

**Julian Bond Oral History Project  
“The Making of Julian Bond, 1960-68”**

**Interview with Paul Delaney**

**Special Collections Division  
Bender University Library  
American University  
Washington, D.C.**

**2019**

## PREFACE

This interview is part of an oral history project entitled, "The Making of Julian Bond, 1960-1968." Unless otherwise indicated, the interviewer is Gregg Ivers, Professor of Government and Director, Julian Bond Oral History Project, American University.

The reader is encouraged to remember that this transcript is a near-verbatim transcription of a recorded interview. The transcript has been edited for minor changes in grammar, clarity and style. No alteration has been made to the conversation that took place.

Notes, where and when appropriate, have been added in [brackets] to clarify people, places, locations and context for the reader.

### **Biographical Note for Paul Delaney**

A native of Montgomery, Alabama, Paul Delaney came to Atlanta in 1959 to work for the *Atlanta Daily World*, the city's African American owned newspaper. Mr. Delaney spent a contentious year and a half with the *World*, leaving in December 1960 over the paper's reluctance to support the student uprising. Before resuming his career in journalism in 1963 to work for the *Dayton Daily News*, Mr. Delaney worked with student activists, writing stories for their newsletters and later, the *Atlanta Inquirer*, the newspaper founded to support the student movement. Mr. Delaney covered the 1960s civil rights movement for several publications before settling into a twenty three-year career with the *New York Times*. In 1978, he became a founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists. Mr. Delaney has also held positions and taught at several universities, including the journalism school at the University of Alabama, an institution he was not, in the 1950s, permitted to attend.

**Julian Bond Oral History Project  
“The Making of Julian Bond, 1960-68”  
American University**

**Paul Delaney (16-JBOHP)  
May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019  
Washington, D.C.**

**Lead Interviewer: Gregg Ivers  
Secondary Interviewers: Cameron Burns, Andrew Eversden  
Videographer: Cameron Burns  
Production Assistants: Lianna Bright, Colleen Vivaldi**

**Code: Gregg Ivers [GI] Andrew Eversden [AE] Paul Delaney [PD]**

GI: Today is Thursday, May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and we are on the campus of American University in Washington, D.C., to conduct an oral history interview with Mr. Paul Delaney for the Julian Bond Oral History Project, sponsored in part by the School of Public Affairs at American University. A video recording of this interview, as well as a transcript, will be available through the Special Collections Division of the Bender Library at American University. I am joined today by two outstanding American University undergraduates to assist with the interviewing and recording of this interview, Andrew Eversden and Cameron Burns.

Mr. Delaney, thank you so much for sitting down with us this afternoon to have this conversation. We appreciate you making time in your schedule for us.

PD: Sure. Thank you.

**ON BECOMING A JOURNALIST**

GI: Tell us about your background and what made you decide to become a journalist.

PD: I was born and raised in Montgomery, Alabama. I'm asked a lot, "How did you get interested in journalism?" I cannot point to a single inspiration other than I wanted to be a writer and, for some reason, I always wanted to be a writer. Where it came from, I don't know. I started writing and I started a paper in our high school. After graduating from [George Washington] Carver High in Montgomery, Alabama, I couldn't go to the University of Alabama or Auburn to major in journalism, so I majored I went to Alabama State for a year. In fact, the long name was, Alabama State College for Negroes. After a year there, fortunately, my father had gotten a job. He was a carpenter and got a job in Cleveland building the white suburbs around Cleveland. I went up after that first year to join him. For

a year or so I was not in school. I was drafted, which was the best thing that happened to me at that young age. I was drafted at twenty, and I went to the Army for two years.

GI: What years were these?

PD: 1953 to 1955. It was a great experience, terrific experience for two things. I had never fired a gun in my life. They gave me a rifle and training, and I was a perfect marksman, for some reason. I just had a sharp eye. Another thing I did I was, I was good at Morse Code. I used to listen to that stuff all day. "Be-beep, be-beep, be-beep, beep, beep!" They sent me to radio school and then they sent me to France. I spent most of my Army life in France, which was a great move. Fantastic! It introduced me to Europe, to France. I went to Spain for the first time. And it changed my entire life. When I came back out of the military, my entire family was in Cleveland by then. I entered Ohio State [University] majoring in journalism.

I worked on the school paper, *The Daily Lantern*. I became the sports editor in my senior year. In my senior year, looking for work, I wrote to fifty newspapers across the country, daily papers across the country. I spent most of my last quarter, actually, writing letters to these fifty papers. I heard from two – rejection letters from the *Charleston West Virginia Gazette* and the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. I took a job with the *Baltimore Afro-American*. It was disappointing to say the least. They put me on what was called the "national desk," which entailed five or six guys sitting around the desk. The editor would hand you a clipping or a bunch of clips from different papers across the country and then ask for six to ten paragraphs of rewrite to go in to the *Afro-American*.

