. Martin and Ralph were in Mont-, Montgomery and they were so close and so eye to eye and did things together that Dr. King even designated Ralph as his heir apparent if anything happened to him. You know Ralph became President of the Movement after Dr. King's death, when really C.K. Steele, of Tallahassee, was to become. But Dr. King and Abernathy were so close, went through so much together, and they spoke as one and they were one in so far as we were concerned.

00:23:35:00

INTERVIEWER: AND THEIR ROLES, WHAT WERE THEIR SPECIFIC ROLES, THOUGH, IN THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT?

Shuttlesworth: Leadership. Inspiring people. And people followed, at that particular time, anybody that appeared to be going somewhere. At, at, at this time in history, blacks appeared to be seeing somewhere they should go, or could go. And here was Martin leading with his voice, with his own personality, willing to take the chances. And they rallied the people, and of course, the Montgomery boycott was a success. They had to do the mechanics, get the carpools and other things, but people from all over the country rendered aid and support because this was a first, first time this has ever been done in the history of the United States like this. Particularly with the non-violent aspect and point of view.

00:24:30:00

INTERVIEWER: OK. I WANT, DURING THIS, ABOUT THIS TIME, YOU MENTIONED JUST A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ALABAMA OUTLAWING THE NAACP AND TO TRY TO CONTROL OUTSIDE AGITATION. WHY DIDN'T IT WORK?

Shuttlesworth: Why didn't it work? Well, I wrote the principle of our movement and I said you can outlaw a movement, but you cannot outlaw the determination in people's minds and hearts to be free. I don't think you can do it. Then, now, anytime. You can keep a man in prison, but so long as you don't imprison his mind, you can't imprison his mind, he has to do that by accepting the walls, actual or imagined. And freedom is something that I think people will always aspire to. And when you tell people they can't have it, and this was a state in effect saying, you can't hope. You can't kill hope in people's minds, and therefore we were determined. So it was from this that the Alabama Christian Movement was organized. And maybe I should say it here. I was the NAACP Membership Chairman, and, I was holding, I remember a membership meeting when this sheriff, deputy sheriff came in with a roll of paper that looked like it roll out from half the room down to the floor, and he had a pistol with a shiny belt looked like it was the longest belt I'd ever seen. He said, you're outlawed, you can't do this, you can't do that. And, of course, I didn't accept it. And I told him, I doubt if you're going to make this stick. And he said, well, you're outlawed. I guess the thing that got me was that people started calling up. See, remember I was well known at this time, from all over, people saying what can we do, what can we do? Can we send things to New York? Well, we couldn't collect membership, we couldn't do anything. And the Board of People, NAACP Board, they were outlawed. Attorney Shores said, well, we really can't do anything, we're outlawed. I said, we're going to have to do something. He said, well, you'll be in contempt. I said, well, we have to be in contempt. He said, if you get in jail for contempt, you can't get out. I said, well then, somebody has to go to jail. And, meanwhile, people for [unintelligible] next three or four days, what can we do, what can we do? That, that's drummed into my consciousness and I remember on Friday morning, or Saturday morning, I believe it was, before June 5th because we called our first mass meeting on June 5th, I sat up in the bed three o'clock in the morning wide awake. That, that what shall we do was just drumming in my conscience. And it looked like to me God or something said to me, you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free. I knew then, instantaneously, it was God telling me I had to call a mass meeting and get people organized. So I decided that Saturday to call a mass meeting and ask the Negroes if they wanted to organize for freedom. I knew we'd be in contempt and I expected to get arrested. This was frightening. It hadn't been done in Alabama nor the South. Every radio program, TV program, every 15 minutes,

