

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

Interview with Judy Richardson

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

2018

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. Ms. Richardson reviewed the transcript for accuracy.

Biographical Note for Judy Richardson

Judy Richardson entered the civil rights movement in 1962 while a first-year student at Swarthmore College in Swarthmore, Pennsylvania. She joined the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) during freshman year and began taking part in local demonstrations and sit-ins during her first semester. By her second semester, Ms. Richardson was participating in protests led by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) along the Eastern Shore of Maryland. She left Swarthmore before her sophomore year, moving to Atlanta to work in the SNCC national office. For the next three years, Ms. Richardson was active in local sit-ins, worked in Greenwood, Mississippi during Freedom Summer 1964 and participated in the 1965 voter education project in Lowndes County, Alabama. She moved back to Atlanta that summer to manage the campaign office of Julian Bond, who ran successfully for a seat that year in the Georgia legislature. A noted author, educator and documentary filmmaker, Ms. Richardson was a key researcher and producer for the Emmy Award winning documentary series on the civil rights movement, "Eyes on the Prize" and is co-editor of *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, a collection of essays about women's involvement in SNCC. She is a member of the SNCC Legacy Project.

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

**Judy Richardson Interview (03-JBOHP)
August 9th, 2018
Silver Spring, Maryland**

Interviewer: Gregg Ivers

Code: Gregg Ivers [GI] Judy Richardson [JR]

GI: Today is Thursday, August 9th, 2018 and we are at the home of Miss Judy Richardson in Silver Spring, Maryland, to conduct an oral history interview for the Julian Bond Oral History Project, an undertaking sponsored in part by the School of Public Affairs at American University. My name is Gregg Ivers. I am a Professor of Government at American University and also the director of this project. This interview, as well as a transcript, will be available through the Special Collections Division of the Bender Library at American University. Dating back to the early 1960s. Ms. Richardson has had a long and distinguished career as a civil rights activist, author, educator and documentary filmmaker. Ms. Richardson was a key member the research and production team for the Emmy Award winning series, “Eyes on the Prize” – narrated incidentally by Julian Bond. We’ll have the pleasure this afternoon of learning more about Judy Richardson and specifically her memories and impressions of Julian Bond. Ms. Richardson, what an honor and privilege to be here with you this afternoon. Thank you so much for welcoming me into your home and taking time in your schedule to speak with me.

JR: Thank you, Gregg.

ENTERING THE SOUTHERN FREEDOM MOVEMENT

GI: Tell us a little bit about your background and what led you into the freedom movement.

JR: Well, I grew up in Tarrytown, New York about 45 miles north of New York City. My father was one of the primary organizers of the United Auto Workers Local at the plant, which is where everybody’s father worked, including mine. We lived “Under The Hill,” which is still called “Under The Hill,” in Tarrytown, New York. When I was seven, they pulled me out of class because he had had a heart attack on the assembly line. My mother became a working parent. She’d been a stay-at-home mom before that and so she got me through to Swarthmore College. She got my sister through Bennington [College]. I go to Swarthmore, and my first year there I find out that there’s an SDS [Students for a Democratic Society] chapter on campus. I had never heard of SDS before.

But I started going because I just want to see what I can get into my freshman year. I find that they are doing a lot of campaigns around workers’ rights, trying to organize the all-black, all-

female cafeteria staff for better working conditions and higher wages. I am part of that staff because I'm a work-study student – I had received a four-year, all-paid scholarship, so there's work-study for that. I become part of that and they're also trying to desegregate public facilities in Chester, Pennsylvania – Pennsylvania [laughs]! The third thing they're doing is working with this local movement in Cambridge, Maryland, which is on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, to desegregate facilities there. So again, I go to these meetings to find out what's going on.

I start getting arrested when we do bus trips down to Cambridge. And that was a SNCC [Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee] project because Gloria Richardson, one of the major local leaders of that Cambridge, Maryland, movement, had asked for SNCC's help, and so they had sent one of the major SNCC veteran organizers, Reggie Robinson from Baltimore. I had decided, okay, I'll take off my next semester, which would be the first semester of my sophomore year. And just one semester. I go down to work in Cambridge, Maryland for that semester. When I get there, they're doing demonstrations. Reggie Robinson, at some point says, "I'm going to a wedding in Ohio." It was a SNCC couple – Bill Hansen, who was white, and Ruthie, Ruthie – I can't remember her last name – she was from southwest Georgia, and they were being married in Ohio. Reggie and I take this train to Ohio. I don't know either of these people. I somehow become the matron of honor for Ruthie. On the way back Reggie says, "Oh, why don't we just stop by the national office [in Atlanta] on the way back to Cambridge?" And so we do. That's when I first see the national office.

JOINING SNCC

GI: That's how you end up in Atlanta?

JR: Yes.

GI: So what happens once you get there?

JR: Okay, I get to the office. Again, I'm thinking I'm on my way back to Cambridge, Maryland. It was this little office right on a side street, 8 ½ Raymond St; we had 6 and 8 ½ Raymond St. It was right near a barbershop or beauty parlor. I can't remember which one. And it was on the second floor. When you first looked at it, I mean we're talking about this teeny, tiny street. We look through this window on the door because the SNCC office is on the second floor. You look through this window that only shows stairs.

