

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

**Interview with Heather Booth**

**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 Heather Booth**

Heather Booth [b. 1945] grew up in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York, and moved to the North Shore of Long Island shortly before her high school years. She developed a sense of social justice early on, joining the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1960 to support protests of Southern students against racial segregation in public accommodations. Ms. Booth soon joined protests against the death penalty and began to question the Vietnam War. She entered the University of Chicago in 1963, becoming active in the Friends of SNCC chapter and other causes related to education and civil rights in Chicago. Ms. Booth was a volunteer for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project in 1964 and took the lessons from her time there to continue organizing after returning to college, particularly in the area of women’s rights.

Ms. Booth worked with Julian Bond during the 2000 presidential campaign, developing a Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign to increase African American turnout. She maintained a relationship with him until Mr. Bond’s passing in 2015. Ms. Booth is the subject of a 2019 documentary, [Heather Booth: Changing the World](#).

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

**Heather Booth (17-JBOHP)  
May 20th, 2019  
Washington, D.C.**

**Lead Interviewer: Gregg Ivers  
Videographer: Macy Rooney  
Production Assistants: Claire Ivers, Macy Rooney**

**Code: Gregg Ivers [GI] Claire Ivers [CI] Macy Rooney [MR]**

GI: Heather, thank you so much for taking time this afternoon and welcoming us into your home to have this conversation.

HB: Oh, great to see you both. I'm very glad that you're doing these interviews to keep the record of the civil rights movement, both for its history and for those who currently want to learn from it, in order to make history for the future. I'm also glad to see both the professor and the next generation who are going to carry on this legacy!

GI: Speaking on behalf of myself and my students, it's an honor to have this time with you.

HB: All mutual and I'm glad to talk about Julian Bond and the civil rights movement at any point.

**PERSONAL BACKGROUND**

GI: Why don't we begin by having you tell us about your personal background, the influences that you may have had when you were coming up and how that led you into the civil rights movement?

HB: I was so fortunate to be born into a really loving family who held both love at the center of their lives and the belief that we needed to make this a better society. So, in addition to just being a good person, they believed, my folks, that we should actually take it into our hands to make this a better world, to treat all people with dignity and respect and make sure that society was one which treated people with dignity and respect. With those values, I grew up first in Brooklyn, in Bensonhurst, in a community that I was very comfortable with. And then we moved when I was a teenager, in fifth grade to the North Shore of Long Island. I didn't quite feel that I fit in where we moved, and so I ended up seeking out connections and other friends from some other places who did share those

same values. Some I met at camp. I'm still friends with, in fact, one, Ann Popkin. We had been friends when we were teenagers, lost touch with each other a little bit, and then in 1964 met when we were both going down to Mississippi for Freedom Summer.

I also made my way into New York City, as I grew a little older, to find people with shared values. [I] connected first with American Friends Service Committee and then with CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality. In my high school I was involved in a wide array of activities, from the yearbook and chorus. There was even a little sorority. I realized that each of them were excluding people who didn't fit a standard norm. African-American students, kids who seemed to be too fat, too thin, to pimply, to this, to that . . . and I left those organizations that wouldn't let others in, and then made those people who were "other" my friends. They were the ones who sat down together at lunch. I realized I had an association both with the "other" and believed that we treat all people with dignity and respect, both in our personal lives but also in our activities and what we do.

GI: About what year was this or what years were these?

HB: I graduated from high school in 1963. So those were the general years. I often say I was ready for the '60s before I knew the '60s were coming [laughs].

GI: Were there any moments, like did you see the Freedom Rides take place and see the violence? Whether it was the violence in Birmingham, the violence on the Freedom Rides, the violence that became so much of a part of how people literally began to view the movement in the early 60s? Did that accelerate or enhance the kind of engagement that you found yourself getting into?

HB: When I was a teenager, my first-grade teacher found me. I had been living in Brooklyn. We moved to Long Island and so she had to locate me. She came to visit our family and told a story that happened when I was in first grade. There was only one African-American kid in our class in first grade, a boy named Benjamin. One of the girls said that he had stolen her lunch money. There was a circle taunting him and the teacher said I walked into the circle and put my arm around Benjamin. The girl later found that the lunch money was in her shoe. It's hard to say when all this started. I think that it was a part of me and a part of how I believed people should be.

I remember seeing the picture of Emmett Till, the battered, beaten, bloated body, who had been so brutally murdered. [He was] a teenager from [Chicago] who came to Mississippi and was lynched when he so-called whistled at a white woman. We know now years later the woman says he never even did whistle at her.<sup>1</sup> Even if that would have been a problem, and it shouldn't have been a problem, I was horrified that this is what could happen in our country. We needed to do something about it. When I heard about the sit ins at Woolworth's [in Greensboro, North Carolina], I sought out CORE, the Congress of Racial

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<sup>1</sup> The noted scholar of African American history, Timothy Tyson, interviewed Carolyn Bryant, the woman in question, for his 2017 book, *The Blood of Emmett Till* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2017). She admitted that the account she gave of her interaction with Emmett Till was false.