I did that, but the worst thing I did was they had me making up letters to the editor! I found that horrible. The editor again said, "Give me three letters on this topic," and you'd sit there type up, "Dear Editor: That was a great job! That was a dynamite story you guys did on blah, blah, blah." I'd make up a name like Joe Schmo from Henderson, North Carolina.

This went on through the summer after I graduated. I couldn't take it anymore, so I quit. I went back to Cleveland, where I drove the cab for a year, from the late 1958 until the summer of 1959. In 1959, when I got a call from the *Atlanta Daily World*. C.A. Scott, the editor-publisher, asked if I was still interested in coming to Atlanta. Well, I had written the *World* in in all of my previous writings looking for a job. I never heard anything. Of course, I was interested! I packed my bags, my wife and month-old son and drove to Atlanta and started working for the *Atlanta Daily World*. This was in September 1959. We know it's history now that the civil rights movement started on February 1st, 1960. It was just my luck to be in Atlanta when the movement started.

## **ARRIVING AT THE ATLANTA DAILY WORLD**

GI: When you were in Baltimore, this is after the bus boycott, after Little Rock, was there any interest in your paper of those events?

PD: No. They covered it by using the wire services. They were not interested in pushing or promoting or giving any good publicity to the movement whatsoever. When I got to

Atlanta, another thing they had me doing was subbing for the editor and his mother on a committee in Atlanta. He was a part of a committee of black leaders, the top black leaders in town, consisting of a bunch of conservative guys. They would have a weekly lunch. A lot of times. C.A. Scott, the editor, couldn't attend the meeting nor his mother, so they were sending the lowest ranking reporter, the newest kid in town, which was me. I would go and meet with these guys. I'm the youngest thing, the newest thing in town, at these luncheons.

They consisted of talking about, mainly, for my purposes, on how, when the movement started, they would control the students, how they would keep the students from screwing up their thing. That is, they were the black leaders. They ran Atlanta and they didn't want any youngsters coming in and messing it up. That was how the meetings went. That was my introduction to the black establishment in Atlanta, which I wasn't impressed by. They were against the movement because the movement was a threat to their power. They, in fact, would sometimes tell the kids, "If you have any problems, bring them to me and I'll take it up with the white folks." That was their attitude. That was the tone of the meetings I went to.

GI: What was the response of C.A. Scott and some of the others to the Greensboro sit ins?

PD: Here's what happened. They saw this as a threat. In Atlanta, students were organizing. From February 1st, as the movement spread across the South, these guys, that weekly lunch meeting I went to, their calling was to prevent that from happening in Atlanta. They did everything they could to squelch it. They talked to their college presidents to keep a lid on it. "Don't let those kids demonstrate! We're not going to have that in Atlanta!" From February 1st through the end of March, the first demonstrations in Atlanta, it was just building up. The students' anxiety to get out there and get in the movement that had been tamped down by the [black] leaders finally broke through. They said, "We're going to march!"

Let me back up a little bit. They sent word that they were going to march and that they would expect that some of them would be arrested. They expected the adults in the room to bail us out because they knew they were going to get arrested. The elders said, "Don't do it." Finally, in late March, they did. They marched from [the Atlanta University Center] campus, about a thousand students, downtown.<sup>1</sup> They picketed Rich's, Davison's, [which were] the [most prestigious Atlanta] department stores, and the restaurants downtown. They demanded that they desegregate the lunch counters, that Rich's, for example, hire black clerks, etc. This was the beginning of it – it opened the gates to the [student] movement [in Atlanta]. This perpetual clash between the [black] establishment and the kids went on throughout the movement.

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<sup>1</sup>. The Atlanta University Center consisted of six private historically black colleges and universities: Morehouse, Spelman, Clark Atlanta, Morris Brown, Atlanta University and the Interdenominational Theological Center. The campus was the staging ground for the Atlanta student movement that began in spring 1960 and lasted for the next several years. In 2019, only Morehouse, Morehouse Medical School, Clark Atlanta and Spelman are members of the Atlanta University Consortium.

## COVERING THE ATLANTA STUDENT MOVEMENT

GI: When did you first begin to develop relationships with some of the students over at the Atlanta University Center?

PD: The movement would have been the main starting point. Because I was a journalist and they needed a form of communication, they asked me to help them put together their [demands]. There was a mimeographed sheet that served as a form of communication, updating and putting the word out about what they were doing. I knew some professors, Carl Holman at Clark [University] and some others, who were backing the students. Carl got me to help edit [their newsletters]. It put me in touch with the students and I helped them, as much as I could, put together the first mimeographed sheets. I also got to know the leaders because they were trying to understand why the *World* would not cover them or cover them adequately. I mean, I did. That first sit in downtown, the first demonstration in Atlanta, I covered that for the *World*. But here's what happened. I remember that perfectly. My lead was, "Atlanta University students marched on downtown. Some three thousand strong or so marched. They demanded blah, blah, blah."