Reverend F.L. Shuttlesworth, 3191 North 29th Avenue, that's telling the Klan where to put the bomb. See, Birmingham is north and south. It's called a mass meeting, and this went on from Saturday until Tuesday. I might just say here that the pastor of the church, 16th Street Church at that time, was a famous preacher and he was nervous, too. So he called me and told him the Lord told him to tell me to call that meeting off. I wasn't quite as non-violent then as I am now. I, I said to him, well, Doctor, when did the Lord start sending my messages through you? Because I knew he was afraid. That was about 9 o'clock in the evening. But 11:30 that night, I recall it, there was my picture on TV, radio, everything was blaring out Reverend F.L. Shuttlesworth, Negro minister, 3191 North 29th Avenue, has called a mass meeting. And he called me back at the same time that was on, he said, well, I've been praying. The Lord told me to tell you he really wants you to call it off. I said, well, Doctor, I want to be respectful, but you go back and tell the Lord that I think he told me to call it on. And the only reason I'm going to call it off is he'll have to come down himself in person and tell me to call it off. He'll have to bring the identifying marks, his pierce in his side, nail prints in his hands. And so the meeting went on. That Tuesday night June 5th, you couldn't get to the church for blocks around. Negroes came with, oh, fervor, and I gave one of those rip-roaring speeches and they elected me president and from there we went on every Monday night and, and then many times every night during the week once we had things that happened. That's how the Birmingham movement got, people had somebody they could trust, and after the bomb blast went off—this is how I think that God crystallized the movement—and I didn't run away, I didn't back up. In fact, my board wanted me the next day after the bombing on December now, Christmas Eve night, Christmas night, *they said, we ought to stop and think this thing out. I said, there's nothing to think out. We said we're going to ride and we ride. We do what we say for a change. So we rode the buses and over 250 people got arrested, I guess and joined desegregated riding.*

00:30:09:00

INTERVIEWER: WOULD YOU TELL ME—

[cut]

[wild sound]

INTERVIEWER: —HOW YOU CAME UP WITH THE NAME, ACMHR?

Shuttlesworth: Yes, we were, we wanted to have for—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: WE'VE JUST RUN OUT.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

[cut]

00:30:20:00

[camera roll 541]

[sound roll 1518]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: HAVE FLAGS AND—

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: IT'S ALL YOURS, CALLIE.

00:30:29:00

INTERVIEWER: BRIEFLY, REVEREND SHUTTLESWORTH, HOW DID YOU COME UP WITH THE NAME ACHMR? [sic]

Shuttlesworth: Our board meant we wanted to be Christian, we expected to cover all of Alabama eventually at one time or another, and Reverend Alfred, who was pastor started the Baptist Church at which he met, I said it had to be called a movement, it had to be Christian. He said, well I suggest we call it the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. That's how the name came up.

00:30:56:00

INTERVIEWER: IN APRIL OF 1963, BIRMINGHAM HAD A NEW FORM OF GOVERNMENT, BOUTWELL HAD JUST WON, AND THERE WAS A LOT OF HOPE THAT MAYBE THINGS MIGHT CHANGE SINCE HE WAS CONSIDERED A MODERATE AT THAT TIME, BUT YET THE NEXT DAY—

Shuttlesworth: A lot of hope among whom?

INTERVIEWER: WELL, [laughs] AMONG, SOME HISTORIANS SUGGEST THERE WAS A LOT OF HOPE AMONG BLACKS—

Shuttlesworth: Yeah, not among blacks, no. The only difference between Bull Connor and Albert Boutwell was that Bull was a bellowing bull and Albert Boutwell might have been a crying, trembling bull. We didn't think that any system of government at that time, and I'm being honest with you, would, would do what we needed to do.

INTERVIEWER: SO THIS—

Shuttlesworth: It, to the outside it looked like it meant change, but to us it had been superficial.

00:31:36:00

INTERVIEWER: THAT'S WHY YOU DECIDED TO GO AHEAD WITH—

Shuttlesworth: We had to go ahead. Nothing else. We had already met the merchants and had made a tentative agreement and, that they were going to take the signs down and other things, and Bull Connor made them come back. So we, we were used to segregation. We were used to white people's promises. In fact, we said that the white man smiles like he means yes, but he really means hell no. So it didn't, didn't, we weren't upset about it. We didn't care who got elected. We knew we had to fight. I want to get that point, as Nixon says, crystal clear.

[laughs]

00:32:11:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU, YOU HAD A STRONG ORGANIZATION IN ALABAMA. WHY DID, WHY WAS THERE A NEED TO CALL IN KING AND SCLC?