Equality. There was a group in Manhattan that was regularly demonstrating, CORE pickets in front of Woolworth's, which wouldn't seat African-Americans at their lunch counters in the South. So that was an entry point and I was welcomed into the movement. I was a young teenager and felt this is a community of people with shared values who are building a loving community. Taken in their embrace, I wanted to continue with this kind of work.

GI: Were you unusual in the sense that you were a high school student, 15, 16, 17 years old, and yet you find yourself moving towards the civil rights movement? Did you stand out in that sense in your high school class? Where there are others that followed you or did you follow anybody else or were you unusual in the sense that you just decided this was something that you needed to do?

HB: I looked for people who shared the same values. As I was saying, there was a little sorority called "Sixteen" and it had just sixteen people who were allowed in it. I had suggested that some other kids be allowed in it, including some of the black kids, and they weren't allowed in, so I quit. I was on a cheerleading team, "The Portettes" [laughs] in Port Washington and I realized that the African-American cheerleaders were much better than I was, but they weren't allowed on the team, so I quit that. I realized that each time I tried to pursue what I thought was living my values I ran into barriers that didn't support it within that specific community. But my family supported it. I sought support elsewhere. At one point, Dr. [Martin Luther] King [Jr.] was speaking in a nearby town where I lived, and I couldn't find anyone who would go with me. In those days finding how you even get transportation to go hear him speak was a challenge. But I did hear him speak and was glad for it. There wasn't a big basis of support for it. I had a few very close friends, some who shared the broad values, but at that point it was more about discussion about these ideas and less of the taking action.

## **COMING OF AGE IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

GI: As someone who grew up in Atlanta, we were used to hearing from people up North that racism was a Southern problem and things were very different outside the region. But it seems that you broke through that fiction very early on. Were you ever told that racism was a Southern problem and not something you should get involved with, or when you were coming of age did you realize that racism was a national and not just a Southern problem?

HB: It's hard for me to remember how I was consciously thinking about it. I did think that the explicit brutality that I was hearing about in the South, say Emmett Till being lynched, others being lynched – I saw pictures of "A Man Was Lynched Today" from a different era – and I did think that the problem was more dramatic. The dividing line [was] clearer in the South. I was actually born in Mississippi. My father was in the Army and I was born in Brookhaven, Mississippi when he was on an Army base in World War II. We left Mississippi. Part of my history is I knew we left Mississippi as soon as he no longer was deployed there because my folks didn't want to grow up in that kind of closed environment, both by race, by religion – we're Jewish – and I felt there was hostility against Jews also. I thought it was more extreme in the South, I certainly saw inequality, discrimination,

injustice that I'd see in the North. I don't know that I had words to put to it or saw it as systemic, as I understand it now.

## **COLLEGE YEARS**

GI: If I'm correct, you go to the University of Chicago and that becomes your next stop. How did you choose the University of Chicago and how did you continue your activism once you arrive there?

HB: I had interviewed at a number of colleges on the East Coast. I had had this prior experience with a sorority, so I didn't want to go to a school with a sorority. I didn't want to go to a school where I felt people were in just a closed environment, so I [wasn't really interested in] a school that might have been away from a city, that didn't have an urban experience. The University of Chicago didn't have sororities. There is a story that one of the students, Ida Noyes had pledged a sorority, had wanted to be in a sorority and then wasn't accepted and committed suicide. At least the rumor is – I don't know.

Apocryphal or not that, as a result her parents, created the student center called Ida Noyes in her honor and I was very impressed with that. Also, I didn't go to the campus. I was interviewed at a distance because I lived in New York. We had a great discussion about books and philosophy and about how the world should look and what morality was like. And I thought, "Oh, this is the place that I want to go." And at that point, the university was focused on the life of the mind. I found it very engaging and exciting, and I came to understand that you need the life of the mind in a society and the two need to be engaged. Once I got to Chicago, after the first week of being totally intimidated and wondering did I really even belong, I was a pretty insecure person and in some ways I think I still carry that insecurity in the same way that many people feel I'm not good enough, I'm not smart enough, I'm not pretty enough. I'm not enough.

And so much of society tells us we're not good enough. Part of what I found is, however we are, together we are stronger, together we can solve these problems. But we have to come together, we have to organize. I came to the university out of an experience of feeling I didn't really belong. Within about a week I felt like this this was my place. There was a school boycott called against the public schools that had segregated and second-class schools for black kids. It was at a time when you could have a black school and a white school next to each other. The black school was overcrowded. And could have sent students into the white school and still had neighborhood schools without busing. There wasn't. There was still a closeness.