Well, C.A. Scott would not print the demands. He said, "If we'd print printed those demands, our readers would think we supported those demands." I tried to tell him, "Mr. Scott, our readers know the difference between reporting events as they happen and editorializing." He would not print the demands. This happened every day. I would argue about my story. I'm covering the movement, but he would take out major, major portions of events that he did not want to print in the paper. We argued every day and eventually he fired me. But that was my introduction. I got to meet most of the student leaders by that method – by writing about it.

GI: Do you remember when you first met Lonnie King, Julian Bond and some of the other student leaders?

PD: Yes. I met them when I would go to their rallies, for example. I would cover them. The paper wouldn't print the stories of their rallies or their meetings that I was let into. The *World* had two reporters, me and John Britton.<sup>2</sup> The two of us had good relations with the students. They would let us into their meetings and into their rallies, even though they knew we couldn't write about them. I got to know all of them in that way. Even having "inside dope" the *World* was not going to print it. But the students did hold it against us. They knew that, as journalists, we wanted to write and print their versions. They knew who the culprit was [laughs]!

GI: Over at the Atlanta University Center, there's Julian Bond, there's Lonnie King, there's Ben Brown, there's Charles Black, Marian Wright, and many other people that you got to

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<sup>2</sup>. John Britton was a pioneering African American journalist who worked for the Atlanta Daily World in the early 1960s before moving to Jet magazine, where he worked for many years before moving on to public relations positions for private companies, including Motown Records, and government agencies.

know. What made those students become leaders? How did they emerge as the face and the voice of the student movements at that time?

PD: Ben Brown, for example, was president of the student body at Morris Brown. Charles might have been. He led something, I think. They were natural leaders and rose kind of naturally through the ranks as the top leader. Lonnie King, Julian Bond, they were excellent speakers and they could rally a crowd. They just kind of rose up, those students, Charles Black and the rest. Julian was a terrific speaker and writer, too. Carl Holman might have been the editor, but Julian was certainly one of the co-editors [of the *Atlanta Inquirer*]."

GI: How did the *Atlanta Inquirer* emerge as the alternative voice of the Atlanta student movement?

PD: Well, the student paper, at first, was a mimeographed sheet. It became a real paper . . .

GI: . . . *The Student Movement and You*. Does that make sense?

PD: Yep. I was called in when they wanted to make it, I guess, a real paper. I volunteered to help. Julian and a few others were there. Carl Holman ran the whole thing. Carl was the inspiration for it.

PD [To GI]: Did Lonnie ever mention the printer, the person who printed the actual paper in his basement?<sup>3</sup>

GI: Yes.

PD: Yeah, he printed the paper in his basement. He was in the background with him. Oh, the name is escaping me. He was an aspiring printer. And he did the work. He printed church programs, etc. He printed the first paper in his basement. We'd go over and put it together in his basement. Eventually, we came up with the name, *The Inquirer*. I think it was called the *Word*, then the *Student Word*. Then it became the *Inquirer*. Eventually, the *Inquirer* was taken over by professional money-makers, Jessie Hill and other folks. That's when it became really the paper to challenge the *Atlanta Daily World*. It was the alternative to the *World*. It began as a student paper, but it evolved and eventually was taken over by adults from the students.

John Britton was there. He was one of the first editors. I did it surreptitiously because I was still at the . . . in fact, by the time it became the *Inquirer* I had left the *World*. I had been fired. In fact, I was no longer with the *World*.

GI: How long were you there?

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<sup>3</sup>. Lonnie King, who was the chairman of the Atlanta student movement, was interviewed for this project (01-JBOHP). Mr. King passed away on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

PD: Two years. Then I was fired. That was my Christmas present [laughs]. We joke about that a lot. My Christmas gift of 1961 was being fired by C.A. Scott. A week before Christmas I was out of a job. I had been looking already because, as I mentioned, when I wrote stories, he would rip them apart. He would rip them apart. He wouldn't put in the salient points of the movement. We would argue every day. And I knew it was coming to a head. And I knew I was gonna get fired or I was going to quit. So he fired me first, a week before Christmas. I had been looking for a job, putting the word out and had applied at different places. It just so happened that a judge, Judge Luke Arnold, the chief judge of the municipal court was running for re-election and he needed the black vote. The court never had a black probation officer. And lo and behold, after they fired me, I got that job [laughs] as the first black probation officer at Municipal Court in Atlanta. I continued my work for the movement but again I had to do it surreptitiously. I would leave my day job at the court and go and help the students put out the paper.

GI: Did anybody ever get wind of what you were doing surreptitiously?

PD: No, they didn't.

GI: If they had they found out what you were doing what would have happened?

