

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

Interview with Michael Bond

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American University
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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. Mr. Bond was given the opportunity to review the transcript for accuracy.

Biographical Note for Michael Bond

Michael Bond is the third of Julian Bond's five children. A graduate of Frederick Douglass High School in Atlanta, Mr. Bond attended Morehouse College and Georgia State University. He was first elected to the Atlanta City Council in 1994 and served until 2001. In 2009, Mr. Bond re-entered Atlanta politics when he was elected to the City Council, on which – as of 2019 – he continues to serve. For over two decades, Mr. Bond has been an active member of the Atlanta branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

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“The Making of Julian Bond, 1960-68”
American University

Michael Bond (23-JBOHP)
October 11th, 2019
Atlanta, Georgia

Interviewer: Gregg Ivers
Videography: Jessica Merriman
Production Assistant: Jessica Merriman

Code: Gregg Ivers [GI] Michael Bond [MB]

GI: Today is Friday, October 11th, 2019, and we are in the office of Councilman Michael Bond at City Hall in Atlanta, Georgia, to conduct an interview for the Julian Bond Oral History Project, 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 Director of the Julian Bond Oral History Project.

Michael Bond is the third of five children of Julian Bond. A member of the Atlanta City Council from 1994-2001, and then from 2009 to the present, Mr. Bond will talk about what it was like to grow up in the Bond household, how his Dad influenced his personal interests, career choices and his own vision of public service. Finally, Mr. Bond will talk about his Dad’s legacy as a civil rights activist, educator, public figure and, above all, a father.

GI: Mr. Bond, thank you so much for taking time this afternoon to have me down to your office and have this conversation.

MB: Sure. It's my pleasure.

GROWING UP A BOND

GI: I'd like to begin by asking you what it was like to grow up in your household with Julian Bond as your Dad?

MB: Well, for me, I was the middle of five in a family of seven. At home, it was probably like everybody else's family. I'm the middle child, so that had its own challenges. The family dynamics for me, though, with my father's schedule, [were] different than some of my friends' parents. I had other friends of mine that really could relate to the kind of schedule my Dad had. I had a couple of friends whose Dads were truck drivers. They were on the road and they were gone ten days at a time.

And that's how it was with my Dad. He was constantly traveling, constantly on the road. I became accustomed to him, literally, really not being at home. But when he was at home, I wanted as much of his attention as I could get. I spent as much time with him, even if we weren't doing anything, if he was just doing his work or typing a speech or just mulling around at home. I just kind of wanted to be in his presence. My mother was the primary manager of the house and she was strict. She was tough.¹ My Dad was more of a pushover [laughs], kind of a marshmallow, when it came to us. We were really happy and relieved when he would come around, which is kind of unfair to my mother because she kind of ran everything. You always miss the parent that's not there the most. When he did come back, though, he tried to make up for it. I mean, he would take us everywhere with him – to community meetings, to the store, to wherever he was running errands.

We got exposed to a lot and saw a lot of people, people in the movement, a lot of the celebrities around town, a lot of people of note around Atlanta. We got to know them, even some on a first-name basis because we would see them so frequently with him. Family life was, as I said, probably at home, pretty normal. But when we would go out to a restaurant or somewhere like that, there was no privacy. People would say, "Oh, I don't mean to impose." But then they turn around and they would impose and want to talk to him and speak to him and ask him about different issues. He was also elected to the [Georgia] state house and then the state Senate. So everywhere we went, we had to share him with everybody else. Sometimes, as a kid, that was tough, knowing that anywhere that we went, whether it's McDonald's or Piccadilly [Cafeteria] or wherever we were shopping for clothes, people are going to come up and want a piece of his time.

GI: What was that like for you? Did you enjoy that?