But instead of doing that, the superintendent of schools put trailers on the school grounds of the black schools, and they were named after him. His name was Ben Willis and they were called "Willis Wagons." It became a symbol of what we were fighting against, which had substandard texts at the school, substandard chemistry labs. If there was a swimming pool in the white school, there was none in the black school. The school boycott was for quality integrated schools. During the school boycott, there was an attempt to have "Freedom Schools." I played a role in recruiting teachers and helping to organize. Under the

direction of a coordinating group, the "Triple C" – the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations (CCCO) and particularly with the leadership of SNCC or Friends of SNCC, which is what SNCC was called in the North – it became very active with it helped recruit and build that that those Freedom Schools for that day that were just so great.

The kids loved it. The parents loved it. The teachers loved it and some progress was made because we had organized. I then learned a whole new world that was organizing on these issues. Al Raby was the head of the Coordinating Council of Community Organizations. He became a very good friend later on. His wife, who became one of my best friends and is still one of my best friends, Pam Novak Raby, we ended up living together. Al and Pat and my husband Paul and I ended up living in the same apartment together both because it was cheaper to all live together and a little bit for security.

We used to joke there was one police car out front who was keeping track of Al, Paul, my husband, who had been very active – was a national student leader in the anti-war movement and the student movement – me and Pat. We used to joke that the police car got four for the price of one [laughs]. I came into a whole new world. There was Al, the head of SNCC, Sylvia Fisher and Monroe Sharpe were the co-chairs of SNCC in Chicago, a white woman and a black man. Fanny Rushing was the staff person, who is still keeping alive the SNCC tradition in Chicago. I set up a Friends of SNCC chapter on my campus and became the coordinator of that and carried on the activities from that Friends of SNCC chapter, as well as other things on campus. I was involved in the student government. I was involved in SDS. I had set up what became the first independent women's liberation organization on a campus. I just loved this world. It opened up for me. And I fully engaged it.

GI: Was this all during your first year at school?

HB: No.

GI: I'm thinking, "Wow! You did more in one semester than I did in four years of undergraduate and five years graduate school."

HB: [laughs] So '63 to '64, my first year, I was very active in a lot of things. The civil rights movement through Friends of SNCC. The anti-war movement, against the war in Vietnam, the building of a "New Left" on campus. The women's movement activity really started in 1965. It's a whole story to it. But it's also related a bit to SNCC at a crucial point. One of the SNCC organizers played a crucial role.

GI: I'd like to back up a little bit and talk about the Friends of SNCC program on campuses outside the South. What did it mean to be a Friend of SNCC on a Northern college campus? What kinds of things did you all do?

HB: SNCC was the overall organization. It was largely staffed by field staff who were full-time, low-paid deeply dedicated frontlines of the civil rights movement . . .

GI: \$9.64 cents a week after taxes . . .

HB: [laughs] . . . and were incredible organizers who went in and listened to people who heard more than they talked, who then gave people a way to come together and take action together and gain confidence and gain victories. In the North, to distinguish from those who were the full-time field staff, we had Friends of SNCC chapters, and those were designed largely to support the work going on in the South. But we also emerged into support for work on civil rights going on in Chicago. We did fundraising. We had a big event with Dick Gregory where we raised money to give to Amzie Moore, who really helped to initiate the voter projects in Mississippi.<sup>2</sup> We did demonstrations to create visibility for the issue. We would write up educational material. We were on campuses, so we often injected those issues into the coursework, and had sympathetic professors use that as part of the coursework. They would raise it so that it was the life of the mind within a society. We became knowledgeable ourselves on the issues and we're able to talk about it.

### **THE MISSISSIPPI EXPERIENCE – FREEDOM SUMMER 1964**

HB: For several years, I was also doing national traveling, going to other campuses and other places talking about our experience. This is particularly after 1964, when I went south to Mississippi. Friends of SNCC also helped to recruit for the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project that happened in '64.

GI: Were you a recruiter?

HB: No, I was a volunteer. I actually was recruited, and I applied. We also recruited other people, but as volunteers.

GI: I see. So you're New York-raised, you're at the University of Chicago, then you find yourself in rural Mississippi in the summer of 1964. Can you talk a little bit about everything from just being there, what you saw and what you did to some of the cultural dynamics that existed for a lot of Northern students coming south for the first time?

HB: Well, first of all there was a rigorous acceptance process. I think I was borderline whether I'd even be accepted. You have to write essays: Why do you want to do it? There were interviews. Curtis Hayes, now Curtis Mohammed, was one of the people who interviewed me and he was really wanting to know whether I'd be able to stand the rigors of the South and would I respect the people that I was living and working with, knowing that this was *their* struggle and they were taking the lead in their struggle. We then had a training session in Oxford, Ohio. I was in the second round of training.