PD: I think they would have had an issue! They would have had a problem with it, I think [laughs]! No, they didn't find out. Not even P. Delano Lane tipped them off! I would leave my probation job and go and help the students put out the paper. As it became the *Inquirer*, go and write stories for the *Inquirer*.

GI: Why don't you tell us how you got the name, P. Delano Lane?

PD: My first major story for the paper, the *Inquirer*, the student paper, was the major story, Page 1. Julian Bond was editing it and I've turned it in. I'm at home the night before the edition came out. I got a call from Julian asking me how I wanted to be identified. What should my by-line be? And I told him, "Julian, look you're a smart student. You come up with something." The next morning when the paper came out, the name on the top the lead story was first "P. Delano Lane." I was shocked. I told him, I said, "Julian, you're supposed to be smarter than that. Good grief!" They laughed at it. No, my bosses at the court never caught on, not even with P. Delano Lane. Well, Julian Bond, whenever he talked to me, he would greet me as P. Delano Lane. Charlayne Hunter Gault to this day calls me P. Delano Lane. The only two people probably who would even remember that.

GI: It sounds like you have a much better sense of humor about it now than you did back then.

PD: You better believe it!

GI: How long did you work for the *Atlanta Daily World*?



PD: I worked for [C.A. Scott] for two years. I started in September 1959 and left at the end of 1960. So '59 and '60.

GI: So you were able to cover some of the more significant developments in the early stages of the Atlanta student movement?

PD: I covered some of them that the *World* didn't print [laughs].

GI: What were some of those events?

PD: At the beginning of the movement itself or the pre-movement, behind-the-scenes battles as the black establishment delayed the movement as long as they could. They did not want the youngsters to screw up their relationship with downtown, and so they put it off as long as they could. The movement started in Greensboro on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1960, and the kids on the campus in Atlanta wanted to march immediately as the movement spread throughout the South. The black establishment held them back as long as they could. Eventually, they could no longer prevent them from marching or demonstrating. The first one was around March 15th, 1960. That began the clash between the downtown and the black establishment, plus a clash between the youngsters and the older black establishment in Atlanta. I covered that.

Also, the sit in movement in Atlanta as it built and as it progressed. I covered SNCC when it first opened its headquarters in Atlanta, across the street from the *Atlanta Daily World*. It was directly across the street from the SCLC – King had moved [in 1960] the headquarters of SCLC from Montgomery to Atlanta. That was about three doors away from the *World* so we could walk right up the street and hobnob with all of the leaders, including King himself, and then walk across the street and talk to the students, the young kids. One of the first things that the kids did to show their antagonism toward the conservative leadership in Atlanta and also that they were not satisfied with King – the SCLC was not a militant organization, so the students felt – was to hang a portrait of King in the SNCC office so when you opened the door the first thing you saw was this big picture of King with a label, "De Lawd" [laughs]. There was always the clash between the younger students at SNCC and King.

I covered that. By then I was fired from the *World*. I didn't cover much of the activity, but I was in Atlanta. I was there as the movement built. Atlanta became the headquarters of the movement, with SNCC being located there. And the SCLC. The regional office of the NAACP was in Atlanta, on the west side of town. Atlanta was a hotbed of activity. Anybody who was anybody in the civil rights movement or wanted to be anybody had to come to Atlanta. Everybody came through and they came to those offices that were right near the *World*, and I got a chance to meet a meet a lot of them.

GI: 1960 is a very busy year. The student demonstrations break out in the Spring. In the Fall things pick back up. And then, of course there's Dr. King's arrest at Rich's in October of 1960 . . ."

PD: But leading up to that arrest here's what happened. When King was moving SCLC from Montgomery to Atlanta that weekly meeting I mentioned to you – the luncheon meeting. Joe's Back Room it was called, on Auburn Avenue. When it was first floated that King was thinking about moving its headquarters from Montgomery to Atlanta it sent shock waves to the establishment. One of the leading one of the members of that weekly luncheon that I went to was King's father, "Daddy" King.<sup>4</sup> They couldn't prevent junior from moving to Atlanta. They prevailed upon King Senior to, okay, if your son is going to come here, get him to agree that he will not come in here and take over the leadership. He will not come in and lead students in marches. Daddy King said, "Okay I'll do that." And he came back and said, okay, he's not going to lead any demonstrations in Atlanta. For quite a while, King did not lead a demonstration in Atlanta. That was because the local black leadership felt that he would destroy them. He lived up to it. But the pressure kept building and building.

I remember I was at a rally one night at Mount Moriah Baptist Church on Ashby Street. The students had been kept from demonstrating for weeks. This should have been in mid-March 1960. And at this rally the students were riled up! They wanted to march! They didn't want anybody telling them they couldn't. It was programmed that the speakers would try to tone them down. Okay, you can't march but blah, blah, blah, blah. And the students said, "No, no, no way." And the meeting that kept getting rowdier and rowdier. They finally had to call Dr. King to come and speak to them to calm them down. And he did. He came and made a terrific – as he usually did – speech, telling them we're going to overcome, etc. And that toned them down. They were ready to march the next day. But they didn't. They put it off until a few weeks later, two or three weeks later. That was the importance of King.

