

SNCC 40th Anniversary Conference: Welcoming Remarks and History of SNCC

Host

Dr. Walter C. Jackson - Dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, North Carolina State University; historian and educator dedicated to Southern political history and civil rights

Invocation

[Victoria Gray Adams](#) - Citizenship Education Program, S.C.L.C., 1963-1966; National Committee, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, 1964-1968; Challenge delegation, Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, 1964

Welcome Remarks

Dr. James West - Member, Raleigh City Council District C
Dr. Marye Anne Fox - Chancellor, North Carolina State University.
Dr. Talbert O. Shaw - President, Shaw University

Speaker

[Julian Bond](#) - (Atlanta Committee for Appeal on Human Rights, 1960-1961; Director of Communications, SNCC 1962-1966; Georgia House of Representatives, 1966-1974; Georgia Senate, 1974-1987)

Walter C. Jackson: Ms. Victoria Gray Adams will lead us in the invocation.

Victoria Gray Adams: As one who believes fully in participatory involvement, I'm going to invite all of us to join in this grace. I think it's one that is probably very well known by most of us, and those who don't know it shouldn't be too hard for you to catch in or chime in, in the meantime let us bow.

Most gracious Father, creator, sustainer of us all, we thank you for this opportunity to come to be in fellowship with each other. As we take this food, which has been prepared for us, and thank you, oh Lord, that from this food will come the strength to do those things that we are called to do on behalf of peace and freedom everywhere, now and always.

[sings hymn]

*Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heav'nly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*

Walter C. Jackson: We have a number of folk who want to welcome you to Raleigh and to this conference. Okay, thank you. I'd like to recognize a few special guests before we have some welcoming remarks. First of all, Mrs. Lucille Payne, the mother of Chancellor Marye Anne Fox of North Carolina State University is visiting us and is at one of the front tables. Welcome Mrs. Payne.

I'd also like to recognize two of the former chairs of SNCC who are with us: [Marion Barry](#) and [Chuck McDew](#). And you've already heard from one executive secretary of SNCC—but we have two here with us, [Jim Forman](#) and [Cleveland Sellers](#).

Our first welcoming remarks will be given by Dr. James West, who is the member of the Raleigh City Council from District C. Mr. West represents an area of Southeast Raleigh which the Raleigh Citizens Association, building on the momentum of the sit-in movement, registered 1600 voters in the summer of 1962 with the help of John Fleming, Vivian Irving, John Winters, and SNCC volunteer Dorothy Dawson Burlage. We would like for Mr. West to please come forward. Thank you. Mr. West is a retired professor of agricultural extension at North Carolina State University.

James West: Good afternoon to each of you. I guess in terms of a little side note, I would like to say that I was actively involved in the Civil Rights Movement at North Carolina A&T in the early sixties, working with Reverend Jesse Jackson at that time. We led a march on the theater downtown and desegregated the theater. So I feel a real part of this effort and the importance of the struggle that we have been in and the challenges that we have for the future.

To our distinguished head table, as well as our distinguished guests and audience, and to all of you on behalf of the Raleigh City Council and more than 280,000 citizens of our capital city, we are certainly proud to welcome you to our great city. We are very proud to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

As you all know, working with the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) [SCLC], SNCC was a powerful force in the struggle for racial equality during the sixties. SNCC members fought that value in nonviolent tactics. It is very fitting that we honor the legacy of Ms. [Ella Baker](#), [John Lewis](#), and the young people at that time that came together to found SNCC.

However, we cannot rest on the accomplishments of the past and let that legacy become just a footnote in history. We cannot leave it to others to see that these ideals continue to become a reality. We must not stand mute when justice is often denied and opportunity is deferred.

Your efforts remind me of a question once posed to a great Greek historian. The question was, “When will justice come to Athens?” He thought deliberately and replied, “Justice will never come to Athens until all of those who are not injured are just as indignant as those who are.”