MB: Well, yes and no. I mean, it does have its advantages because as a child, with most of my friends, their circle beyond their family were just our other friends. I knew adults, and I didn't know just any adults. I knew adults who were movers and shakers in the city. If my Dad wasn't in the newspaper, there was Andy Young or John Lewis or Tommy Dortch or Lorenzo Benn, who was a state senator, or . . . Jondelle Johnson. Maynard Jackson, for example I could say I knew them. Because I was with them when my Dad was around, some of the things that they were doing that were getting media coverage of note, I could say to my friends, "Oh, I was there. I heard about that. I was in that conversation, you know, wink, wink [smiles]. I know something about this and that." It did make the world bigger for me. It made me feel like I wasn't just a child, if that makes any sense. I didn't feel confined to the world as a child. I felt networked. I felt connected to the larger city beyond my elementary school or high school.

But the disadvantages were some of the ones that I mentioned. You have to compete for the time that your Dad has. It's one thing when we have to compete for his time as siblings, as everybody wants some individual time. But then you're going out and then folks who are

¹. Julian Bond was married to Alice Clopton Bond from 1961-1989. All five of Julian Bond's children are from his first marriage.

strangers, some who are friends, some people you've never seen before, are all vying to get in and wanted to have a piece of him or just a few minutes. They're always polite and say, "Hey, I don't want to impose." But impose they do. And they don't stop.

GI: Your Dad built a reputation, even as a young activist, as always being collected, as always being cool, as always having the right thing to say. Did you see some of those qualities in him as a Dad, as his son?

MB: Yes. He had a very, as you describe, a very cool demeanor. At times it was as smooth as glass. But some of the things that the public didn't get to see was that he had a tremendous sense of humor and a razor-sharp wit. He was very, very funny. I wouldn't say he liked to tease, but he liked to joke. He was very, very playful. It was always fun being around him because he was so funny. And he really was silly in a lot of ways, particularly, when you're smaller, He liked to play games. Sometimes he could have a temper, but you would have had to have done something really bad to bring out that temper. This said, my mother pretty much was the disciplinarian. And if my father got riled and got upset, you had earned it. It wasn't something that was just off the cuff. But he was very funny. He loved music. He loved jazz. He loved all kinds of music. I believe all of us got some of that [about] every genre, whether it was some amount of country music to blues and jazz and rockabilly, rock and roll, from The Coasters to The Lettermen. He was all over the place musically. I think that expanded our musical taste as well.

GI: What do you think contributed to his wide range of interests in music, because you've mentioned a wide range of artists Where did that interest come from?

MB: Well, I think probably growing up on a college campus and then growing up in Pennsylvania, on the campus of Lincoln [University] and in the town that they were in. They lived in a diverse town. He went to the George School when he was in high school. That was a multicultural experience, a Quaker school that was still kind of multicultural. He had the advantage of being a teenager when rock and roll was "New Wave." It was changing the music industry. It was a brand-new thing that nobody had seen before. He got to be exposed to that and all of its different iterations. He was also around a diverse group of teenagers. When you're that young, you're forming your identity. You're exposed to other people, exposed to other ways of life. He got a taste of that as a teenager and it stuck with him. You're excited about those different kinds of things. I had a similar experience in the 80s, with New Wave and hip hop and rap in my own generation. But in his, it was rockabilly, it was rock and roll, it was rhythm and blues, it was soul music. All these different things, coming to the fore musically that he could share with people outside of his African American culture up there. He was exposed to folks in the Jewish community, Catholics, Protestants, Italians, Irish, all these different cultures kind of blending in. And he soaked it in.

FROM DAD TO NATIONAL PUBLIC FIGURE

GI: When did you first become aware of some of the work your Dad had been involved in in the mid to late 1960s when he was still building his notoriety and becoming a person of

national significance? When did you learn about these things, given that you were very young at the time?

MB: Well, I think it just kind of happened. It was also a slowly growing and increasing awareness as I got older from infancy. But it really wasn't until I got in elementary school that I remember seeing my Dad on television. I've got a really good memory. I can remember seeing the moonwalk in '68. I remember seeing my Dad on television in '68.² I remember parents or grandmothers showing us him on television during the news. But – I was born in '66 – that just seemed to be normal. Like, "Well, hey, my Dad was on TV!" You know, the same guy whose sitting on the sofa at home. But it wasn't until my friends and then my teachers, when I began to see their reaction to him, it was like, "Hey, there's something going on here!" I know my friends' parents, I'm not as excited to see them as they are to see my Dad. I would guess probably around the first, second and third grade, the early '70s, that I began to realize that there is an impact here.