That was a major event. One other thing I remember that happened. One of the reasons that Lonnie King and C.A. Scott had this tremendous animosity between them is because The World had, for one its biggest advertising clients, was A&P [grocery store]. There was an A&P on around the corner, on Edgewater, I think, the next block over from [Auburn Avenue]. The students were going to picket it.

That was the biggest advertiser in The World, A&P. The students did picket. They threw a picket line around it, trying to get A&P to hire black workers, cashiers, clerks and that A&P wouldn't. So they threw a picket line around it. That presented a problem with C.A. At one point, C.A. Scott told his workers, all of his employees, to cross the picket line go and shop at that A&P. His family did and others. But John Britton, the reporter, and I and a few other stragglers refused to cross it to the picket line. That was another example of the fight between C.A. Scott and Lonnie King, that A&P battle. What else do I remember from. That was about as much as I covered because most of my activity after that, after I was fired, was when I was not covering [the movement] but when I was helping the students.

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<sup>4</sup>. Martin Luther King, Sr. (1897-1984) was a towering figure in Atlanta, pastoring the Ebenezer Baptist Church from 1931-1975, working closely with the NAACP as far back as the early 1930s on voter registration, equal pay for African American teachers and eliminating Jim Crow policies in public accommodations. Until Martin Jr.'s return to Atlanta in 1960 – in which he became co-pastor of Ebenezer – "Daddy" King was the city's most dominant African American public figure.

GI: Where is the *Atlanta Constitution* in all of this?

PD: The movement, and everybody from King on down – and John Lewis, even today – give credit to the success of the movement to the media at the time. Because Atlanta was Atlanta, because it was the headquarters, it attracted a lot of national media. I met a lot of folks who became friends later . . ."

GI: Such as?

PD: Bud Trillin – Calvin Trillin, who later went to the *New Yorker*. He lived in Atlanta. He was the Atlanta bureau chief for *Time* magazine at the time. We used to party together. Hal Gulliver – he was at the *Macon Telegraph* at first. He and Reg Murphy then came to the *Atlanta Constitution*. Doug Kiker of NBC. Sandy Vanocur of NBC. All of these folks covered the movement and came to Atlanta. We knew each other. We knew that there was a separation, but we would cover stuff together and then go drinking together at night. Bud Trillin used to have parties at his house and invite all of us in, integrated parties.

Another incident. Before I left Atlanta, I tried to get a job on the Atlanta paper. I was interviewed by Ralph McGill, who was the editor of the *Constitution*. He told me that they were just not ready to hire a Negro reporter. They just were not ready yet, so they wouldn't hire me. When I left Atlanta, all the papers were still all white. In 1963, I was approached by the *Dayton Daily News* which is owned by Cox. Cox owned the Atlanta Constitution. Instead of inviting me up to interview me in Dayton, they had the editors of the Atlanta paper interview me. When I walked into the newsroom to be interviewed for the Dayton paper, all my friends, the reporters, thought I was going to start working with them at the Atlanta paper, but no, I was being interviewed for the Dayton paper. The *Journal* or the *Constitution* finally hired their first black journalist – I don't know if you remember Harmon Perry. He was a photographer. But he could write, so they hired Harmon Perry. This was after a year or so after I left and moved to Dayton. They finally hired a black reporter a year later. But the journalists got along well – those who came to cover the movement and the local [reporters].

GI: Do you believe the *Constitution* and the *Journal*, those papers being white newspapers, were sympathetic to the movement, reported it straight, had an angle against it? Where do you think the local white media was coming from?

PD: The *Constitution*, edited by Ralph McGill, who was succeeded by Eugene Patterson, editorially it was much more sympathetic to the movement than the more conservative afternoon *Journal*. That's editorially. On the other hand, both were excellent papers. They had excellent journalists and they gave fair coverage, good coverage and much better coverage than the *Atlanta Daily World*, I might say. The papers themselves covered the movement as it happened then. They were generally fair in their coverage, again compared to the *Atlanta Daily World*.

The *World* had another mission, too. Remember C.A. and his family were part of the black establishment and they saw the movement. I mean, there was no question it was a threat to their legitimacy as leading the black community. The white establishment had faith that these guys could hold the line, not to let anything happen, not let this city be the victim of what was happening in the rest of the South. They had more to more at stake than just advertisers. They had their entire legitimacy at stake. It means that all that legitimacy fell as the movement became dominant and overwhelming.

## **ATLANTA AS THE CENTER OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

GI: What made Atlanta different from other cities as the movement was emerging in the early 1960s?