All of us here today, no matter our birth, our genetic cloth, the color of our skin, we must become indignant and continue to undo racism in any form that it may come. When we are told that we must wait for tomorrow, the next tomorrow, for the next generation or even the next election, we must reply as the Reverend Martin Luther King did from that old Birmingham jail — “that now is the time and the day is today.”

Through the grassroots efforts of this great organization, we can achieve the goals set forth 40 years ago. We must get everyone involved to finish the work that began here in Raleigh and never settle for anything less than the best for creating a social order where justice and equal opportunity are the supreme ruler.

Thank you for this opportunity to welcome you all to Raleigh and my salute to what you've done in the past, and let's keep the legacy alive. Thank you and God be with me.

Walter C. Jackson: We also have welcoming remarks from Dr. Marye Anne Fox, the chancellor of North Carolina State University. A native of Canton, Ohio, Dr. Fox received her PhD from Dartmouth in 1974. She established a distinguished publication record in chemistry as a professor at the University of Texas from 1976 to 1998, and served as Vice President for Research at the University of Texas. Since 1998, she has been chancellor—the highest administrative officer—at North Carolina State University, Chancellor Fox.

Marye Anne Fox: Thank you for your invitation to participate today and for your willingness to accept us into this community. We have been very pleased to participate in a partnership in helping Shaw sponsor this activity. We have believed in partnership for a long time, and I'm particularly happy to acknowledge several members of the African American Citizens Advisory Council at North Carolina State who've been instrumental in making today's events happen. In particular, the chairman, Mr. Everett Ward, back here. Thank you so much, Everett, for your leadership.

North Carolina State University was a very different place when some of you who were organizing SNCC were here in the early sixties. I'm proud to say it's a very different place now. It's one which has embraced diversity and tries to nurture our cultural differences and our similarities. I'm very proud to say that we would be joining with all of us in the community,

in—as Langston Hughes once said—"We all want America to be America again." Let freedom and justice ring. Thank you very much.

Walter C. Jackson: Thank you, Chancellor Fox. Before I introduce our next speaker, I should have mentioned earlier that we are very grateful to have with us Mrs. Marlene Shaw, the wife of Dr. Talbert O. Shaw, who is seated next to Dr. Fox's mother at the first table here.

And on behalf of the conference, I'd like to express my deep gratitude to Shaw University for making possible this dialogue between the returning members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and students, teachers, and scholars today.

During the past three days, we've learned much about the founding of Shaw in 1865 as the first university in the South for freedmen, its role in nurturing Ms. Ella Baker and so many other activists of the Civil Rights Movement, and its proud history as the university that made possible the first national meeting of the students from the sit-in movement on Easter weekend, 1960, forty years ago.

It's my privilege to introduce the man who's been president of Shaw since 1987 and who has led the university into the 21st century. Dr. Talbert O. Shaw earned his PhD degree from the University of Chicago. His years as a professor and administrator have been spent at Howard University, Catholic University, Bowie State College, Federal City College, Princeton University, and Morgan State University. His publications include theological and philosophical monographs as well as educational writings.

During Dr. Shaw's tenure, student enrollment has increased from 1,400 to 2,500. The university has expanded its physical plant and renovated two historic buildings—Estey Hall and Leonard Hall. And in 1993, President Shaw led a reform of the curriculum, making courses in ethics and values central to the general education of all its students in order to emphasize Shaw's commitment to high personal standards and citizenship in its graduates. Ladies and gentlemen, Dr. Talbert O. Shaw.

Talbert O. Shaw: Thank you very much, Dr. Jackson, and let me welcome all of you to this historic campus. We are very proud that you chose to have the celebration here. And as Dr. Fox said, we are delighted at the partnership that she has forged with us as we establish this celebration.

I am tempted to—of course, my assigned task is to introduce the speaker—but I'm tempted to introduce him the way the President of the United States is introduced. People get up and say, "Ladies and gentlemen, the President of the United States." The man I'm about to present to you indeed has earned that type of profile. Very few people here don't know the Honorable [Julian Bond](#).