Shuttlesworth: That's an interesting point. You must remember that we'd been fighting now for quite awhile. And the system always presents itself as if there's no hope, and if you win something here, it's made to appear to you as if you haven't won, so the victories were in fact, pyrrhic. You must remember that before King came to Birmingham, we'd been there seven years, we had desegregated terminal station, first case, the buses, many other things. I'd filed suits against Birmingham. Birmingham was suing me a lot and putting me in jail, but also I was suing them. Shuttlesworth vs. Birmingham got the park, but they closed the park. See, so the victories were pyrrhic. We decided, and SCLC needed something, and I said, Birmingham is where it's at gentlemen. You all must come to Birmingham and let's do this. ***Coming out of Albany, which was what many people considered not a victory. They needed a victory. Dr. King's image at this time was slightly on the wane because he had not projected. I say, I assure you if you come to Birmingham, this movement can not only gain prestige, but really shake the country,*** because if you win in Birmingham, as Birmingham go, so goes the nation. And, and I, we had threatened literally to fill the jails, we did it in Birmingham. Said, we'd come to Birmingham. So here's where the idea of confrontation came. Wyatt Walker can explain that, he's the director, the executive director. And so we came to Birmingham at my invitation, personal invitation and the board, because when I spoke, the board spoke. Basically they believed in me and we were together. And we invited Dr. King in Birmingham to confront segregation. Massively non-violent, with our bodies and our souls.

00:34:17:00

INTERVIEWER: IT SEEMS FROM WHAT YOU'VE JUST SAID THEN THAT THERE WAS NO CONFLICT IN THAT YOU UNDERSTOOD THAT SCLC WAS THERE FOR SOME NATIONAL GOALS THAT THEY WERE TRYING TO REACH, NATIONAL RECOGNITION, AND YOU WERE CONCERNED WITH LOCAL GOALS—

Shuttlesworth: Well, I wouldn't've done it just for, for, for SCLC to get a national goal. I said, projected SCLC into national prominence. I did it because it was right, because we had to do, we needed something more than we were doing. You must remember, we won victories but we couldn't cash in on them, we couldn't go to the park, whites nor blacks could go. Segregation was just as terrible on white folks as it was on us in one sense.

00:34:53:00

INTERVIEWER: WE HAVE HEARD FROM SOME OF HISTORIANS THAT ONLY 10% OF THE BLACK POPULATION IN BIRMINGHAM PARTICIPATED IN THE, IN THE MOVEMENT. THOUGH, ONE GETS THE IMPRESSION LOOKING AT FILMS THAT THERE WERE MANY MORE THAN THAT. TELL, TELL US WHAT, WHAT WAS THE REAL SITUATION.

Shuttlesworth: At one time, and at any time, there are always more people for right than will get into a movement to project right. We are sent to goodness, all of us. Very few people stand up for goodness. That's the tragedy of our generation. But when a movement gets on, catches on fire, so that it is winning, then everybody feels 'em trying to get into it. It did start off with very few people and, but when it got rolling, we had people who were in the middle class: doctor's wives, lawyer's wives, and others going to jail, school teachers, all, yes.

00:35:49:00

INTERVIEWER: THERE WAS NO, NO PROBLEM AT INTERESTING THE MIDDLE CLASS IN SUCH THAT WE'VE ALSO READ THAT THEY FELT THAT THERE WAS NOTHING TO BE GAINED AND A LOT FOR THEM TO LOSE.

Shuttlesworth: It's true that happened in, in Birmingham at first. You must remember I was a pariah and, many times, somebody to be avoided. They knew I was going on because of just my will and determination. And I was, I was friends with them, we never clashed, but so far as the middle class joining in at first, the answer is no.

00:36:21:00

INTERVIEWER: AND THE LOWER CLASS?

Shuttlesworth: Well, the lower class, Jesus said himself, the poor you have with you always. And some people think that means you keep 'em poor always, but not so. The job is to lift the burdens off the poor, and so the poor need a leader, they need a spokesman. Therefore I was, what the poor needed. And I had the people, basic people.

00:36:44:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT WAS A.G. GASTON'S ROLE IN THE BIRMINGHAM MOVEMENT?

Shuttlesworth: Well, A.G. Gaston had money, he had prestige as a successful business man. But then most people didn't have money. They respect him for what he had. And he cooperated with us to a degree, a great degree. I don't, if you're asking me did A.G. Gaston make the movement, the answer would be no. He cooperated with Dr. King and us and, I, at one time when I was bombed out, you must remember I was bombed out of my house from '56 till up in '57 when I had to go around and raise money, I stayed in a motel but we paid for that. During the massive demonstration, I think he put up some money to help bail people out. On one or two occasions he got me out, and, and then, and Dr. Abernathy and King. All that was paid by, he made some donations and contributions and I don't, I don't downgrade anybody's contribution, whether they were words or money or other things, because at this time there was a need for everybody to have some semblance of togetherness. And these times every little bit helps. We were friends, Gaston, I, we were friends then, we never were enemies. And there was one time, since we're talking about Gaston that I think when we pretty well had basically won a victory, the middle class people decided to speak up and wanted to take over and we just, had to meet with Gaston and have him rescind the statement, because we couldn't let the middle class take over because white people and middle class people have always talked. And the poor class just stayed back. But, it was settled and so I never had any animosity personally against Mr. Gaston. I think we have regarded each other to this day as friends.