PD: Well, Atlanta leaders, white leaders – the power structure, movers and shakers – could see on the horizon that they could attract money to Atlanta. They knew that they needed to keep a clean image. The city could not, like Birmingham and Bull Connor, like New Orleans, like other cities in the South. Montgomery, another one. They wanted to keep the peace. They did not want the image of police rushing in with billy clubs beating up black people. They had begun to attract businesses from the North. It was becoming the headquarters, the regional headquarters for a lot of major corporations and they wanted to build on that. They also wanted professional sports to come to Atlanta and eventually it happened. Atlanta kept its reputation. It never became like the other cities in the South. Well, it worked. What they wanted to occur happened.

GI: To what extent do you think that King's presence in Atlanta required the white power structure to be a little bit less regressive in how it dealt with change? For example, when he won the Nobel Prize, that certainly put people in an uncomfortable position. Atlanta still sort of dealing with this in fits and starts and then Dr. King is recognized as a Nobel Prize winner.

PD: They didn't want King to come to Atlanta in the first place. They thought that he would rile up the youngsters and give Atlanta the image and the reputation that Atlanta did not want. I think that the Nobel Prize helped turn around the attitude of Atlanta. Remember the picture of King being arrested in Montgomery with his hand behind his back? Atlanta didn't want that to happen because they again they saw the bigger picture. They would not have their cops beat up students. They were very image conscious. That changed as King won the Nobel, as King's image became international. I think Atlanta's white establishment slowly came around.

GI: The image consciousness in your view was a huge factor in how Atlanta chose to manage the movement?

PD: Oh, absolutely. Atlanta did not want to have a bad reputation on race. It knew that if it was going to be the hub of corporate America, at least in the South, it could not handle demonstrators the way they were handled in Birmingham, Nashville, New Orleans and Montgomery. They were smart enough to know that [you] can't do that and become the city

that [they] wanted to become. They didn't let it happen – the police chief and the mayor at the time. It started with Hartsfield. Leading the establishment, they all knew that if Atlanta was going to become the city it wanted to be, they could not treat the movement as the other cities did. Atlanta didn't. They were very, very conscious of that throughout.

Politically, you could say that Atlanta was divided into threes. One third black; one third white, progressive liberal; and one third "Kluxer"-type led by Lester Maddox. The two-thirds, fortunately, the two progressive parts got together politically and ruled Atlanta. They kept the one-third at bay, the Lester Maddox's.<sup>5</sup> The two thirds knew that if we wanted them if we're gonna make an Atlanta into a mecca [for business] we can't let the one third [run things]. They kept the one-third at bay, politically, socially, etc. etc. They knew exactly what they were doing. And it worked.

GI: And yet, in 1965 when Julian Bond runs and wins a state legislative seat, he's not seated.

PD: The legislature is made up of all those segregationists from around the state, right.

GI: Where were you when that happened?

PD: I had moved to Dayton. I left Atlanta in 1963.

GI: You did know what was happening with Julian's race in 1965 . . .

PD: Yeah, I kept up with it. I remember.

GI: What's interesting here is, on the one hand, trying to portray Atlanta as a progressive city and then here's Julian Bond not being seated in the legislature because he opposed the Vietnam War. In your view was the legislature's decision not to seat him initially driven more by race or the fact that he had come out and opposed the Vietnam War or was it a combination?

PD: It was a combination, but race was definitely, I think, the bigger factor. In fact, I think the war was just a good excuse to cover the fact that race was the big factor. I think it was purely racial. The white legislators did not want him coming in. I felt it was race.

GI: Do you think this was a bit of a self-inflicted wound after trying to build this image of progressivism?

PD: I always separated Atlanta from the rest of the state. Atlanta was an island. In dealing with the politics, Atlanta was an island unto itself. It was just totally different from the rest

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<sup>5</sup>. Lester Maddox was a firm segregationist who was famous in Atlanta for refusing to desegregate his restaurant, The Pickrick, after passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination in public accommodations. Maddox became famous for chasing customers and demonstrators away with a pick ax. He was elected governor in 1966 and served one four-year term before being succeeded by Jimmy Carter. Carter, of course, ran for president and won in 1976.

of Georgia. The rest of Georgia was, seriously, it was like Birmingham, Montgomery, those places.

GI: Did you travel the state much?

PD: Oh, yeah. When they were trying to integrate the schools – the state was under serious pressure to integrate – they had the Sibley Commission. John Sibley was a banker in Atlanta. They had the Sibley Commission to go around the state. He held hearings around the state asking people about integrating the schools. I covered that. *The World* covered that. I went to those hearings around the state. It was only in Atlanta that the folks were going to totally accept integration. No other place in Georgia would. They were very against it. But the Sibley Commission was set up to delay the decision on integrating schools. And they found that only in Atlanta was there any sympathy for integrating schools. I traveled around the state in that regard with that commission.