There were two rounds going down. And it's particularly notable because, while in the training, we learned about nonviolence [and] we learned about poverty. We read Michael Harrington's *The Other America*, just about poverty in America. We had great speakers come about the state of race relations in America, the legal status, the political analysis that

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<sup>2</sup>. David Dennis (02-JBOHP), Bob Moses (10-JBOHP), Hollis Watkins (11-JBOHP) and Charlie Cobb (15-JBOHP) all discuss the work of Amzie Moore in Mississippi during the period leading up to the Freedom Summer.

part of the reason we were going down was that there were these "rotten boroughs." They were places where African-Americans were way overrepresented in the population for what they represented in the voting population – almost none, because people lived in a state of terror. That is, poor black people lived in a state of terror.

We learned technical skills, cultural background [and] political history. We learned relationships with each other. We learned what we would be teaching. We were teaching both literacy with the Laubach Method, so people could learn literacy tests to write their names when they registered to vote. We saw a curriculum that Staughton Lynd and others had developed of Freedom School teaching that also was learning from people their own history so that the main lesson was people can make their history. We've made it in the past. We can make it in the future when we come together. We learn skills of nonviolent civil disobedience so that would be disciplined and not jeopardize the lives of the others we were working and living with.

Just before the session ended, the people in the second group. [which] was about to go down, got the news from Bob Moses that three of the volunteers, Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, who was from Mississippi, and Michael Schwerner were missing. They had been picked up by the local sheriff when they were investigating a church bombing and released that night. We knew it was dangerous. And while we hoped for the best, we thought it was likely that they had been killed. Bob Moses, in framing a parallel of good and evil around the Lord of the Rings, and the impact of power and how power corrupts, and how we are part of the force to address that power. In a very moving time, he both tried to give people space if they chose not to go and wanted to know if we'd commit to go.

I committed to going. When I called my folks, who I loved dearly, just before I went, they were hysterical on the phone because they were so frightened. My mother was so frightened she couldn't really talk. My father was so frightened that it was one of the first times I actually remember him yelling at me. It's not the kind of house I grew up in, but he was so frightened. I went down the next day so part of what was in my frame was both concern for the people I lived with. I didn't want to get any of them killed. Concern for my parents, who I loved dearly, but felt our relationship had fractured over this. Going down, just trying to figure out what I could do that could be of any help. I was in three towns in Mississippi.

The first was in Ruleville. We met with Mrs. [Fannie Lou] Hamer. I've got a picture of her right there if you want to . . . [Ms. Booth holds the picture up in front of the camera]. Well, there's Mrs. Hamer just outside of her home with two of her friends. I was often the person playing the guitar for the group meetings, even though I didn't have a very good voice, but I figured I had the spirit to carry it along. And from Ruleville we went to Shaw, a little town. I stayed with a most remarkable family, Andrew and Mary Lou Hawkins and their kids. The generosity of that family the courage the insights, the knowledge, the leadership that they provided, is breathtaking. I've never seen a greater demonstration in my entire life.

There were so many things I didn't even appreciate initially. I think we had four volunteers staying in the house. First of all, this was a family that did not [have] many resources, took

in four volunteers and we slept in what I only later understood was Mr. and Mrs. Hawkins large bed. They must have slept on the couch or on chairs in another room. But they took us in with incredible generosity. One early night I had a conversation with Mr. Hawkins. I had prided myself on really knowing about Chicago politics, and I realized he knew so much more about Chicago politics than I knew. He regularly got the *Chicago Defender*. He kept up on it. He asked me questions I certainly didn't know the answers to. And I realized you need to listen to local people, trust them. They know what they need. Find out from them what they want us to do. They took us with them to church. A black revival church, the Church of God in Christ. That was a whole new experience for me [laughs]. We lived in a house. They had a pig, and the pig would come in and out of the house – the indoor and the outdoor was a little bit permeable.

GI: We're pretty far from Long Island at this point [laughs].

HB: We're pretty far from Kansas, yeah [laughs]. They had an outhouse. They had running water in the house but had an outhouse. And their love really was transformative. After the summer, the Hawkins family joined in with some other families in Shaw and sued the town of Shaw for unequal facilities that were in the white part of town and in the black part of town. The black part of town had no paved roads, no sewer system, no indoor toilets. The white part of town had all of that and more. The Hawkins family in the suit is called *Hawkins v. Shaw*.<sup>3</sup> The Hawkins family and the few other families won the suit going all the way to the Supreme Court. There are some who think that that case is as significant as *Brown vs. Board of Education*. After the lawsuit, their house was firebombed twice. And in the second firebombing, one son and two grandchildren were killed. They never found the people. I don't even know if they investigated thoroughly for the people who caused the firebombing. And then a bit later, one of the policemen shot Mrs. Hawkins to death. Though he was tried, he was exonerated.