00:38:39:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU HAVE TALKED ABOUT BULL CONNOR IN YOUR PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES WITH HIM. CAN YOU TELL ME WHAT HE LOOKED LIKE?

Shuttlesworth: He's a person that if you saw his picture on TV, he'd look much larger than he was. He was a low affair, I don't think he was as tall as I was and certainly not as thick as I was. He had one eye, he was rough. Bull Connor had a, kind of a rough, raspy voice. He used to announce ball games and, as I've said before, he thought that by talking loud and rough he could make people afraid of him. He thought he could hold back the sun. And many white people in Birmingham thought that. I never thought that. I thought he was a man and, that once light, darkness is challenged by light, the light is designed to overcome darkness. I always thought Bull Connor was more than a voice, more of a voice that frightened people, than he was a substance that kept people in the dark.

00:39:34:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT THE WHITE LEADERSHIP IN BIRMINGHAM? WAS THERE ANY, AS THEY WERE NEGOTIATING WITH, WITH THE LEADERS OF THE BIRMINGHAM MOVEMENT, WERE THERE ANY DIVISIONS AMONG THE WHITE LEADERSHIP ABOUT HOW THEY SHOULD RESPOND TO YOUR REQUESTS, YOUR DEMANDS?

Shuttlesworth: Well, I don't give credit, too much credit to the white leadership in Birmingham. Some people do, but I don't. First of all, I'd been working in Birmingham for seven years, as I said, before King got there. The only time I met the, quote, power structure

in Birmingham was when they got Gaston and Dr. Pitts of, of Miles College to, to get me to meet with them. So the leadership had never met the leadership. So we met and they made this compromised position. And that was on the second meeting 'cause on the first meeting, they met and told me what they couldn't do. I said, well, you're all wasting my time. I'm not here to waste time. I'm out trying to fight for freedom. Come back when you can talk and have something to offer. And that, and we came back the second day and they, they said, well, I, I can desegregate water. And I said, no, we have to have toilets now. Said, toilets not water alone. And Dr. Gaston and Pitts told 'em, said, well, you all been talking to me but you have to talk to Fred, Fred's the man with the soldiers. And he, they'll do what he tell 'ems. If you all can make an agreement and they, their purpose for meeting me, talking about leadership, we wanted to find out how we can keep Dr. King out of here. I said, well, at this time you got signs all over town, it's so nice to have you in Birmingham. We think King is nice and we'd like to have him in Birmingham. So you have to promise us something, to keep him out. Because we want him in. I said, we've already invited him in fact. So you come up with something. That's how they made this temporary agreement. And we told them if you violate it, Atlanta's just one hour flight from Birmingham, a 25 minute flight from Birmingham. So I don't give the leadership of Birmingham credit. It's not to take anything from them, they just wasn't doing it.

[cut]

[wild audio]

Shuttlesworth: Bull Connor had cowed the leadership.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: WE JUST RAN OUT.

[cut]

0041:33:00

[camera roll 542]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: OK, IT'S ALL YOURS.

00:41:44:00

INTERVIEWER: OK, ANDY YOUNG SAYS THAT MARTIN LUTHER KING NEVER REALLY ACCEPTED HIS ROLE AS LEADER IN THE MOVEMENT UNTIL BIRMINGHAM. DO YOU AGREE WITH THAT?



Shuttlesworth: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: WHY?

Shuttlesworth: Well, he didn't really want to be projected as, quote, the leader. And Martin downplayed that even to the end because he said everybody in a sense is a leader if you stand up for right and righteousness. But then, it's, it's, it's human mankind's system to have somebody be in front. But in Birmingham, I think it, it finally got into, it came into his consciousness that really, the lead, the, the, the, the movement has to have a spokesman. And, he, he felt as if he had to actually go into the same kinds of suffering that he was leading other people into. Going to jail, and, and doing other things. And, and to have the whole philosophy and action and projections bound together with himself as the leader. Of course, there were those of others who were just as committed as Martin was, but as I said, there is but one leader at one time, one main spokesman.