GI: What was it like going back and forth between small town Georgia and then coming back to Atlanta?

PD: There was a difference between North and South Georgia. There was a hearing in Albany where the local officials were just fiercely against even thinking about integrating their schools. No, no, no, no, no! The final hearing was in Gainesville up north [of Atlanta]. The *Gainesville Times* was probably the most progressive paper outside of Atlanta in the state of Georgia. The attitude was totally different about integration. It was not as harsh as in South Georgia. The paper itself was moderate compared, for example, to the press and in South Georgia. There was a distinct difference between North and South Georgia in their attitude and in the testimony of the mostly local officials who would testify before the commission. County commissioners from South Georgia were against integration. There was an almost like night and day the difference between South Georgia and North Georgia regarding integration.

GI: So much of the opposition to Julian's election comes from the rural community, not necessarily within Atlanta?

PD: Oh, yeah. It was outside of Atlanta. I'm sure if you look back, most of the leaders of the opposition were probably from [outside] Atlanta. Maybe a couple of Atlantans who were against Julian but most of the opposition was from the rest of Georgia.

## **SHAPING THE NARRATIVE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

GI: How effective were the major civil rights organizations in shaping the narrative of the movement?

PD: As you can imagine these were these young college students who had never had any dealings with the press or with the media. They had no experience. It was by hit and miss. For the most part, those who spoke on behalf of the movement just kind of emerged out of

the masses. The Julian Bonds. The Lonnie Kings. Herschelle Sullivan.<sup>6</sup> I can call a lot of other names. They emerged because they were the ones who were smart enough, who were articulate enough to explain the movement to a bunch of reporters who didn't know a lot, who were also new to this. All of this was totally new to us. Everyone was really nice with terrific personalities and knew how to get along with journalists.

They were the ones who emerged. That's how they did it. They were not professionals. They developed over the years. It didn't happen overnight. It just happened that Julian Bond was very smooth. You know, Julian was a poet, too. He and Lonnie and others, by sheer force of personality, they became the spokespeople. That was how they learned how to schmooze the press. We would go, after a day of working, have drinks together at various watering holes – Paschal's, Frazier's Cafe, the Parmesan House. Le Carrousel, which was the nightclub next to Paschal's.

You bring up Paschal's. Paschal's was a restaurant. After I became a reporter even with the *New York Times*, if I went to Atlanta to cover a story and I needed to interview locals. I would go to sit in Paschal's. I would go for lunch and stay all day because anybody I wanted to interview [laughs] would eventually show up at Paschal's. If they didn't show up at Paschal's during the afternoon to eat, Le Carrousel was a nightclub adjacent to Paschal's and owned by the same folks, I would just drift over to the nightclub and they would show up at the nightclub [laughs], so I would spend all my day there. But anybody I wanted to interview would eventually show up at the at Paschal's or Le Carrousel without fail. I could just sit there all day and take my notebook and sit there all day. As they would come in, I would interview my sources right there.

GI: How effective was SNCC, in particular, in helping construct the narrative of the civil rights movement?

PD: That was very important that because it strengthened the bond between us. We knew that we could trust what they were saying because they knew that if they lied, they would get caught somehow. It strengthened the bond between us. For example, we knew that if we talked to the white racist police chief, he's gonna lie about all kinds of things. We knew that if we talked to the SNCC kids, [they] hadn't learned [laughs] to be really nasty, [they] haven't learned it yet.

There's an innocence there that they had, and we respected it. We respected each other. They trusted us, too. They could be honest because if they didn't trust us, they wouldn't tell us anything. They wouldn't even talk to us. So that was a bond that was there. They knew they could rely on us to present their side of events and we could rely on their numbers and their facts. That was very important and worked.

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<sup>6</sup>. Herschelle Sullivan, later Herschelle Sullivan Challenor, was the student body president at Spelman College in 1960 and an active participant in the Atlanta student movement. Ms. Challenor later earned her Ph.D in political science from Columbia University and held a number of academic positions. In 1993, Ms. Challenor became the Dean of the Clark University (of the Atlanta University Center) School of Public and International Affairs, a position she held for the remainder of her academic career.

AE: How important was the news media in telling a story of the civil rights movement?

PD: It wouldn't have happened without the news media. And it has to be the Northern press that really was the basis for it. The Southern press would have ignored it, totally ignored it – at the least ignored it, and, at the most, distorted it. With Northern reporters coming down and especially with the [television] networks covering and spreading the word across the country, even internationally, that was extremely important. I'm sure that in a lot of demonstrations, even where demonstrators were beaten and killed, it would have been worse if the media hadn't been there or if the bad guys didn't know the media was coming. Things would have been much worse.