I see Reggie go in. He opens the door and sees this guy at the top of the stairs who is sweeping the floor and the stairs. I see Reggie go over and he's hugging this man who has these overalls on and I'm thinking, "How egalitarian SNCC must be because this guy is obviously the custodian!" Then I hear this custodian person say, "Hey man, how you doing?" No, no, he says, "Hey, cap'n, how you doing?" And he and Reggie are hugging like long, lost brothers and I'm thinking, "Oh, this is wonderful." It turns out this guy in the overalls is Jim Forman, the executive secretary of SNCC. I come up and Forman finds out that I am at Swarthmore, so he assumes that I can write a literate sentence. He knows that I can also type ninety words a minute because he asked me. and I also mention that I can do what was known then as Gregg's Shorthand, which I always say is like texting but with symbols [laughs].

And so he says, "No, you're not going back to Swarthmore. Come save me. You will be my secretary." I become his secretary. Reggie goes back to Cambridge, Maryland. And I stay there as Forman's secretary in this teeny, tiny little SNCC office. What it did for me was give me this bird's eye view of all the expanse of the national office. I see the various friends of SNCC all over the country. I learn about the main fundraising office in New York. It's about Chicago; it's about the friends of SNCC; it's the campus friends of SNCC. The print office is on the bottom floor. It has the photo department with Danny Lyon and Tamio Wakayama. The research department with Jack Minnis. All these things are part of this youth group, which I am coming to find out is really the only youth-led, and only black leadership-led, national civil rights organization.

Really, this is unusual within the national civil rights organizations, particularly in terms of being youth-led, because everybody was knocking on being nineteen, twenty, twenty-one years old. When I come in, what I see are all these people and they're all busy.

They all seem to be doing things. I see Julian [Bond] for the first time. And this is when I found out that he is the Director of Communications. And he's typing away because Julian, as long as I knew him, could type with two fingers faster than anybody I knew. I mean, when I say I type ninety words a minute, I mean that's with all fingers. Julian is doing his thing. And he always had this cigarette coming out of his mouth and the ashes just fell wherever they fell. He always seemed intent, always doing something. So I see him. I see Mary King. I see Bobbi Yancy, who later becomes second in command of the Schomburg [Center for Research in Black Culture] Library in New York. She was head of black campus recruitment [for SNCC] at that point.

GI: And this is what year?

JR: This would be . . . I land there in October 1963. Probably late October, early November 1963, because that's when I came down from Cambridge. And that's when I see Julian typing. Mary King was in the same office. I see Bobbi Yancy. I see Dinky Romilly, who becomes Forman's second wife, although not then. She's in this teeny, tiny little office we have. I end up working in the national office.

MEETING JULIAN BOND

GI: What was your first impression of Julian?

JR: Busy, busy, busy. Busy. I didn't joke a lot at that point because I didn't know him that well. I didn't know that he had this rapier wit, which I later come to find out, but only after I get to know him. I mean you have to understand, I know nothing about anything, right? I'm coming from *tabula rasa*. All of this is so new to me. All the people I meet are like heroes to me. They're changing the world as I know it. A lot of them look like me, which I'd never seen in Tarrytown. I'm just in awe of everything, and I'm also, in some ways, a little afraid of everybody because they know so much more than I do. And Julian, when he would speak in meetings, people would listen to him because he was always so clear. He always seemed to come from such a foundation of experience and knowledge. I come to find out that he was the head of the Atlanta movement, or, really, part of the leadership, along with other people. All of these young people like Julian are

coming out of campaigns in a way that I had no knowledge of. Look, I'm from Tarrytown, New York – the home of [novelist] Washington Irving. I didn't really come to know Julian that well until later on. So all of this is new to me.

GI: So before you get to Atlanta you had never heard of Julian Bond?

JR: Nothing.

GI: Didn't know about his work in the Atlanta student movement?

JR: No.

GI: Didn't know about his work with *The Atlanta Inquirer*?

JR: I barely knew about SNCC, okay? The only thing I knew about SNCC was through Reggie Robinson because he was a field secretary in Cambridge, Maryland.

GI: You mentioned a lot of impressive people. People who went on to have very distinguished careers and make very, very important contributions to the freedom movement. Standing out in that group could not have been an easy. Julian did. What made him stand out?

JR: Yeah. I'll say Julian stood out.

GI: Among those who stood out?

JR: Yeah, he stood out for me in the way that Forman stood out for me. In the way that Ruby Doris [Smith] stood out. He was part of this group of young people that were doing amazing things, so I don't know that he stood out any more than Ruby Doris did, who had done thirty days of "in jail, no bail" in Parchman Prison [in Mississippi]. I was just surrounded by this amazing group of people. Julian was one of those. I come to know him a little bit more when I'm working on his campaign [for the Georgia legislature in 1965]. But at that point he's just part of this amazing band of brothers and sisters in a circle of trust.

GI: Was it intimidating?

JR: Oh yeah, they were all intimidating. Julian was intimidating. Forman was intimidating. Ruby Doris was intimidating. Everyone was intimidating.

GI: Intimidating how?

JR: Intimidating in the way that I knew nothing, and I *knew* I knew nothing. And I'm now surrounded by these people who have been active in the student movement for two, three, four years, right? What I'm seeing is people who are coming in and at staff meetings, having opinions not just about what's going on in their local movement, but also opinions about what's going on in Nicaragua or Ghana or these newly independent African nations. I'm hearing them know about the world in a way I never knew about. I'm just sitting there taking notes, right, because I'm

Forman's secretary and I know shorthand. I have a piece in [the book], *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, where I talk about how I'm still doing the minutes because I was in awe of these people.

At the first staff meeting they're bringing in the executive committee and I'm taking down every single word these people are saying. I could do that because I knew shorthand but also because I'm in total awe of these people. I'm taking down everything that Ivanhoe [Donaldson] is saying, everything that Charlie Cobb is saying. And Casey Hayden, because she's so brilliant – all these people. It's like, "Oh, my God, these people are so brilliant and I know nothing!"