GI: When you kind of think about this now, looking back at the development of your Dad's career, particularly the early part of his career, what do you think was the most consequential of those events?

MB: Well, I think probably what catapulted him to the national scene would have been the issues around the legislature. He was on this road to becoming a good activist and a good, decent politician until he confirmed the SNCC statement on Vietnam.³ If [James] "Sloppy" Floyd and others in the Georgia legislature had not had that knee-jerk reaction, I'm sure my father would have had a great impact on what he did with his life, but that was the catalyst, I think, that propelled him to the stratosphere, politically. That put him at "Ground Zero" for the conversation at the time, which was the Vietnam War. And with all of that, it was going on, all the turmoil that was going on in the late 60s about what type of America we want to have, "America: Love It or Leave It," and all these kind of issues to have issues around exercising our freedoms for what a lot of people viewed was a lot of oppression.

You know, that just put him at a central point, a focal point for a lot of different things. One, people have the right to speak out. People have the right to voice their opinion. People shouldn't be persecuted for their opinions in America. It's almost like he became a living history lesson or history conversation about what it means to be an American and to speak out and to try to exercise these rights in the face of injustice, institutional injustice. Without that having happened, I'm sure he would have been impactful, but it really pushed him to the front of the stage.

². Julian Bond was the leader of the Georgia challenge delegation at the 1968 Democratic Convention that challenged the official all-white delegation led by Lester Maddox and other Georgia segregationists.

³. In January 1966, SNCC issued a statement explaining its opposition to the Vietnam War. Bond did not author or contribute to the statement, but, when interviewed by reporters, publicly stated his support for the statement. As a result, James "Sloppy" Floyd, the Speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives, refused to seat him. Bond sued Floyd, and in late 1966, the United States Supreme Court, in *Bond v. Floyd* (1966), unanimously ruled in his favor based on First Amendment grounds. Bond took his seat in 1967 and served for twenty years in the Georgia House and the Senate.

GI: What do you think motivated "Sloppy" Floyd's decision? Do you think it was primarily his position on the war? Do you think it was that your Dad was an African American civil rights activist of some notoriety?

MB: Well, it's laughable. He was a racist. I think that's probably motivated him the most. He [was] an Old South Southern Dixiecrat. I think at the same time that a lot of these Southerners were trying to cope with the advances of the African American community that had been really underneath their boot for a hundred years, there's also all this other stuff going on in America. As I mentioned, "America, Love It or Leave It," or the times are changing within their [white] own cultural diaspora about kids with long hair and the hippie movement, the peace and love movement and "Make Love, Not War" and all those different kinds of things. It's really kind of a collage of different things. And then when this young guy comes along and they know he's been an activist, which is to them, he's a radical. He's subversive to them because his quest for freedom undermines the dominance that they've enjoyed for hundreds of years. He's a threat. They want to eliminate and squash that threat. They gained their seats in the legislature after a lawsuit because they have basically won the "one man, one vote" for representation.

Of course, the state legislature had been just kind of gerrymandering black communities into certain districts for decades so black people couldn't have any representation. So [they were] probably threatened by that, blacks being in the legislature. Threatened by the radicalism of his perceived position. And then, of course, he's a good old Southern racist, minted in the South, an old Southern Dixiecrat, so they probably didn't want him [referring to his Dad] in the Democratic Party. They certainly didn't want him down at the capitol. This is a way to resist that, to have a knee jerk reaction and say, "We're not going to stand for this. We can do something about this. We'll put this guy out so we don't have to listen to him and we'll make them send somebody [else] down here." That also is an attempt to send a chilling message to the electorate by saying, "Don't send these type of guys down here. We will put them out. We will crush them. We will destroy them. We will silence their voice. You send us somebody that we can deal with. Don't send anybody that's going to represent you."

GI: Did your Dad ever talk with you about the 1968 Democratic convention? That's obviously a very important moment in his life and career.