So you have four people in one family who were killed because they stood up for justice and freedom. And almost no one knows that story. This summer or this fall – I think in October – Bennie Thompson, the congressman from that area, has gotten a piece of highway renamed in the name of the Hawkins family. Timla Washington, who is working for him on this project, is trying now to raise funds so there can be an organizer to come back to Shaw to revitalize the movement for self-determination, and the freedom and justice movement. Shaw had a profound effect on me.

The third town I went to was Cleveland, which was more of a town. I mean, it was paved roads! Amzie Moore, who lived in Cleveland, had actually a brick and cement building. I mean, things were a more built up in that area, not quite a city, but a mini-city. I lived with a woman who was a midwife and who also made moonshine [laughs]. Mississippi is a dry state, at least those counties were dry, and she made moonshine in the bathtub [laughs].

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<sup>3</sup>. The litigation brought by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund on behalf of the Hawkins family began in the late 1960s. The Hawkins lost in federal district court, a decision that was reversed by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in 1971. That decision was affirmed by an *en banc* Fifth Circuit panel a year later. See *Hawkins v. Town of Shaw*, 461 F.2d 1171 (1972).

She could only take a bath on, I think it was Sunday, the day that everything was [laughs] delivered out. But again, incredible generosity. People are going on with their lives taking risks because we're there and accepting us into their homes. We did more voter registration there.

In Shaw, while I was there, we did Freedom School work. We did trained people, [taught] people's history, telling your own story. Literacy. Some reading and writing. We also went out to do voter registration work. We gathered up a crew of as many people as we could and brought them down to the courthouse to register to vote. The police picked us up to stop the registration drive and they held us until it was too late. Just about nightfall, at which point the drive was ended. We realized if you can't register using the official tools of registration, we would do a freedom registration. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party became a very vital vehicle. Mrs. Hamer, Fannie Lou Hamer, became co-chair of that. You had a white reverend and a black former sharecropper who became co-chairs.<sup>4</sup>

We'd go out to get people to register in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. It was organized by town, by county and by state, voting who they wanted to represent them at the National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. And at the end of the summer, as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party came to Atlantic City, the Freedom Democratic Party was offered two seats as a compromise which was an integrated delegation as opposed to the all-white delegation and Mrs. Hamer, with the moral clarity that she always had said we won't take two seats because we're all tired. It didn't win that day, but it did rivet the consciousness of a country.

It did change the rules of the Democratic Party, so you now have integrated racially integrated and later gender integrated delegations to the Democratic Party, and you can just see it at these conventions. If you look at the Republican Party and the Democratic Party for who's seated and who's not in one room, you have an integrated room racially integrated room with multi-faceted backgrounds, and in another you have basically a white population in which there's a search for where is that African-American? Where is . . .

Change was made because people organized. And then after 1964, within a year, there was a voting rights act. So even when things seem most hopeless, even when lives are taken, even when people live in terror, and you almost can't see a way out. There is a way when people organize. But we have to organize. It doesn't happen naturally. I think the most important lesson for these students that are watching this is that if we organize, we can change the world, but we need to organize. Among the other great lessons I learned from Mississippi, and they were many, one was sometimes there's illegitimate authority and you have to stand up to illegitimate authority. You may even have to break a law if it's an unjust law.

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<sup>4</sup> The white reverend to which Ms. Booth refers is Ed King, a Methodist minister who began service as campus chaplain at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, a historically black college that served as a safe haven and staging ground for the civil rights movement in Jackson and Southern Mississippi.

I learned how much we need to trust local people. People know what they need. If given just a little bit of help and a chance to get together. And people's courage and generosity can really start to mirror the beloved community that Dr. King talked about.

## **HOW THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT INSPIRED THE WOMEN'S RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

GI: How important was your experience in the civil rights movement in organizing for the women's rights movement?

HB: One movement gives birth to another. Almost every modern movement owes our lives to the civil rights movement. Partly it was because of the incredible courage and brilliance of the civil rights movement, but it's also because the civil rights movement in the '60s came out of a period of McCarthyism and quiescence, political quiescence, with a lot of work going on but not visible because McCarthyism drove out some of the most vital portions of the progressive movement. Trying to scare [people] by saying, "That person's a socialist, that person is a Communist, that person is not to be trusted. Oh, you're against lynching. You must be a Communist. Oh, you want to raise issues about wages of farm workers in the South. Oh, maybe you're Communist. Oh, you once went to a meeting with someone who . . ." and so on. This guilt by association, in which people were fired. Some people were hounded so much they committed suicide. People went underground and had to have a new identity because you couldn't hold a job in your old name, your real name because of this period of McCarthyism and the Red Scare.