00:42:57:00

INTERVIEWER: DURING THIS TIME, AND BEFORE ACTUALLY IN ALBANY AS WELL, THERE WAS TENSION BUILDING BETWEEN SCLC AND SNCC WORKERS. I'M WONDERING IF YOU WERE OF THAT IN BIRMINGHAM AND WAS IT DETRIMENTAL?

Shuttlesworth: Well, the difference in Birmingham and other places can be summed up in one word. I think my own personality and the fact that people accepted me, totally, the, the common people I'm talking about, and others grudgingly, maybe. And really what I said went, so that, that, it was difficult for anyone to have challenged me. This is why I say I think Birmingham was destined to be the spot. I think God, designed for this. When I was, you must remember I been, I was mobbed two, three times, and there's a lot of history that you can't get just in one sitting, and I remember when I went to the hospital, after this mob, beaten over the head with chains and brass, doctor, doctor thought my skull was cracked. But I said, doctor, the Lord knew I lived in a hard town, so he gave me a hard skull.

00:44:04:00

INTERVIEWER: I'M GOING TO CUT YOU OFF HERE—

Shuttlesworth: Go ahead.

INTERVIEWER: —BECAUSE I WANT YOU TO ADDRESS SNCC AND SCLC.

Shuttlesworth: OK, OK, so SNCC, *well you must remember that, there's always some disagreement when it looks as if you're not getting what you're aiming at. And there are people who want victories, social victories that come quickly*, and these were younger people anyway, with some older people who were not students. And some philosophies which were not Dr. King's too also. It was almost like a good parent but he's got a smart

child, and that child differs with him on a lot of things. And it rose up more readily in Albany and other places. In Birmingham, it was also, it tried to rise, I remember particularly we were at the 16th Street South one day when Diane was saying that they, we had a, we had a movement prepared, and Diane openly said to me, well we think that SNCC oughta go ahead its own way. I said, I think you should too, but if so, you must get you a movement, you must not be in ours and take over ours. If so, then I'm going to announce at the press that you all designed this in order to destroy the legitimate, the legitimate movement. It, it came to suffer, but it was just, it just didn't work.

[door knock]

INTERVIEWER: [laughs] EXCUSE ME.

[cut]

00:45:23:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: MARK.

[sync tone]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: IT'S ALL YOURS, CALLIE.

00:45:35:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT YOUR CONVERSATION WITH DIANE NASH BEVEL. IF YOU COULD PICK IT UP FROM THERE.

Shuttlesworth: Well, there was a lot of undercurrent. I don't want you to get the impression that there was not. Because there were those who wanted to challenge Dr. King, and challenge the movement, but I said to them, you know, I have no objection if y'all want to have your thing, to do it your way, you organize. But in this movement, you know, we will lead. We will agree with you wherever possible, but we have to have the main projection. Our movement will be non-violent. Our movement will move on this way. And there was a lot of respect. Diane and others, they respected me a lot. They respected the suffering I had gone through. Many of them thought that Dr. King had not suffered as I much as I had, and that he ought to be challenged just as a voice without other parties suffering, you see? But my position was that you cannot have a multi-headed movement. And if you're going to be a part of it, you have to be a part of it. And it was a direct confrontation—Dr. King, Abernathy, all of them knew that we had it. She, she, I think she did well by coming to me and saying it because she got my position. And she knew that my position would be the position. Because I said to her I will have no opposition, that if you all create any diversion in the movement, under the guise of disagreeing with Dr. King, I will call a special press conference and say that I've said this to you, and that will put you in a situation. This wasn't to take anything from her except, as I say, to set the record straight.

00:47:13:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT ABOUT FEDERAL INTERVENTION? IT WAS VERY LATE IN BIRMINGHAM.

Shuttlesworth: Almost too late and almost too little. But the, the government always wanted to calm things down and, and, and, and, and we wanted to keep things at attention—create attention, Martin called it—in order to get people to address the problems. They had to do it because they knew that we were going to get killed if they didn't move in to protect us. They didn't protect us, as you can well see in some of 'em. Selma and Montgomery, the situation where there was white people got lost and all. But, and then as we learned later, how the CIA and FBI was, being some of our worst enemies. But, in the main federal presence helped a lot. I must say also had it not been for the media and the press, a lot more of us would've been killed. So, I don't think that we can give federal intervention 100% mark. They came because they had to, and they had to be there. And then, on the other hand, I have to say, that if it had not been the Kennedy's in the White House with the Kings and others on the street, America wouldn't be where it is today.