MB: Yes, he did. We had lots of political discussions largely as a function of me trying to stay up late [laughs]. Everybody else would be shuffling off to bed, and I said, "What about this? What about that?" He did talk about the convention and the turmoil there. I knew when it happened that he had been nominated for vice-president. Of course, I was a very small child. But he was the first person to fully explain to me all the details about what happened and why he was there and how it came about and how he felt about it. He was very, very excited about it, very excited to tell me the story of how his nomination was placed, and how he had to decline because he was too young. It was weird for me as a small child because I'm looking at my father as someone who is old, as someone who is grown up. How can you be too young to have to have this job or to take this position? He seemed to be kind of cool and okay with the fact that he couldn't serve as vice-president. He said, "You

know, I was too young." But I think there was still a little gleam of wistful hopefulness that maybe it would have come about.

We had lots of political discussions like that. I would question him a lot because, again, when he would take us around to different meetings with him and everything, I guess people thought we weren't paying attention. But I like to draw. I would be drawing, but I'd still be listening, listening to what goes on. When it every evening when it came time for them to shuffle us upstairs and off to bed, my way of getting some more time was to ask him questions about these different things and then he would explain them to me. I remember this: When Nixon resigned, we were downstairs on the sofa, and I had all my markers and pens. I knew something was different because he wasn't really trying to send me away or tell me to go to bed. I was bored, and it was just the president again on TV. And he says, "No, no, Michael, this is amazing! This is something that is happening in your lifetime, that has never happened before in the history of the United States. Nixon is resigning!"

At that point, I remembered Johnson being the president from when I was very young, but very short, and I really hadn't connected. I knew he had been president, but he seemed like an old man to me. When Nixon became president, it didn't seem unusual or and he didn't seem natural. But at that point in my life, Nixon had been the only real president that I had known. I said, "Why would the president quit? Why would he do that?" He was really on the edge of his seat, just really trying to explain it to me. He was very, very excited. We sat down there that night and watched that happen. It was just amazing. Then conversely, decades later, when Obama was elected, I was stuck over at Morehouse. [I] had gone over there because they had asked me to come over and speak to the students. And I was trying to get to the Georgia DNC [Democratic] party, the big parties for Obama.

But the students, they were everywhere. They blocked the streets around the schools, and we couldn't get out. My daughter, Mychal, was over there. She was at Spelman and we were all at the Morehouse student center, the Frederick Douglass Commons. We watched the results of the election there, which was good. It was very, very good to be there. That was my school, Morehouse. And he called me. He didn't say anything, but I could hear him smiling through the phone. He was like, "Michael . . ." He didn't say a word. I said to him, "So how does it feel to finally be free?" And then he laughed. I could hear him laughing. He was very pleased. So you take those two bookends of that type of experience. We would always have these political talks. It was just amazing.

GI: How important do you think your father was to someone like Barack Obama?

MB: Well, I think he was very important. I met Barack Obama when he was running for Senate here at the Carter Center [at Emory University]. Eugene Duffy and some other folks were having a fundraiser for him. When I met him, his mannerisms, his chain smoking, his cadence, it all put me in the mind of my father. He reminded me of my father. I think if you didn't have a Julian Bond or Jesse Jackson or John Lewis or some of these other folks, Barack Obama doesn't happen because you need these folks who came before the kind of clear the way and make it possible. I think my Dad and subsequently Obama are kind of

made from it that same kind of mold. There lots of different role models or role model-types in the African American community, but they kind of come out of the same mold. I think with him getting to know Obama and being able to interact with him in the Senate and as president, I believe the interactions were positive. I think they were substantive and meaningful.

GI: Do you think that your Dad's ability to relate well to different kinds of people was a strong part of his appeal as a public figure?

MB: Yes, I do, because he could walk with kings and keep the common touch. I think that's really kind of born out of how he grew up. He once said to me that when he grew up on the campus of Lincoln University, when my grandfather was president there, that it was great. It was a great experience for him because he said he felt like he had hundreds of big brothers. He had all of these different guys from all walks of life in the African American diaspora that could teach him about how to be cool, how to do things. To have not only his father teaching him about how to be a man, but he had all these other young men, relatable young men, that could be, in a sense, an unending source of big brothers to kind of mentor and to kind of shape him. I think that helped him a great deal in his relatability, because he was always exposed to a lot of different people within his world.