You know, the dialogue continues regarding the times and the leaders—does the time provide the leader or does the leader produce the time? The dialogue continues. Well, while you are speaking about that, let me give you some ideas that place this man in the time. I believe there are a conference of streams that prepared the speaker today for what he has done and what he continued to do.

First of all, his father was a college president. And by the way, he expressed his condolences to me as president of Shaw University since he lived on two college campuses: Fort Valley State and Lincoln University. And when I asked him if it were the Lincoln in Missouri, he said, “No, the real Lincoln.”

So he has grown up on a college campus. He knows the nervous atmosphere on college campuses. He sat at the feet of Dr. Martin Luther King. It was a time when the acidity of racism was so corroding that there were movements across the country to change American history. So the times and the preparations produced the man today.

I have a few things here I could bring with me—the biography—and it’s a long, very long one. But I’ll reduce it. He said, please don’t do that.

And by the way, those of you who are meeting me for the first time, each time I stand before an audience that doesn’t know me fully, I have to throw in a disclaimer. And that is although the university and I have the same name, I don’t own the place.

Julian Bond has been an active participant in a movement for civil rights, economic justice, and peace for more than three decades. As an activist who has faced jail for his convictions, as a veteran of more than twenty years’ service in the Georgia General Assembly, as a university professor and a writer who raises hard questions and proposes difficult solutions, he has been on the cutting edge of social change since 1960.

I recall very vividly when he, this young man in his late twenties, had gotten on the civil rights path. I was Dean of the students at a little college in the South, and we saw this young man—there was a refreshing contrast—young man with much more hair at the time, standing there speaking with such maturity, beautiful voice, refreshing contrast: youth and maturity. I still remember those days.

He was a founder in 1960 while a student of Morehouse College of the Atlanta Student Sit-in and Anti-Segregation Organization and of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—SNCC—and was SNCC’s communications director. He was active in registration and campaigns throughout the South.

Elected in 1965 to the Georgia House of Representatives, [Mr. Bond was prevented from taking a seat](#) by members who objected to his expression of opposition to the Vietnam War. He was

reelected to his own vacancy and unseated again, and seated only after a third election at the unanimous decision of the United States Supreme Court that said the Georgia House had violated his civil rights.

He was co-chair of a challenge delegation from Georgia to the 1968 Democratic Convention. The challengers were successful in unseating Georgia's regular Democrats, and Bond was nominated for Vice President but had to decline because he was so young.

In the Georgia Senate, Bond became the first Black chair of the Fulton County delegation—the largest and most diverse in the upper house—and chair of the Consumer Affairs Committee. During his legislative tenure, he was a sponsor or co-sponsor of more than sixty bills which became law.

Today, Bond is chairman of the NAACP [[National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#)]. He holds nineteen honorary degrees. He is a distinguished professor at American University and also teaches at the University of Virginia. So today we have an activist, an academician, a father, a husband, and a man for the times. Just before I present him, I'd like Mrs. Bond who is here to stand and be recognized.

So while the dialogue continues: Did the time produce the man, or the man the times? Let me present to you a man of the times, Dr. Bond.

Julian Bond: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you a great deal, Dr. Shaw, for that kind introduction. Unfortunately, some of these people already know me too well. And like many of my colleagues here, I'm older than I was when I came to this campus in April of 1960, but we are all reminded that just because there's snow on the roof doesn't mean the fire is out below.

Ella Baker said, "Strong people don't need strong leaders." I want to talk about some of the things the strong people did.

You know, an early 1960s freedom song, which has probably been sung this weekend before I arrived, described the student movement of the early 1960s in this way:

*The time was 1960. The place, the USA.
February 1st became a history-making day.
From Greensboro across the land, the news spread far and wide,
As quietly and bravely, youth took a giant stride.
Heed the call, Americans all, side by equal side—*

You know I'm not gonna sing this, Bettie [Fikes]—

Sisters sit in dignity and brothers sit in pride...

But this organization was described another way by former President Jimmy Carter, who told [Mary King](#), “If you want to scare white people in southwest Georgia, Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference wouldn’t do it. You only had to say one word—SNCC.”