00:48:32:00

INTERVIEWER: ALL RIGHT, I HAVE A NUMBER OF PEOPLE I WANT TO ASK YOU ABOUT. AND THIS IS JUST REAL SHORT REACTIONS FROM YOU, AND YOU CAN TELL ME WHAT THEY LOOKED LIKE AND WHAT THEY WERE LIKE AS FAR AS YOU REMEMBER THEM AND IF YOU COULD BEGIN THE SENTENCE BY SAYING, BLAH BLAH WAS OR IS OR SO ON AND SO FORTH. DAVID VANN.

Shuttlesworth: David Van was one of the, quote, white liberals of Birmingham, and he worked with us in trying to get the government, formal government changed. I respected him for it, and of course, he respected me for what I was. I would give him a good mark.

00:49:05:00

INTERVIEWER: ANDY YOUNG, JUST AS A FOLLOW-UP TO THAT, TELLS US A STORY ABOUT SOME NEGOTIATIONS GOING ON, AND YOU WERE CUSSING AND HE WAS CRYING. DO YOU RECALL ANY INCIDENT LIKE THAT?

Shuttlesworth: I don't. David Vann was crying?

00:49:17:00

INTERVIEWER: THIS IS, THIS IS WHAT HE SAYS. THIS IS WHAT ANDY YOUNG SAYS.

Shuttlesworth: That might have been so. I didn't, I didn't, I don't know whether I was so impressed by a white man crying at that time. And Andy might have seen something that I didn't see because I was dealing with rock bottom ideas. Andy himself, was a person who

could, sometimes he'd be in a situation trying to negotiate and maybe you wouldn't know where he was coming out. I was always straight down the line.

00:49:52:00

INTERVIEWER: GEORGE WALLACE.

Shuttlesworth: I thought George Wallace was like a bantam rooster in a courtyard trying to show how brave he was. And of course, at that time you could get publicity by challenging the Federal Government. It, the effect of it was like a feisty dog barking at the sun trying to keep it from shining. Of course Wallace meant what he said to his situation. He was like Bull Connor trying to make segregation stay and go. But we knew that once the light shined into darkness, that darkness couldn't hold us back.

00:50:34:00

INTERVIEWER: JAMES ARMSTRONG.

Shuttlesworth: One of the sweetest and dearest people that I've ever met. Not only was he the first pers—

INTERVIEWER: JUST START IT AGAIN.

Shuttlesworth: James Armstrong was one of the sweetest and dearest people that I've ever met. Every time I went to jail, he went to jail to protect me. And he was the first to put his children in school, and even in the years that followed, everything about freedom, any sort of a movement or gathering, James Armstrong was there.

00:51:02:00

INTERVIEWER: SHERIFF MEL BAILEY.

Shuttlesworth: Sheriff Mel Bailey was a, just a nicer type of policeman, I guess, in the crisis of things. He didn't have a lot to say, he wasn't out front, and Bull Connor overshadowed him. And he was, I think happy to, to have Bull Connor out there in front of him.

00:51:24:00

INTERVIEWER: WYATT TEE WALKER.

Shuttlesworth: Wyatt Tee Walker, like myself, was an actionist. And he and I'd like to get together and reminisce that because we were actionists and because I had the Birmingham movement, which was SCLC at one time, and he was executive director, and we both saw eye to eye in so far as moving into things. We got a lot of things done that we wouldn't have had just by words and philosophy alone.

00:51:49:00

INTERVIEWER: JIM FOREMAN.

Shuttlesworth: Jim Foreman hated SNCC at the time, and I think he could, I think you have to give Jim Foreman credit for a lot of forward movement in SNCC, but when reactionary situation came about, I think Jim Foreman was in the forefront of that, as, and there, there was no question about what did we got for this? What did you get for getting hell beat out of you and so forth and so on. And of course they didn't say all that in our meetings, but behind the scenes and other things, I think he did a lot to cause the contrast between SNCC and SCLC.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: WE'RE ABOUT TO RUN OUT.

[cut]

00:52:33:00

[camera roll 543]

[slate]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: FLAGS. AND MARK.

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: [laughs]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: OK.

00:52:46:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU STARTED GIVING ME A LITTLE BIT ABOUT ANDY YOUNG. I WANT YOU TO JUST GIVE ME JUST A BRIEF STATEMENT ABOUT ANDY YOUNG.