And of course, when he went on to the George School there is even more diversity. If you think about it, when you're on a college campus, you've got to relate that way, you know? I mean, you have to interact with your professors. You have to be a real serious academic when you're in the classroom. But when you're out, you and your buddies are going out to get a six pack, get some ponies and some beer. You just expand that when you're out with the rest of the world. I saw that firsthand. We grew up over on Sunset Avenue. There was a corner store that started off as a Jewish store that turned over and they sold it to a black family.

But on that corner, what remained consistent, were – I don't want to call them winos and I don't want to call them drunks – a set of men that would be out there every day, seemingly all day long, that imbibed in various alcoholic beverages. True to being the South, of course, if you went around anywhere in the neighborhood and didn't speak, you're in trouble. But those guys were always there, and they never really had conversations with us. But when my Dad would walk us to the store, he would get into conversations with them. He would talk to them. Of course, when he would send us to the store or my mother would send us to that store, we were expected to talk and to relate and to be respectful. Sometimes, he would get into conversations with them that were just as deep as some of the ones I heard he and Andy Young have and other contemporaries. I think just when you're cool like that, you can relate. The elevator works on every floor. You can get off on every floor and deal. He was like that.

GI: How important was your Dad's influence on your decision to enter politics and do the work that you've done?

MB: Well, it was extremely important. I figured when I was coming up as an adolescent and a teenager that I would be an artist, that I would go into some type of graphic art and wanted to be a professional artist or cartoonist.

GI: Does that come from anywhere or anybody or just sort of a natural thing?

MB: I had a natural artistic talent. My appearance belies that I'm a natural creative. I love art. I love everything about it. I figured, as I was growing up, my Dad was in politics. I said, "Well, you know what? My father went into politics, my grandfather was a savant academic, he gave back to the community, contributed to *Brown vs. Board of Education*, wrote all these books and all this kind of thing. At some point in life, I'll give back and I might run for office." I didn't really contemplate it as a career.

When I got into college, when I was at Morehouse and then took some classes over at Georgia State University and kind of got involved with the Black Student Association – at Georgia State – to me it was funny. There was an NAACP chapter and an SCLC chapter at Morehouse College. But I didn't really do much because you're in that in that world. But at Georgia State, it was more of a microcosm of the real world. And they faced the same kind of issues that you face out in the world on the campus. Then I said, "Well, you know, maybe I should get involved because I wasn't really involved politically or in an activist way at Morehouse. But I became very involved when I was taking classes over at Georgia State. That's when it kind of kicked in and I said, "Hey, you know, I need to get involved the way my Dad got involved."

The more I got involved, the more I wanted to emulate what he did, [especially] the more I learned about issues that were affecting us. My cousin was involved, and I assisted in a group called SCAR, Students Against Apartheid and Racism. They got Georgia State to divest from a lot of the companies that were invested in South Africa at the time because apartheid was still going on. Nelson Mandela was still in jail, and that began to put the fire in me. So I went for my first seat when I was twenty-five. My Dad was twenty-six when he got elected. My younger brother was my campaign manager. Something that spoiled us was that my Dad never had any opposition, except for his last race for the [state] Senate. And he won, but he never had any real opposition, so he never had any poll workers on election day.

I was in a race and my Dad was advising me. We planned for a campaign, but we woke up on election day and didn't have any GOTV [Get Out The Vote] on election day and lost by less than a hundred votes. I cried like a baby for three days. I locked myself up in my brother's apartment. I was so hurt. When you lose a political campaign, you feel like everybody voted against you, you feel like the world has turned on you. My father called and said, "You know, you need to straighten this out, you need to shape up. You need to call the victor and congratulate him." And I said, "No, no, no, I'm not gonna do that!" But I did it. That made me really want to be elected.