That's what really does it for me. And Julian, among them, is part of that, the aura of what SNCC was. You know, he was just brilliant.

GI: Many people I've spoken with during the course of this project have said that Julian's sword was his pen. Is that an accurate assessment?

JR: Yes, absolutely.

GI: Can you tell us when you began to realize that Julian was something special?

Yes. First of all, it was just watching him work. I would hear Julian talking to Claude Sitton of *The New York Times*. I would sit there and listen to Julian talking to people who I had come to know as major journalists at the paper of record. And he's talking to them on an equal basis because Julian just knew so much and retains so much. I hate to say, because of the whole thing with black folks [lowers her voice], "You know, he was just so articulate." But he was! He was amazing like that. He could bring in all of this information and put it into context so that it made the struggle that we were dealing with real. And he only spoke the truth. It wasn't only that he had absolute integrity. But he made sure that when he said, Dottie Zellner, who worked with him before I got down there – and is still a close friend of mine -- Dottie said, "when we said there were fifty people at a mass meeting, there were fifty people at a mass meeting."

So, of course, when Claude Sitton of *The New York Times* hears Julian say, "We had fifty people at a mass meeting, he knows this is the truth because Julian is telling the truth. He's not going to expand on it. He's not going to lie about it. He's not going to do what the idiot in the White House is doing. He will tell me the truth, you know? And so when Claude Sitton is talking, Julian is taking notes because he always took notes on everything. I learned about taking notes when I started working on [the civil rights documentary] "Eyes on the Prize." I learned about that from the people in SNCC. That way you could always go back to your notes and say, "No, no, you didn't say that here."

Julian also knew how to schmooze. He could sit in with journalists of any stripe. He's talking, and you could hear him, you could see him. He enjoyed people, he really had a love of people, including journalists. You would see him sometimes at meetings and he's talking to these folks, and he's talking in a kind of camaraderie-type way he knows how to. He just always met people on their own level, and he could do that because he had such an openness about him. I would say warmth but that's seems touchy feely and he was never touchy feely! But there was sense he had that he liked you – if he liked you – that he was able to show that.

GI: What was Julian's strength as a communications director? How was he able to communicate the message of SNCC and the other causes that were important?

JR: The brilliance of Julian was that he was able to talk about what SNCC was doing and make it real. But he could articulate it in a way so that regular people who do not know what we were dealing with could understand it. When he talks about how the FBI isn't doing diddly-squat to protect us even though it's federally mandated. When he talks about "X" mass meeting. And when he's talking about all this to the press – and that could be local radio, it could be the print journalists – he's interpreting it in a way that makes him able to "story-tell" that, while at the same time being very, very factual. You can see the way Julian brings it. The way Julian framed it, you can see this story happening in front of you. When he says something that allows people to understand, "We are trying to register black voters without getting them killed," he makes that real through the storytelling. When he talks about Mrs. [Fannie Lou] Hamer getting beaten in 1963 in a jail cell in Winona, Mississippi, with June Johnson who was fifteen years-old, with Annell Ponder and others, he could make that real because he brings it forward by story-telling it, by making these people real to the folks who were listening to him.

He had a gift for being so genuine and so principled but telling [the story] in a way that everybody could understand it. And he's doing that with journalists, but he's also doing that with regular people. He's also talking, maybe, to the Friends of SNCC in Detroit. Now certainly the Friends of SNCC person [in Detroit] is doing that as well. But he's also, in addition to talking to journalists, he's also getting out *The Student Voice*. And he's writing it with Mary King or Dottie Zellner. He's making sure that they're short [stories], that they're not too big, that they're not unreadable reports of some of the things that are going on.

He's working with the photo department – Danny Lyon or Tamio Wakayama – he's coordinating with all those folks so that what goes out is definitely SNCC's voice because he's the editor of *The Student Voice*. This is at a time when even the black press is not necessarily as much in the vanguard as we are. The reason he works with the . . . what was the name of it?

GI: *The Atlanta Inquirer*.

JR: Right. *The Atlanta Daily World* was the really right-wing Republican paper, black paper. He still works on *The Atlanta Inquirer* while he's still going to Morehouse because he knows there has to be another voice that will represent what's really going on in the student movement. Well, he's able to talk to a lot of the black press in a way that they will understand. So, *The Atlanta Daily World*, *Chicago Defender*, *Baltimore Afro-American*, *The Pittsburgh Courier*, all of those black newspapers that are getting the news out, and not necessarily in the same way that we were. I mean, we were very progressive in our way of thinking about things. We're not just talking just about integrating facilities. We really are talking about structural changes within this white supremacist world. Although we don't call it white supremacy, we are talking about fundamental change in this country. That's not necessarily what even the black press is talking about. But Julian is able to represent what we are doing and what our goals are in a way that the black press and the white press – and the white TV folks – will understand. He could interpret that in a way that they will print it and they'll show it.

THE INFLUENCE OF JULIAN BOND'S FAMILY BACKGROUND

GI: Do you think Julian's family background helped shape the way he was able to communicate with people, coming from a background where Paul Robeson and W.E.B. DuBois were dinner guests in his home?