Shuttlesworth: Andrew Young was the, quote, liaison man in any kind of a problem. He could almost be with every side in a struggle. I think he was, I'd classify him as a good person. I don't think at times that Andy Young was happy that I had the position I had, but I had the movement. But we've never had clashes to the point that I had to just come down on him against him. I think Andy Young was one of, was one of the great people of our time. And you had to have people back there to talk with people who were mad as if he was mad. But he really wasn't mad. I call him the great conciliator and emolifier [sic]. Dr. King needed him.

00:53:46:00

INTERVIEWER: AFTER THE 16TH STREET BOMBING WE HAVE HEARD THAT A LOT OF BLACKS GATHERED AMMUNITION AND GUNS TO FIGHT BACK. IS THAT TRUE?

Shuttlesworth: I heard that, and I'm sure that may be to some extent it was true, but I think teachings of Dr. King—It, it wouldn't have been done as a movement or as a part of the movement anyway. You know, you always have people who would like to do things other than what they are represented as being or doing, but it wouldn't have been the movement that would have been using guns as a movement, no.

00:54:21:00

INTERVIEWER: WHAT KEPT PEOPLE FROM USING GUNS IN BIRMINGHAM?

Shuttlesworth: Well, in the first place, we had been speaking against violence and against force and we tried to live that. You know, we, we even said in the, in the demonstrations, don't carry rocks, we collected knives and guns and we even said to people, I would say this especially, don't even carry a toothpick, you might scratch yourself and think somebody else did it. We tried to practice non-violence in action as well as in deed. There were times people wanted to fight, and people are people you must remember, but you have to drill into people that this is a movement, and it's amazing how much discipline people can exercise when they realize they must do it this way in order to gain an appointed end.

00:55:11:00

INTERVIEWER: MANY PEOPLE FEEL THAT THE BIRMINGHAM EFFORT JUST, AND HISTORIANS SAY THIS TOO, COULD NOT HAVE HAPPENED WITHOUT YOU. AND YET, WHEN YOU READ SOME OF THESE BOOKS AND YOU HEAR PEOPLE TALK ABOUT IT, YOU KNOW THE NAME THAT IS REMEMBERED IS KING AND IT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE FAIR. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT?

Shuttlesworth: Somehow or another, last night I was thinking about that. I'm happy to have been used by God, because I regard this as God's effort to deal with men. This was a divine interjection, or interference in human affairs. And God always has to use men, and in every situation there is a man. There was a Roosevelt for Roosevelt Age, and Truman wasn't Roosevelt, but after, but he made the decision to do certain things and history would regard him as a great president. There can't be but one person after whom an episode or a generation is named. Only God's name can go through all of it. And none of us can be God. This was King's day, and I'm happy to say that I thought King was the person to be it. I was happy to be used. And if I, indeed, thought that I never had any feeling of enmity, or at his personality projection. I've been happy to do what I worked to do. You know, to, that I, if I could be the neck or the shoulders, or whatever. And always, I spoke whatever I felt, wherever and whenever, even to this day. I've never felt harmed by King's personality or image. I thought we were all in the movement together. I was happy to have him be the leader and I can say,

as you say, had there not been a Shuttlesworth in Birmingham, King would not be in history today. But thanks be to God, all of us worked together with God to bring this thing about.

00:57:01:00

INTERVIEWER: I HAVE A QUESTION ABOUT THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON. AFTER BIRMINGHAM AND THAT TRIUMPH WENT ON TO A SUCCESSFUL VICTORY AND, ON, WITH THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON, DO YOU EXPECT SOME-, OR DID YOU EXPECT SOMETHING TANGIBLE TO COME OUT OF IT?

Shuttlesworth: Yes. Now that was one time that we had the vice president, everybody, highest echelons of government, we were being, quote, protected, we were being, the movement was the thing and everybody was getting into it and we really thought here again, America's soul was so good that we're gonna just come on, do better because we oughta do better. We didn't. And, and, and, and, and after the great march on Washington, King asked people to go back to your communities, and you must remember I said before, it was the hope of King that this would inspire other people, he said, now you can be a Martin Luther King, or Fred Shuttlesworth, or Abernathy if you stand up against freedom and organize in your community against freedom, against slavery and injustice and segregation. And so, I guess the need will always be there, and people will always have to be aroused, and it's only at special times in history that people will be aroused and make a massive movement, but the need is always there.

00:58:13:00

INTERVIEWER: THIS IS, WE'RE GOING TO SELMA NOW. WHY WAS SELMA CHOSEN AS THE SITE FOR A VOTING RIGHTS CAMPAIGN?