Out of that period the work on the ground with civil rights was still going on. In the civil rights movement, as it burst forth, it gave new courage to everything that came after. One of the movements that it helped us to birth was part of the women's movement. There were many origins, particularly from SNCC in the South. During the summer of '64, Mary King, Maria Varela and a third writer wrote a paper about caste and sex. I may have the details wrong, but I know the point. It was being circulated and it raised the issue of women in the [civil rights] movement and raised the question of, "What's the position of women in the movement?" The quick answer, the joking answer, was the women's position in the movement, it's prone, on our back.<sup>5</sup>

It's sometimes attributed to the person who said it, but actually he was mocking how the movement treated women. He, I think, really did was inclusive of women, at least in the project that I was involved with, in projects that I saw. He was our overall supervisor, Stokely Carmichael – Kwame Touré later. But that paper was one of the first times the issue was raised and being talked about. By 1965, I'm back on campus, I've been spreading the story the civil rights movement and my professor, Dick Flacks, who had been in the founding of SDS, Students for a Democratic Society, and was a sociology professor at the University of Chicago. He said that there was going to be a national conference of SDS in Champaign-Urbana [Illinois] and that they were going to discuss "the woman question."

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<sup>5</sup>. Two papers were written in 1964 about issues of sex and caste in the civil rights movement, and specifically women who worked for SNCC. For a discussion of these papers, see <http://scalar.usc.edu/works/sex-and-caste-at-50/transcription-sncc-position-paper-24--1964>.

Based on some things I had said in class, he thought that it would be interesting for me to go down. I went to my first SDS conference, though I'd been a member of SDS on campus and quite active in it.

During that conference, there was a many-hours discussion about women, women's roles and the women would say, "I sometimes feel you don't listen to me" and the men would say, "Oh, that's not true." Or the women would start talking and men would interrupt. Three SNCC organizers, led by Jimmy Garrett, who was a terrific SNCC organizer, got up and said, "The women aren't going to get your act together until you go off by yourselves and talk by yourselves." And so he left with his two men friends and at first I thought, "Oh, no, we are black and white together, we're men and women together, we can make this all work."

And then after about another hour I realized he was exactly right. We just can't make progress unless those who feel the problem most directly can talk with each other. We went off as women when we went back to our towns and I came from Chicago. I started women's liberation groups on campus and then in the town overall, in my community overall, and set up the WRAP – Women's Radical Action Program. One of the reasons that we set it up is that I had been speaking in an SDS gathering on campus. When I was talking, one of the guys said, "Ah, shut up!" I was so shocked that he'd treat anyone that way, and I also felt he shouldn't treat *me* that way. I tapped all the women on the shoulder when I was done speaking and said, "Let's go upstairs."

We did and we formed this group, Women's Radical Action Program. The name came out of Students for a Democratic Society, [which] had community organizing groups called "E-WRAP Groups." There was one on the Northside of Chicago called, "JOIN" – Jobs Or Income Now – that was working in a white Appalachian part of the city. And that project did things like study what we called "significant response." How often did the teacher respond to a man student and a woman student? The teacher might go, "Oh, John, what do you think? John would say something. "Oh, that was very interesting, and have you considered this or that. Bill, what do you think?" Bill would say, "Oh, I don't think that really works because what about this? Sue, what do you think? Robert, what do you think, as if Sue didn't even exist.

We called that "significant response." And it was a 4-to-1 significant response from men versus women. Then we released the study. We had it discussed in classes. We'd also prepare women, [because] women would feel insecure. If you're treated as a non-person, you feel like a non-person. We'd prepare before going into the class. If Sue raised her hand and said something and then was ignored, another woman would raise her hand and say, "I thought what Sue said was very interesting. I think we should go back to that question and pursue it a little bit." And we did a number of efforts like that.

We had some demonstrations also in '65. A friend of mine had been raped at knifepoint in her bed. When we went with her to student health to get a gynecological exam, she was given a lecture on her promiscuity and told student health didn't cover gynecological exams. We sat with her. They called it a sit in. Because people organized, you now get

gynecological coverage from student health not only at that university but around the country. But we only make that progress when we organize. We now know those rights are now being taken away, but we can make progress when we organize. Further in '65, a friend of mine told me his sister was pregnant and was nearly suicidal and wanted an abortion and I wasn't sure what to do.

I hadn't really ever thought about the issue before and I've never had to address it personally. I went to the Medical Committee for Human Rights, which was the medical arm of the civil rights movement, and asked them if they knew anyone who would provide an abortion and was directed to T.R.M. Howard, who was an extraordinary doctor and civil rights activist who had left Mississippi when his name appeared on a Klan death list. [He] came to Chicago and set up what I only learned later was Friendship Clinic on 63rd Street, a large women's clinic.