JR: Well, I'm not sure. See, he was among the elite, so you could have had somebody who could only speak to the elite and was only comfortable around the elite. Okay, so Paul Robeson is among the elite [laughs]. But when you think about Kwame – Kwame Nkrumah – who later becomes head of Ghana the first president of the new independent state of Ghana. Even Nkrumah was a favorite son. Julian could have been somebody who could only speak to those kinds of people. He was not. He could speak to everybody. He could relate to somebody who's a sharecropper because he was comfortable with that. I don't know that being at Lincoln University, where he is his father and mother are part of the black elite, whether that groomed him or whether his family, and the sense that his family had, that you will be easy with everybody. Maybe that helps. But I'm not sure where he got that or if he got that from the student movement. A lot of folks went to Morehouse who were not elite. Certainly, the people he met in the student movement were not all elite. However he got that . . . he was very comfortable with everybody.

And so when I mention that Kwame Nkrumah, who becomes the president the first president of independent Ghana, that he knows him because Kwame Nkrumah has come through Lincoln, that's one of the things that you see in SNCC. And certainly, Julian is a part of that. That we in SNCC, particularly this black-led SNCC, we're looking at this anti-colonial struggle going on. The struggle going on not just in Ghana and but also in South Africa. All of that. Well, one of the things that I realized when I come here [to SNCC] is that I knew nothing about this struggle that Julian and all the others are talking about. And so what we take as are one of our slogans, "one man, one vote," we are picking up on the slogan that is used in West Africa, and particularly Ghana, with their anti-colonial struggle there. And they used "one man, one vote." Some of the guys would carry little attaché cases and you would see the bumper sticker, "one man, one vote." That's coming from the African anti-colonial struggle. Julian is a part of that, a part of interpreting that, being aware of that from way back when he's at Lincoln University.¹

GI: How long were you in Atlanta and working with Julian in a close way?

JR: I was in Atlanta from the time I get there in late October 1963 until we move the entire SNCC office from Atlanta to Greenwood, Mississippi, in the summer of 1964.

GI: And so that's in preparation for Freedom Summer?

JR: Yes, that's Mississippi Freedom Summer, when bring the seven hundred volunteers down to Mississippi. I kept saying to [Jim] Forman, "I want to go to the field, I want to go to the field!" because that's where I thought the action was. I didn't want to be his secretary forever. When

¹. Julian Bond did not attend Lincoln University. His father, Horace Mann Bond, was, for a time, the president (and first African American president) of Lincoln University. Prominent individuals were regular guests in the Bond home.

he's probably at an anti-apartheid [South Africa] meeting in London, I think that was it, Dinky Romilly gets me a ticket to go down to the Freedom Vote in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I'm nineteen. I go down there, and I'm in Mississippi for the first time. Then I come back again [to Atlanta]. I continued being Forman's secretary. And when I say I'm Forman's secretary that also means I'm dealing with the *pro bono* lawyers in New York. [Victor] Rabinowitz and [Leonard] Boudin, I'm dealing with all of them. This is Hattiesburg Freedom Day, so it's January 1964 when I get there. So I'm dealing with all this. Forman wants to keep me as his secretary because I'm good at this. I'm a good administrator.

FREEDOM SUMMER

We move the whole national office of SNCC from Atlanta, although we keep a presence still because we're in that building. But we move the office down to Greenwood, Mississippi during Freedom Summer of 1964 when those seven hundred, primarily white volunteers come down to Mississippi. I am based in the SNCC office with Dottie Zellner, and we were running the WATS line, which is the Wide Area Telephone Service – that's the 800 line – where we contact all of the SNCC projects throughout Mississippi twice a day to make sure the people are still there and that they haven't been shot, to just check in. Then we do written reports. Julian was still in the national office and worked much of that time in Atlanta.

However, what I remember about Julian is him coming down with his brother, James Bond. And James had a small VW Bug, a teeny, tiny little Bug. James would drive that – James also taught me to drive stick shift on that because I only knew automatic, even though I learned to drive when I was fourteen. And so I was always afraid that I would have to do a getaway in one of the SNCC cars all of which were stick shift because they had been given to us by up through the Black Caucus of the UAW. So the "Sojourner Truth Motor Fleet" was ours. There were twenty-three or twenty-four cars organized by Ruby Dorsett Robinson, and I was always afraid that I would have to drive one because some Klansman or local sheriff was driving and chasing us, so I would need to know how to drive. Julian's brother, James Bond, taught me how to drive. I stripped various gears on his VW. So, it's 1964, and Julian and James are down, and they are making a tour of some of the SNCC projects because Julian's idea was that he would actuality audio.

Let me back up a bit. The applications that these volunteers had to fill out were about three or four pages. On this application they not only had to list who would be called in the event of injury or their death, but also what were the media outlets in their location. That was print as well as TV and radio. The whole point from Julian was that you had to make sure that one of the major points of doing this was fulfilled, which was that the folks up wherever they were from outside of Mississippi would begin to care about all of these black people being killed because they were trying to register to vote. You had to make white America feel and care about this. Well, the way you do that is to connect them through their sons and daughters who are now in Mississippi. If anything happened to any of them, then we would then call their location – say they were in Akron, Ohio – we would call the newspaper there or in Michigan or wherever it was and say, "John Jones has just been arrested in Holly Springs, Mississippi, and he's in jail and he lives at so-and-so in your town." Then we would do a report on the fact that John Jones had just been put in jail. Julian was one of the main people setting this up.