Shuttlesworth: In 1940, 1950—'48 and '50—I went to school in Selma. I pastored the First Baptist Church, two other, three other rural churches, two of the rural churches. And in that time, we had, I believe it was 72 black voters. We went back in '65, it had progressed downward. I believe we were 44 at that time and I was counting the black belt counties had none since the grandfather clause era. And after Birmingham, we thought that, that voting would be the key. So we moved into Selma. And here I should make a footnote in history because I think it should be there, it was my feeling that we should have gone into Selma right because without the vote, there is no hope. But I also thought that at that time, SCLC had the ability, the courage, the stature and everything to really desegregate the schools in the South. And I said to Ralph, if we must go to Selma—Ralph and King, Martin—if we must go to Selma and then come back to Birmingham, and that's literally, people will sign anything we send, all you had to do then was to sign for to send your child to a school, the whites couldn't run away. In the absence of the Supreme Court not appointing a special master to do it. But I think that if I, you didn't ask me this, but if I had anything that I would have done differently, it would've been school desegregation, so in fact the masses of children would've been together.

00:59:54:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU DIDN'T ANSWER THE QUESTION AS TO [laughs] WHY SELMA WAS CHOSEN AS—

Shuttlesworth: I said, because we thought that voting rights to vote was the thing. And that if we got the black belt voting, if we got people voting, not only in Alabama, but in the black belt, as Alabama would go in voting, so would go the nation.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: EXCUSE ME, WE'VE GOT—

[cut]

[wild sound]

01:00:14:00

INTERVIEWER: —THE END OF THE SELMA CAMPAIGN.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: FLAGS.

INTERVIEWER: —THE TENSION BETWEEN SC—THAT THINGS—

[sync tone]

INTERVIEWER: —WERE GOING TO CHANGE FOREVER AS FAR AS THE WHOLE TRADITIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WAS CONCERNED. THERE WOULD NO LONGER BE THAT COMING TOGETHER AS IT, AS IT WAS THERE.

Shuttlesworth: I was aware of this, and it was growing, and I think we came to the conclusion that we had, if, if we had to go our separate ways, we would still represent the movement wherein everybody could participate, including the SNCC people who had become quite distant at this time. And, and, and several times, even in the marches, they would try, they would want to sit down in the street when we were going on. And I was there. They respected the personalities of the movement. They really felt that we should be doing things differently, getting people jailed. At this particular time we, we had to go the way we were going. And I can't say that there wasn't a great deal of difference, but we had about mind, we had to go our separate ways, we would still be friends and together.

01:01:24:00

INTERVIEWER: YOU HAD A LOT OF OUTSTANDING MOMENTS DURING YOUR TIME SPENT IN THE MOVEMENT DURING '54 AND '65. WHAT'S YOUR ONE OUTSTANDING MOMENT OF THAT TIME?

Shuttlesworth: I doubt if I could answer that question. All of them were outstanding, in some way or another. I like to think of the moment I was struck with the fire hoses and I thought I



was dying for the 3rd or 4<sup>th</sup>, 5th time. And God seemed to speak to me and said, not yet. I wandered into the hospital and came out the next day and saved the movement by refusing to agree with Dr. King and President Kennedy and others that we ought to call the meetings off, because I knew if we didn't get a victory we wouldn't, if the merchants could ever come and say we didn't promise anything, all that work, all those three or four thousand people going to jail for nothing. I thought in, in, in retrospect, I think of that as one of the most glorious moments. There could be many.

01:02:22:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: LET'S CUT.

INTERVIEWER: OK.

[cut]

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #2: AND MARK.

[sync tone]

01:02:27:00

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: SO WHAT DID, WHAT DID WHITE PEOPLE IN BIRMINGHAM HAVE TO LOSE BY INTEGRATION?

Shuttlesworth: Well, they had to lose, first of all, their right to control blacks; to have everything and to keep it from, keep us from getting any of the benefits. I think they accommodated Bull Connor. They may have said they were afraid of him, but they weren't really afraid of him. Dr. King said it best when he said, power does not give itself up easily nor readily, readily. Even mostly for, quote, Christian principles. White people really had more to gain than they had to lose because when you free people and work together you can do more. They lost more than they gained by trying to hold us back.

CAMERA CREW MEMBER #1: GREAT. GOOD.

Shuttlesworth: I hope I was responsive.

INTERVIEWER: YES, YOU WERE VERY—

[cut]

[end of interview]

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