Public service and things that I've gotten into, because I loved my Dad so much, I began to approach public service in this way. I really wanted to do it because he did it. I really

wanted to do what he had done. I really want to be involved and change people's lives and to serve people, to make government work for the community, the way that he had done. I've spent my career really trying to emulate him in what he had done. I mean, he is the reason that I'm in public service today and I'm not working for Walt Disney or Pixar or something. And I don't regret it. I have loved it. What's made the most impact on me is when I've been able to talk to him about it and when I've gotten a compliment from him or when he's told me that someone else has told him something good about something that I've done in my public service and he feels proud of me about it. That's meant the most to me. All the hills and valleys, all the ups and downs, I wanted to do it and I wanted to impress him. I want to impress my father with what I was doing.

GI: When your Dad ran for the Georgia statehouse in 1965, he ran a campaign that was rooted in the SNCC approach - asking the people what they wanted him to do rather than telling them what he would do if he got elected. Has that been your approach as well?

MB: Yes. We were on the campaign trail with him when we were growing up. I think I was five years old. The first campaign I worked was Andy Young's congressional bid. He came into our room with boxes of flyers and said, "Whoever can fold the most of these can get whatever they want from Burger King." We're like, "Oh, boy, we're going to work!"

He went door to door when he did run. He never had any opposition at all. So he would get the flyers from the printer and put us all in the car. If it was a Sunday and the church was in, we'd leaflet all of the cars with leaflets. I just did one church, but maybe fifteen or twenty churches in the district during the week or on Saturdays. He would just get out and walk, and we would just go door to door. I saw all of that growing up. When I began to run for office, I went door to door. I went and knocked and listened to people. And you're right, people will tell you what they want. Even with the legislation that I've passed, the legislation that's been the most successful is that which has come up from the neighborhood. I wouldn't have thought of it as a "SNCC approach" growing up. I just observed him doing it. But you're absolutely right. It is small "d" democracy where people tell you what they want. When you give them what they want, even if you can't get it, if you're trying to do what the people want you to do, they're going to reward you for it. And they've done that for me. He was the teacher that I had who showed me the way.

GI: What do you believe were your Dad's most distinctive qualities?

MB: Well, I think first and foremost, his intellect. He had a powerful intellect. He had a great deal of self-control. He was a measured person, almost an example of stoicism. He was a stoic in the Marcus Aurelius vein. He was very, very funny. He had a great sense of humor. He was silly at times. He was always fun and a delight to be around. His humor was for me, kind of like that David Letterman, kind of dry, dry humor, but he could be ridiculously silly out of that. But he was caring, and he was he was very kind. He really was. He would seem aloof, but it was I believe he was really just reserved. He was very observant, and he was tender. There's a old jazz standard, "My Buddy." If you listen to that song, that's what it's like having him as a father and a friend. He was a friend. As a parent, we were close. You felt close to him and he was gentle. He was a bender of rules, at times, but at the same time,

kind of strict. I know that's kind of a contradiction. I mean, he spoiled me. I loved him – love him! – through and through. He let me get away with a lot. He did. But at the same time, he was a strong, stern influence on me. But he was brilliant.

He was a great debater, a great speaker. He could be pointed in his criticism, but he was a great observer of our times, and like a good umpire, he could call the shots. He could call it like he saw it. He was rarely wrong or off base. He could observe the time and tides and could accurately comment and reflect upon them. He was "The Man," plain and simple. We wanted to be him. We wanted to be around him. We wanted him to rub off on us. I love him.

A FATHER'S LEGACY

GI: What do you see as his legacy as a civil rights activist, as a humanitarian, as a public intellectual?

MB: Well, as a civil rights activist he started out when he was nineteen, twenty years old. He was a great strategist. He was very insightful. Of course, he had a razor intellect and could plan and could see how movements were and what their end results could be. He was great about putting together the strategy. He knew, and we've talked about this, that when they began in the student movement in the 1960s, that they had to have the media, even though you may have only had two or three reporters on the whole "race beat" for the whole southeastern United States. He knew that they had to have the media on their side, that they had to communicate beyond their little group. That's how the "An Appeal for Human Rights" document was developed. He and Roslyn Pope and others developed that document so they could put their message out. The [college] presidents asked them to do that. They wanted to articulate that and get the message out.⁴