I think the movement would have been a failure had the media not been as prevalent and open and honest as it was. Again, it was especially the Northern press coming in and driving, pushing a lot of the Southern press to change a lot of its coverage. I guess by the fact that we rubbed elbows with each other daily and at these demonstrations we got to know the reporter on the scene. The reporter on scene, hopefully, did shape the coverage. Even if their papers would maybe anti-movement, they would at least be fair and open. It formed a lot of bonds, lasting bonds, between a lot of us.

I've met folks who I'm still friends with. Reporters and movement activists like Lonnie King. I didn't know he [recently] died but he came last year, and we had lunch together. Until Julian died, we were close. I still see and talk to Charlie Cobb and some others.<sup>7</sup> Judy Richardson, too.<sup>8</sup> I haven't seen Judy in sometime. There's a whole slew of them that were good people and they were sincere in what they were doing. We were sincere in our as journalists. A lot the great journalists came out of the movement. The movement couldn't have succeeded without good journalism.

GI: Who were some of the people who emerged from that era and went on to become very well-known either in print or in broadcast?

PD: Atlanta was an attraction for journalists. Some of the big names started their careers in Atlanta. If they didn't start in Atlanta, they honed their profession in Atlanta. A lot of them including, Dan Rather. I don't think Dan was based in Atlanta. There were a lot of others who came to Atlanta. I mentioned Doug Kiker. Some of the names escape me now, but there were many who went on to become editors and national reporters.

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<sup>7</sup>. Charlie Cobb was also a founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists. He was interviewed for this project (16-JBOHP).

<sup>8</sup>. Judy Richardson worked on the national staff of SNCC in Atlanta from 1963-1966. She also served as office manager for Julian Bond's 1965 campaign for the Georgia legislature. She was interviewed for this project (03-JBOHP).



GI: Do you do you think there was any one particular event between, let's say, 1960 and 1965, really altered the way that the country began to see the South?

PD: The Birmingham bombing [at the 16th Street Baptist Church]. I left Atlanta in August of 1963, and a month later, in September, that's when the four girls were killed in the Birmingham [bombing]. I think that was a major, major incident. Mississippi Summer, that was the next year, 1964. They set up their training at Miami University, in Oxford, Ohio. That's right below Dayton. And I went down and covered their training session. The training session was set up to teach these Northern kids, mostly Northerners, who were gonna go south and demonstrate during the summer, not really demonstrate, but to register voters. Southerners considered that an act of war. I covered them for about three days and wrote stories for the *Daily News*. They are teaching kids how to go limp. If the cops are going to arrest you, how to protect yourself if the cops are gonna beat you over the head with a baton, how you would cover yourself. This went on for a few days, and then they headed South to Mississippi Summer 1964.

I don't remember meeting them but the three kids who were killed in the Mississippi that summer, they left Ohio and went to Mississippi, and that's when they were lynched. I might have met them. I don't know. I didn't have their names in my notebooks, and I don't remember meeting them, but they were at this session. That was a turning point, that Mississippi Summer of '64. And the bombings. Those made a major impression.

## **THE IMPACT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT ON A CAREER IN JOURNALISM**

AE: How did covering the civil rights movement shape the rest of your career?

PD: It played a very important role in shaping me as a journalist and that, as a journalist, if you are covering events, you are a journalist. You are not a participant. You had to be very strong to see people getting beaten over the head. Whatever you're covering, you cannot become a part of it.

One example. When I was in Dayton, there had been a racial incident at a high school in Dayton. Black kids and white kids fighting. The next day, I went and interviewed a young white student. She was about fifteen or sixteen. And she was giving me the account of the event. She started telling me the story. She said, "Well, the white kids did this, and then the black kid did that, then the white kid did this, then the black kids did that." Then she started speeding up her tone. "Then the white kids did this, and the niggers did that. And the white kids did this, and the niggers did this, and the white kids did this, and the black kids did this."

Now, as a journalist, I'm taking notes. And when she started using the "N-word," I could have said, "Whoa! Stop! Stop this interview." I could have done something, right? But I'm a journalist. You don't do that. I just continued taking notes. As a journalist, that's how you do at demonstrations, no matter how rough they get, because your editors are not going to be impressed by the fact that, "Oh, well, I didn't get the story because I had to help, I had to stop this cop from being a demonstrator. That's what one of the main things I had to learn

at this point. I knew which side I was on, but I knew what I was covering. I knew my role. I was not a demonstrator. I was there to record it for history. You have to know your role. That was the main thing that I think I learned in all of the years I covered civil rights movement.

AE: Was it hard to accept that role sometimes?

PD: Oh, yes. It was difficult when I was talking to that little girl. I had to restrain myself. I've covered a lot of things where, yes, I had to not show my emotions. Maybe I'm cold hearted, I don't know. As a journalist, you've got an event [to cover]. You're gonna be a journalist or you're not going to be a journalist. That's the way it is.

AE: Thank you.

GI: Thank you.

PD: It's been my pleasure.