What he did though was when he and James came down to Mississippi, he would talk to some of these white volunteers and he would do four or five second stories with them. You would hear "John Jones's" voice, and then he would send this back to the radio station in John Jones's hometown. And they would then play it on their local radio station – the voice of their hometown boy talking about how horrible it is being in Holly Springs and how somebody shot at them, how the FBI wasn't doing diddly squat, how the local sheriff was really in cahoots with the FBI. All of this becomes real because it's coming through the eyes of their hometown boy or girl. And Julian sets this up. He's doing this with James his brother in this little VW bug, going around Mississippi in the Delta. That was Julian's brilliance. He was always thinking, "How do you get this story out to the world that really doesn't care?"

JULIAN BOND'S 1965 CAMPAIGN FOR THE GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

GI: How did Julian Bond decide to run for the state legislature in Georgia?

JR: I don't think Julian ever thought at all about doing this. I don't think it was ever in his mind. What happens is that Ivanhoe Donaldson, who was this legendary SNCC field secretary had just come out of Mississippi. We had just gone through 1964 . . . not just Freedom Summer, but then being in Atlantic City [the site of the 1964 Democratic Party Convention]. And I went up, Ivanhoe went up, Charlie Cobb went up.

All of us had just been through not only Mississippi Freedom Summer and all the violence and all that, but then we go up to Atlantic City and the traditional Democratic Party, under Lyndon Johnson, turns its back. With Miss Ella Baker, we had a sophisticated lobbying effort. We knew we had a ticket. We knew everybody who was on the Credentials Committee. We know all of this. Even as nineteen, twenty and twenty-one-year-olds, we knew who to come to, who to lobby with. We thought we had enough votes to get out of the Credentials Committee and get to the floor of the Atlantic City Democratic Convention. And then of course all the cards fall out because Lyndon Johnson is afraid he's going to lose the Dixiecrat vote.

What that told all of us in SNCC was that you cannot depend upon the good wishes of the liberal Democrats. You can't count on them. You have to depend on the folks who are most at risk in their own communities. With that sense in 1965, when we're coming out of the Selma march – I, Stokely and a lot of other folks – we go to Lowndes County to form the Lowndes County Freedom Organization and work with that local organization because you can't depend on folks who are not part of the oppression that we're experiencing. It doesn't mean it has to be only black folks. But it does mean that it has to be the people who are experiencing the oppression.

So that's happening in '65. I'm in Lowndes County, when I get the call from Ivanhoe Donaldson. "Come work with us," he says. "We're going to run Julian Bond for this single-member district in Atlanta." So I come out of Lowndes County and I go back to Atlanta and we start working. Now, this is Ivanhoe because Ivanhoe decides, in the same way you're doing Lowndes County Freedom Organization and, in some ways, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, you can also possibly bring SNCC's principles and grassroots organizing philosophy to a major city. And that will be this single-member district. You run Julian, who Atlanta knows. They know his family because I mean, come on, Julian is a prince! He's is from this amazing family! He is wonderful and brilliant

and intelligent and well-spoken and all of that. And absolutely principled. So what Ivanhoe says to Julian is, "We can win this. We can really win this."

He brings Charlie – Charlie Cobb – in because they're running mates and stuff. And the two of them become the campaign directors. I become the office staff having, just come back from Lowndes County, Alabama. Now at the same time that Ivanhoe and Charlie are running Julian's campaign as the campaign managers – and it's really just Ivanhoe – they are also lining up, at the same time, another campaign going on that both Charlie and Ivanhoe are running. It is in Springfield, Massachusetts. Because Charlie Cobb's father, Reverend Charles Cobb, a United Church of Christ minister in Springfield, Massachusetts, is running for mayor of Springfield. Ivanhoe and Charlie are running back and forth, driving back and forth, between Springfield and Atlanta.

GI: That's a lot of miles.

JR: You got it! And I assumed that, based on what Ivanhoe told us, that he had told Ruby Doris what he was doing. At some point, I get this call. Now, I'm sitting in the office of Julian Bond's campaign office because, again, I'm the only staff person. The office was on Hunter Street [SW], it was near Paschal's [Restaurant] but it was closer to Frazier's Restaurant. Frazier was absolutely wonderful. Paschal, well, he was clear about our politics and did not agree with them. However, Frazier was wonderful. He would feed us. We would have our staff committee meetings in his basement. It was wonderful! So right next door to Frazier's is where I was. And so I remember getting this call from Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, who was the office manager [of the Atlanta SNCC office], but that doesn't really say how outsized her function was in SNCC. And she says she's looking for Ivanhoe and doesn't know where he is. She calls me and I said, "Oh, yeah, he's up in Springfield, Massachusetts." And she said, "What!?!". Now, Ruby did not suffer fools gladly. Ruby may have known somehow that they were involved in that campaign, but she definitely did not know where they were at that point.

The next call I get is from Ivanhoe. And he's yelling at me – Ivanhoe tended to yell – and Ivanhoe's yelling at me, "Why'd you tell her where I was?" I said, "I assumed Ruby Doris knew where you were." But that's a whole another thing. Ivanhoe and Charlie come back down again. I mean, SNCC certainly knew that they were involved. This was a SNCC campaign. I mean, it was absolutely a SNCC campaign.

But it was not Julian's idea. It was Ivanhoe's idea. It was an experiment which he eventually carries forth in other major cities. He becomes the campaign manager for Marion Barry on that first campaign and then a number of other things you know he's working with Mayor Gary Hatcher in Gary, Indiana. He's working with [David] Dinkins and later on in New York City. He's working with a lot of progressive, particularly black elected officials. But he begins that with the Julian Bond campaign.

GI: Was Julian hesitant when he was approached about running for office?