He was always cerebral about what he did as a strategist. As he got into public policy through the legislature, he went out and sought and pursued legislation that was going to directly affect the lives of people, people who had been unaffected. One of the biggest pieces of legislation he passed was the sickle cell testing that primarily affected African Americans in Georgia. But it's made such a such a tremendous difference in so many people's lives. I've had people come up to me who were aware of it and they know it. His legacy should be the one of a dynamic leader, someone who can articulate the issues, someone who's not afraid to speak truth to power, literally, not just as cliché, but will literally call out the most powerful person in the world, the president of the United States. From that person to a police officer who has abused someone, or someone who's discriminated against somebody at a store or in the street, There's no there's no big "I"s and little "yous" with him. He wants to represent people. He wants to deliver for them. He wants justice to be done at every level because if injustice exists anywhere, then there's no justice for anybody else. And that's what he believed in.

⁴ Lonnie King discusses the origin of the "Appeal" in his interview for this project (JBOHP-01). Roslyn Pope was a Spelman College student and the primary author of the "Appeal."

GI: I've heard him described as a *griot*,⁵ as a person who kept who kept the history, who told the story, who was able, as you said, to create a larger vision of what all this was going to be about when he was just 20 and 21 years old, that he saw things that other people might not have seen. Not to take away the contributions of anybody from that time, because as he would often point out, everybody had a role . . .

MB: Yeah . . .

GI: . . . that he was doing something that a lot of other people at that time didn't see. Do you agree with that?

MB: Yeah, I agree with that. From all the stories that I've heard over the course of my life, that has been the one consistent thread – that everybody has a role to play. To lift from Martin Luther King, Jr., everybody can be great because everybody can serve. It's like positions on a team. Everybody on a football team or soccer team, they've got a particular role that they have to be responsible for. The overall goal is for the team to win. As people specialize in what their gifts are, they bring their gifts to the fore. His was communication. His gift was strategy. His gift was being able to intellectualize the struggle and identify the means and points of attack and say these are the ways that we're going to focus on these different things. He pursued that, and he was right about what he went after. He was usually right about the strategy that needed to be taken. Just look at the course of his life, whether it's desegregating Atlanta [or] bringing the venerable old NAACP around on marriage equality. The equality the NAACP seeks, he would argue, is the same equality that those in the LGBTQ community seek. If they can't enjoy their version of equality, then our version of equality is an illusion. He understood that through his life. It would be great to document all the different arcs and issues with that one theme running through all of them.

GI: Do you have any final thoughts about your Dad?

MB: Well, I just want to express that my Dad, not only how much I loved and cared about him, was a great Dad. He was a great father. As a father, he was a genuine friend to me, buddy, pal and companion, probably sometimes too much so. But there were times in my life in the forty-nine years that I experienced physically with him that were just wonderful and comedic, all of the different qualities that we talked about with him.

I've seen firsthand. He kept my secrets. I was able to confide in him and he wouldn't share. I knew that he could would keep those secrets. He encouraged me to do things. He encouraged me to be an artist. He tried to discourage me from going into politics because he thought it was too rough, too much negativity associated with it. But I did it anyway, and he still embraced me for it. He talked about his own public service, which, once he left, he missed it. He liked being in the legislature, in retrospect. We shared a lot.

⁵. A *griot* is a West African term for a storyteller, historian or writer who maintains the traditions of a people through oral history.

I loved him with everything and just left it all on the table. This is a guy who was gone for sometimes six days a week, traveling to support the family and being away. When he came back, we just we just loved him. I really can't say enough. We know he was a great figure. We know that he is historically relevant. And we know he's a rock star in many people's eyes. But at home, he was Daddy. We could go to Steak 'n Shake, or McDonald's or Pizza Hut. He loved bad fast food like that. Or we would go to Paschal's, which we definitely loved going to. We never missed an opportunity for that. This is a guy who on some Sunday mornings when everybody else was going off the church, it would just be he and I at home in "tidy whities" and he would make me go outside and get the newspaper, stuff like that. Or we'd walk to the corner and get a Coca-Cola, or we'd go to [the] West End [Mall] to get the *New York Times*. That was the only place in all of South Atlanta that you could buy a *New York Times*. It's always the small things, the human things. He was very human, and because of that, he was very well loved.