He and I made an arrangement by phone. He did the procedure and I thought I would just go on my way. I thought I was just doing a favor for a friend, but word must have spread from someone else, not from me, and someone else called. And then word spread and someone else called and I set up a system. We called the system, "Jane," and over time the Women of Jane ended up performing themselves eleven thousand abortions between 1965 and 1973, when *Roe v. Wade* was [decided and] became the law of the land, by the Supreme Court.

When we organize, we make a difference. And now these rights and freedoms for women are now being pushed back and though seven in ten people in the United States don't think *Roe* should be overturned, it's functionally being overturned now. Women's lives, our freedom, our choice about whether we can have full participation in the society, is being threatened with this assault on women. It's only with organizing that we will really be able to respond and turn this around. We need to organize so one movement informs another.

At the same time there was an emerging anti-war movement. I was very active on campus in that we organized the first sit in of an administration building against the war in Vietnam. That was against the university participating with the Selective Service System on a ranking system of male students. We knew the rank order, how high your grade point average was, would then be given to the Selective Service System. If you had a lower grade point average, you were more likely to be drafted and sent to a war that we didn't believe in anyway. I mean, what was the purpose of that war?

This sit in against the rank then attracted national attention and one of the speakers that was invited in was the National Secretary of Students for a Democratic Society, whose headquarters was based in Chicago. His name was Paul Booth. He says a friend told him to look for me. We sat next to each other. Three days later he asked me to marry him. Five days later I said I would if we waited a year. We were married in 1967 when I graduated and were married for fifty years until he died just a little over a year ago. We were movement partners. Even in the last day of his life – he died unexpectedly – we knew he had been ill but didn't think it was that serious. I had signed up for civil disobedience on

behalf of the "Dreamers." It's called "Jews for Dreamers." It's going to be a faith-based support for dreamers. There were probably eighty rabbis and other clergy there.

GI: Tell us who the dreamers are.

HB: Oh, they're undocumented young people who are students, and were looking for a way to be able to stay in this country and have at least a protected status. [They] have so many dramatic stories. Of course, Trump has undone any protections or promise of any protections, for Dreamers. I wasn't going to go to the sit in once I knew my husband was ill. He said, "No, no, no. You really should go." I went to the sit in. It got a lot of attention. I come back to the hospital. Paul is in a great mood. He's feeling terrific on seeing the pictures of the sit in and seeing the visibility and showing it in fact to the nurses, some of whom themselves are immigrants and sending the pictures around.

And then within an hour he died, very unexpectedly. I mention it partly because the last joy in his life was his pleasure at seeing that, in effect, we were both taking action to support another generation in search of freedom and justice and that's what we lived our life for. I hope in part through this video and the kind of teaching you did and certainly by the life that Julian Bond led, I hope others learn the lesson of how our lives can be enriched when we ourselves are part of the struggle for justice and freedom.

## **WORKING WITH JULIAN BOND**

HB: I knew who Julian was. And like anyone just about who was for justice and freedom, I fell in love with Julian from a distance. I admired him, admired his work. I had heard the story about him not being seated in the Georgia legislature and then winning [laughs]. I'd followed him around the Democratic convention being offered into nomination [for the vice-presidency].

GI: So you were at the 1968 convention?

HB: I was outside. I was in the streets with a brand-new baby who was just weeks old thinking that we were going to a picnic. That was Grant Park, and then the tear gas started coming from the police riot. I knew who Julian was and admired him. At the SNCC reunion in Mississippi . . . it wasn't the 50th. I'm trying to remember which one it was but at a prior SNCC reunion, Julian, his wife Pam, and I were seated together sometimes and in conversations. This is in the year 2000. After that, Julian approached me and asked me if I would run the advocacy arm of the NAACP, which had received a good deal of funding and was building up even greater funding to run a very intensive African-American "Get Out the Vote" effort and wanted it run both in a grassroots way and professionally.

I had a history of organizing on different issues. I had started a training center for organizers, and it trained many, many organizations around the country and thousands of people. I had started and been co-director of one of the first organizations that built statewide organizations, multi-issue, which both were new phenomena statewide and

multi issue. They used to be local and national groups and we combined them. I had helped to play a role in helping to build the Working Women's Movement and other efforts.

After [President Ronald] Reagan was elected [in 1980] I became involved in politics. I was very active with Mayor Washington in Chicago and then in other Chicago campaigns. Then, by 1993, I had just run the field campaign for Carol Moseley Braun when she ran and won for Senate, from Illinois. In '93. I went to work at the Democratic National Committee, first to help set up a field effort and then I did outreach as a single payer advocate but for the Hillary health care plan and then became the training director. I'd run a very large-scale training operation.