JR: I don't even know. By the time I get there it's complete. All I know is that I'm running this office, trying to make calls and doing the calls about getting people out to register to vote and so

on. My main memory of that, though, is trying to get people to do events where they do house parties for Julian. And I got this one event and it was a Red Rosebud Savings Club. These were black women in their 70s and 80s who lived out on Gordon Road in Atlanta in the West End. I had arranged for this event to go on, it was a Sunday, and I'm waiting for Julian to hit the office so that I can drive him out to the West End to the Red Rosebud Savings Club. And he's not coming. I don't see him and I'm worried. At that point, I'm not someone who is used to speaking in front of any groups. But I'm thinking that I'm going to have to go by myself to the Red Rosebud Savings Club. I get in the car and I'm driving down Hunter St., now Martin Luther King, Jr. Boulevard, and just as I pass going one way towards the West End, I see Julian and his then-wife [Alice Bond] coming the other way. I stop the car on Hunter St, and I say, "Julian, Julian! We've got to go to Red Rosebud Savings Club."

I see Julian negotiating with his wife. Finally, Julian gets out of the car, and gets into my car, and she drives away. Julian says to me, "Alice is not happy – we were going to do the wash. It was finally at the point where she could corral him to do the wash. And I'm like, "But we've got to be there! So we go on, and he walks into this group – there couldn't have been more than ten of them, these seventy-five to eighty year-old black women, and you could tell they love him. He walks in and they feel like he is the best of them. He is this warm, wonderful young man who someone would be proud to call their son or son-in-law. They see this in him. And so when he starts talking to them they want to listen because he also had this wonderful voice.

What he says immediately, and what he makes very clear, is that he is there to listen to him. Yes, he has an agenda that is basically a SNCC grassroots agenda. He says how we need more employment, we need better housing, we need better wages. It's particularly economic issues because black people could vote in Atlanta. It's not all about voter registration. It is the economic issues. At this point, things are more or less integrated. But for these people, they're not interested in going downtown to eat because they don't have the money to go downtown and eat. They're interested in, "Can I get a decent job at a decent wage?" A lot of them are working in white people's homes or have. He's talking to them about the issues they most care about. But his main thing is, "What do you care about? What do you want me to do when I get elected?"

He's doing a traditional SNCC grassroots campaign, which is, "Tell me what you want me to do. I am your servant." And you see these women absolutely open up, and they see in him a different kind of politician. It was absolutely wonderful. He gets energized – I get energized – because these women are just feeling the . . . saying "the love" is too easy. It is a sense of caring, a sense of, we're going to try to protect you as much as we can. It's the kind of thing that you saw when you were in the field. People didn't have much but who would give you whatever they had because they felt that you were trying to do the best for them, that you were going to work with them and you were going to be with them in this struggle. That's what you got from these women. And it was just it was amazing. It was wonderful to see.

GI: Did his youth – he was twenty-five years old when he ran – pose any kind of obstacle to his acceptance among older voters?

JR: Well, all of us in SNCC had been used to working with people who were three times our age. Amzie Moore had been doing work with the Retail Council of Negro Leadership [in Mississippi]

from the 1950s. They're the ones who had always guided us. C.C. Bryant [in Mississippi], it's Amelia Boynton [in Selma], it's all the older activists who somehow see that, even though you're nineteen, twenty or twenty-one years old we're going to trust you because it's clear that you are going to be here with us. You're not going to turncoat on us. You're not going to go back to where you came from. And a lot of folks, of course, are from that community anyway, so we're used to being our age and having older people trust us. Because they could see something in us that said these are folks who will stand with you and they're not going to you know even if people shoot and beat them up they're going to be with us. No matter what happens. So, it was not unusual to see these older women see the same thing and that all these older people had always seen that in SNCC people.

GI: Where did most of his support come from in the district he won?

JR: My sense was, and I'm trying to remember back now, a lot of it was just regular people. It was not the usual black middle class in Atlanta. They were going for whoever the person was so everybody thought was going win, including me. I didn't think Julian was going to win. They were not usually our base. It was always the people who felt that they did not have a voice. The black middle class thought they had a voice in the usual black elected officials who were there – the ministers, the black businessmen and women. That's not where the base of our vote came from.

GI: Why did Julian decide to run as a Democrat, given that the Democratic politics of the South were in transition at that time? The Dixiecrats still had a lot of power.

JR: Well, I think, again, that had a lot to do with Ivanhoe as well. to. When you talk about what Julian decides about electoral politics that's a lot of Ivanhoe. It was also because there was no way that you could move in the Republican Party. That's where it was until a lot of it turns in the election of 1960 because of Daddy King, which we won't go into. The main point was you couldn't run as a Republican because that was sewn up by the black Republicans. So you had to [run as a Democrat]. This was a single-member district, a new district. So you could do that.

GI: How involved was Julian was the actual campaign strategy, given Ivanhoe's influence?

JR: Yes, Julian was very much involved in the campaign strategy. He clearly was his own man. I mean, you were not going to get Julian to do anything he didn't want to do. He was also very bright. He had seen what Atlanta politics was like in a way that neither Ivanhoe nor Charlie had. He's also bringing his knowledge of having been in Atlanta all these years. He knew what he was up against. He knew what the black middle class was like. He knew how black folks in power in Atlanta interacted with white folks in Atlanta and the kind of liaison they had with each other. When the slogan of Atlanta became, "The City Too Busy To Hate," black folks parodied that. It was not just the white moderates. Some black folks wanted things, in a lot of ways, to stay the way they did. And that includes the presidents of the colleges as well as the black ministers as well as the black businessmen and women.

That's not what we espoused in SNCC no matter where our campaign was and certainly not within the campaign that Julian was running. Wherever Julian went, that's where SNCC went. And so Julian is bringing all of what he knows into this campaign. It's both the SNCC values – and

that's grassroots organizing, it's structural reorganization, it's all of that, economic redistribution, everything. He's espousing that as well. It's kind of this combination of forces of people who know what SNCC wants and what it doesn't want, what it believes along with Julian's knowledge of what Atlanta it is and what black Atlanta is, and he brings all of that into these campaign strategy meetings.

GI: For someone who didn't believe that he was going to win, Julian won over eighty percent of the vote.

JR: No, I'm not saying that Julian didn't believe he was going to win! I didn't believe he was going to win [laughs]! No, no, no, I never believed that he would win. I mean, for me, I said the same thing when Marion [Barry] won [the 1978 mayor's race in Washington, D.C.]. On the eve of both elections, I went outside and said, "I don't believe it. He won. Julian won. How is that possible?" People got Julian. The electorate understood that this is something different. I think they felt that Julian was running a different kind of campaign, that this was not the "same old, same old." And they came out to vote for him. They absolutely voted for him. It was amazing.

GI: You were surprised that he won, then?

JR: I was absolutely amazed. I do not believe that it really happened, right? I get the news that Julian has won. And I remember saying to Ivanhoe, "I can't believe this." Then we have the victory party. I find out I'm really sick. I don't know what I have. I go to Dr. Palmer, the SNCC doctor, the black doctor who says you've got to start staying away from people because you're infectious. And Ivanhoe says, "No, no, no. You worked so hard for this. You need to come to the victory party. So I get out of the sick bed, I'm feverish. I come to this victory party. There are all these SNCC people. And there are also all of these folks who have been poll watchers and just regular folks from throughout the district who are coming. They are so happy and we're dancing and doing Motown. We're doing The Four Tops and all that stuff. And I remember what was interesting is that there were SNCC folk who when Ivanhoe, Charlie and Julian brought this forward, there were SNCC folk who said, "No, we don't do this. We do not do electoral politics." We're doing independent politics. We're doing things like Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama. We're doing the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in Mississippi. We're not doing the traditional Democratic Party party because they have turned her back on us in Atlantic City. Ivanhoe really thought this could work.

And so even the folks who were not happy about the fact that we were going down this road came to the party. It was a sense that, well maybe this might be a possibility, maybe there's a there was a road that can be a fork, where you take the grassroots political organizing that SNCC has always done and somehow fuse the traditional Democratic Party in a way that we had not thought possible before. Maybe that's possible. That's what was happening at the party and it was really a moment. It was really nice.

GI: Was Julian's election the first SNCC-backed electoral campaign?

JR: For the Democratic Party, yes. Because always before that, as in Lowndes County, we go to those folks, and ask, "Who do you want to run for mayor and they pick the slate." The Mississippi

Freedom Democratic Party, they pick the slate in all these counties wherever we are. But here in Atlanta, we said we're going to run Julian in the city's new single member district.

EYES ON THE PRIZE

GI: So many years later you and Julian find yourselves working together on "Eyes on the Prize." Tell us about that.

I first started working on this when there was the first incarnation of it and that was in 1978. I become the first full-time paid staff person and it has a different title. It's called "America, We Love You Madly," because Henry Hampton, the head of Blackside [Productions], which produced all fourteen hours of "Eyes," loved to play on words. And "America, We Love You Madly" was what the Duke Ellington would say at the end of a jazz concert. He would come to the end of the stage and would say, "I love you madly" and open his eyes widely. Henry loved to play on the words, "I love you madly" because he thought that was black folks' relationship with this country. I hated it. When we finally got a staff together, I decide to send out this memo, which I still have.

It begins, this is to Cap Cities because Capital Cities Communications was now funding ["Eyes"] by 1978 – you know how much I hate the current working title. So below are the first phrases and the titles of freedom songs. They're will be a tie-in musically. There's no order of preference. I start with, "Ain't Gonna Let No One Turn Me Around," and number six is, "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize." I go all the way down and there's number twenty-seven or twenty-eight. It has a little asterisk on it. And it says, as a proposed title, "We Sang and Prayed and They Beat the Shit Out of Us Anyway." And the asterisk says, "my personal favorite." Henry obviously did not take to that. But what I was told by Steve Fayer, who was the series main writer, was that up until broadcast, he was telling Henry, "'Eyes on the Prize,' – no one will get it." The funding ran out for that for various reasons.

We now fast-forward to 1984, and I'm going back and forth between New York City and Boston. We start production and around 1986 we will really go into production at Blackside around the South End of Boston. And Henry decides he wants Julian to be the narrator. Julian and I were working together but it's really the producers who are working with Julian and doing the voiceover narration in the studio because at that point I'm the Director of Information for the United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice in New York City. I'm going back and forth. But we're still doing the first six hours of the fourteen hours, and we're doing the screenings. Henry Hampton always had this thing where you don't just have the producers at the screenings.

You have the interns, you have some of the local sponsors. Ruth Batson, who is the head of the local [Boston branch] NAACP Education Committee is there. All the people he knew. It's at a community theatre, Boston Film and Video. The projector breaks down. And we're doing the Selma to Montgomery march, the last part of the six-hour series. Callie Crosley and Jim DeVinny, who were the two equal co-producers, were there. And Callie runs up to me in a rush and says, "Sing a freedom song!" Julian is sitting next to me. I turn to Julian and said, "We've got to sing a freedom song." Now, I don't sing. I mean, I'm in tune, and I have a really loud voice, but it's not a good voice. I'm thinking, "we've got to sing." Now, anybody who knows Julian knows he doesn't sing either. But we start singing, "Ain't gonna' let no projector turn me 'round, turn me 'round."