GI: And this is all during the 1990s?

HB: This is '93, '94, '95 through '98. It was just before I met Julian. He asked me then if I would run this Get Out the Vote arm and they'd set up a new organization, the NAACP National Voter Fund. I tried to find someone else who could run it, but it was late, it was already July – or end of June, beginning of July – and I couldn't find someone to run it. Also, it sounded like out of the blue. I agreed to run it and spoke to and had Julian's support. They set up a five-person board. It was an extraordinary effort and Julian's leadership was extraordinary. He was exactly the kind of chair he wanted. Someone who informed you, ensured you were accountable and gave you the room to actually implement the program that could really work. We created a massive effort. We were in about thirty states with grassroots effort. We had thousands of volunteers around the country. We had eighty people who were [on a] stipend to us in coordination. We only had five people on the central staff, so it's a very small operation where really the effort worked out in the field, partnering with the NAACP, which was the legal (c)3 organization to the (c)4 organization that was moving out this larger get out the vote effort.

I'm told that we increased African-American turnout by over a million votes. We increased the turnout in Florida by such a high percentage that it's why George [W.] Bush decided he had to steal the election because the African-American vote was so extraordinarily high that it hadn't been expected. At every point, Julian was there to support this effort. We had a fairly controversial ad that we ran. Rene Mullins, whose father had been dragged to death in Texas – we had an ad about that as a hate crime. When she goes to Governor George Bush of Texas and says, "I'd like to get your support for a hate crime legislation," George Bush says no. We took out an ad with a slight partial reenactment – the sound reenactment of what happened – it was very dramatic.

It helped motivate the black community. Turnout increased. We know Bush stole the election, and so we weren't successful. We didn't do enough on voter protection work, which we now still need to do. The voter funds have still continued in this. Now, the (c)4 or advocacy arm of the national NAACP, under the great leadership that Derrick Johnson is providing, who is from Mississippi. Julian saw this through. And then Julian and his wife, Pam, and I became very good friends. Our birthdays are around the same time – and his date is the same as Taylor Branch's birthday – so we would sometimes go out together for

birthdays and other times.<sup>6</sup> It's an exceptional life to be a movement couple, with Paul and me and Pam and Julian. At every moment, Julian's clarity about what needed to be done, his moral direction – I'd call it courage, but he wouldn't. He would just say it was the right thing to do. He treated something that even would have taken emotional energy from another person as just the most natural thing. On every issue that mattered, he was there. At one point I was working on the Iran agreement and Julian made a statement for the Iran agreement, calling for a vote on this Iran agreement, this great civil rights leader.

GI: What was the Iran agreement?

HB: Oh, that was an agreement in order to limit the nuclear capacity of Iran. There was an agreement that was in operation until the current president withdrew from it, bringing us closer and closer and to the verge of war. Julian took a stand for the agreement. I was working on marriage equality – I ran the coalition around marriage equality, around the Supreme Court decision. Julian agreed to come to our big rally to stand up to speak for it. Whatever the issue he was, he was there. I ran an effort on social security. Julian was there. He would give a quote, he would give a tweet, he'd physically come, if he possibly could. There was an immigration [issue]. I ended up either running or advising large-scale social change efforts. I was the strategic advisor to the immigration reform campaign. We had a fast that went on for many days. Julian joined us, not in the fast, but in support for it. And it was so meaningful.

You have a great leader, one of the great leaders of one movement providing inspiration for another movement and teaching the lessons and seeing how they're carrying on. He always saw the connection between those movements, between those people. He knew the importance, particularly of young people in the movement because he had been part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. At each point, he not only spoke truth to power, but he knew that we need to organize to have real power behind those words. He is one of the greatest leaders I've ever known. He's one of the greatest people I've ever known. He is irreplaceable and his legacy goes on.

I'm so grateful that you're recording these recognitions of him, his impact and this work so that it is carried on.

## **THE LEGACY OF JULIAN BOND**

HB: Julian was also one of the greatest human beings I've ever known, both a regular person and a super hero, both at the same time. Super hero to others regular person to himself. He always had a mocking sense, liked a good joke and took things deeply seriously. His impact on civil rights on equality overall, and on marriage equality, will leave a lasting legacy. He did this extraordinary effort which helped to lead the NAACP into support for marriage equality. By his presence and his actions helped to raise and elevate the need for racial equality within the LGBT movement. Wherever he went he was a Johnny Appleseed.

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<sup>6</sup> Taylor Branch was interviewed for this project (05-JBOHP).

Or maybe we can just say maybe we can aspire to be a Julian Bond, supporting movements supporting people, out of both love and hate for the indignities that people face. Find ways to bring us together and move us forward. I miss him dearly. The world misses him. We need more of him now and we need all those watching this video to go out and take up that spirit.