And Julian is singing. He does not care! What's wonderful about Julian is that he does not care if he seems silly. He's Julian!

We're singing, right. We've got all these producers who, by this time, know all these songs because they've been working this archival footage, working with interviewees who sing the freedom songs during their interviews. We also get these scholars, like John Ditmer, who specialized in local [civil rights] movement history, and all these other scholars we have in there. These scholars are not used to singing either. They're rather stiff, you know [laughs]? And they're singing because there's a spirit now in this room and everybody is singing this freedom songs. Loudly! And Julian is singing. Loudly! It's really this wonderful moment where we all get into the same space. It becomes a different space because, as it did for the mass meetings, the movement songs make it a different kind of space. Everybody feels differently now. It's like we're back in the movement! And they look at the cut differently. It's like this is a movement song. This is a movement cut. This is a movement movie. Everything just changes. It was just lovely. Just lovely.

So that was my experience with Julian. Everybody who worked with Julian, all the producers who worked with us doing the voiceover narration at the studio, everybody had stories to tell about Julian. And everybody felt like he was their new best friend. Everybody remembered how amazingly funny Julian was. Julian could just crack you up. He just had that.

THE NAACP YEARS

GI: Can you talk about Julian's time as the president of the NAACP? There were some controversial moments.

JR: Julian always puts principle above everything. It didn't have anything to do with what pressure he was going to come under as a result. He was principled, and he took those principles into whatever arena he was operating in. And maybe even not operating in. In terms of gay rights, he was one of the first black folks in any leadership position who came out in support of gay rights, LGBTQ rights. I remember Julian and I, along with Chuck McDew, the first chairman of SNCC, had been at a program that Cleveland Sellers had put together at the University of South Carolina to honor the twenty-fifth anniversary of the University of South Carolina's African-American Studies program. Chuck, Julian and I were there, as was Bakari Sellers, Cleve's son. Julian and I had to leave to go get a plane. We're at the airport in Columbia, South Carolina. And I say to Julian, "How did you manage to go get all that black leadership and come out in support – such vocal support of gay rights?" And he starts talking about these retrograde black ministers and black leadership that really did not see the issue. No one is saying that gay rights is the same thing as the black freedom struggle. But it is a struggle, and it is a campaign you've got to support. He talks about that and he talks about the slam-back, the pushback that he gets from some of the leadership and others that he just expected it.

But there were some that he didn't expect it from. But no matter what happened he was going to hold strong. And then he starts talking about how one of the one of the strategies he used was that he would quote the Bible. Now this was very funny because Julian was an atheist. So he would quote these Biblical verses. He would go to so-and-so and quote this particular verse that said, "Well, if you are menstruating and you are a woman, then you have to use certain kinds of

cloth and you can't come out." He would say to these black ministers, "So are you saying that this is still true? If you can't go back to what the Bible says about this particular thing and gay rights, are you still going to hold strong about ham, and all the horrible things that are in the Old Testament? He knew what to use in what arena to prove his point. He was so right about everything, including the Bible. He just knew it. He held strong.

When I was a visiting professor at Brown University from 2012-2014, I had just talked about Julian as one of the amazing people in SNCC. And this young guy came up to me – a white guy – and says – he's just really excited and he says Julian Bond is one of his heroes. He was with one of the gay rights student organizations. And he said, "I saw what he was doing and how amazing it was. It just made me feel good that someone from the civil rights movement, from the traditional civil rights movement, could support the movement that we're doing now." I said that's Julian. Julian is not going to shy away from anything no matter how difficult it was. But it spoke to him. And that somebody from the traditional movement should be doing this. It was really important to him.

GI: Did this surprise you?

JR: Oh, no, not in the least. That was Julian. It's not only within the larger society, in the world there is a homophobia that can be lethal.

GI: Literally.

JR: Oh, yes, literally. But also, within the black freedom struggle and the civil rights movement, you would have homophobia. And certainly, you get that among the retrograde, the less progressive black ministers. And you would find that even with some SNCC people. That's not unheard of either. But I would never have assumed otherwise. I mean, just because that Julian is always principled. He sees the commonalities in the struggle. He's never going to back down and he will tell you what he thinks.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON JULIAN BOND

GI: Are there any final thoughts you'd like to leave us with about Julian Bond?

JR: Yes, there is something I would like to leave you with. I was one of the two SNCC folks who spoke at Julian's memorial. It was a wonderful memorial. Tim Jenkins was the other person from SNCC. Let me read part of what I wrote for his memorial. I said, to end:

"We at SNCC bonded as eighteen, nineteen and twenty-year-olds often do except that our bond was forged in struggle. And was stronger because racists at every level were trying to kill us. We really were a band of brothers and sisters and a circle of trust. And that bond exists even today. So Julian reflected on that lasting bond last year during the fiftieth anniversary conference from Mississippi Freedom Summer in Jackson, Mississippi. He told radio interviewer Eric Mann what we, his SNCC comrades, meant to him. And so this is a direct quote from Julian: "To see old friends, to see old buddies, to see these people with whom I went through the most important years of my life. It just means so much to me. I am so happy to be here," he says speaking of the

SNCC conference in 2010 at Shaw University, which is where the first conference went. He says, "I don't want it to end. I know I'm going to miss it. I know that some of these people I'll never see again. And so I would say at the end of that, "Presente, Julian!" That was Julian's work. Thank you.