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was founded in 1960 by Southern student protestors engaged in sit-in demonstrations against lunch counter segregation. Within a year, the organization evolved from a coordinating to a hands-on agency, helping local leadership in rural and small-town communities participate in a variety of protests and political and organizing campaigns—all of which set SNCC apart from the civil rights mainstream of the 1960s.

By 1965, SNCC fielded the largest staff of any civil rights organization operating in the South. It had organized nonviolent direct action against segregated facilities and voter registration campaigns in Alabama, Arkansas, Maryland, Missouri, Louisiana, Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Illinois, North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Mississippi.

It had built two independent political parties. It had organized labor unions and agricultural cooperatives. It gave the movement for women’s liberation new energy. It helped expand the limits of political debate within Black America. And it broadened the focus of the Civil Rights Movement.

Unlike mainstream civil rights groups, which merely sought the integration of Blacks into the existing order, SNCC sought structural changes in American society itself.

In 1960, the dominant organization fighting for civil rights was the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Its preferred method was litigation. It achieved its greatest victory in 1954 with *Brown v. Board of Education*. The NAACP lobbied Congress and presidents to adopt anti-segregation measures. Its local branches were often the main civil rights outpost in many communities, and the NAACP and multiple similar local groups and individuals fought against what Aldon Morris calls a tripartite system of racial domination—a system which protected the privileges of white society and which generated tremendous human suffering for Blacks.

One consequence of this segregation system was the development of institutions of close-knit communities—churches, schools, organizations—which nurtured and encouraged the fight against white supremacy.

The young people who began the 1960 sit-in movement lived and learned among such institutions. The goals of the young student movement were described to the Democratic Convention’s Platform Committee by its first chair, Marion Barry, as seeking a community in which man can realize the full meaning of self, which demands open relationships with others.

Barry and others declared Southern students wanted an end to racial discrimination in housing, in education, in employment.

The goals were similarly broadly described by James Forman in 1961 as working full-time against the whole value system of this country and working toward revolution; and in 1963, as a program of developing, building, and strengthening indigenous leadership. And by the third SNCC chair, John Lewis, at the [March on Washington](#) as, building a serious social revolution.

SNCC pioneered first-time races by Blacks in the 1960s Deep South. It added foreign policy demands to the Black political agenda, and it broadened the acceptable limits of political discourse.

SNCC was in the vanguard in demonstrating that independent Black politics could be successful. Its early attempts to use Black candidates to raise issues in races where victory was unlikely expanded the political horizon. SNCC's development of independent political parties mirrored the philosophy that political form must follow function and that non-hierarchical organizations are demanded to counter the growth of personality cults and of self-reinforcing leadership.

While organizing grassroots voter registration drives, SNCC workers offered themselves as a protective barrier between private and state-sponsored terror and the local communities where SNCC staffers lived and worked. SNCC workers were often more numerous and less transient than those from other civil rights organizations, and their method of operation was very different as well.

The NAACP was outlawed in Alabama in 1956 and didn't begin operating there again until 1964, although NAACP activists continued under other sponsorship. In 1962, the NAACP had one field secretary each in South Carolina, Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi, and the regional staff headquartered in Atlanta. .

Of SCLC one historian writes: "The organization had to adopt a strategy of hit and run. Their willingness to run as well as hit provoked consistent criticism. SCLC mobilized, someone said, SNCC organized."

By spring of 1963, SNCC had eleven staff members in southwest Georgia, twenty staff in six offices in Mississippi. By August, SNCC had projects and a permanent staff in a dozen Mississippi communities, in Selma, in Danville, in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, twelve workers in the Atlanta headquarters, sixty field secretaries, and 121 full-time volunteers.

Typically, SNCC began a campaign by researching the economic and political history of a community. Field workers would be supplied with detailed information on a community's economic and financial power structure, tracing corporate relationships from local bankers and business leadership in a local White Citizens Council to the largest American banks and

corporations—and in one instance, to the Queen of England herself. Remember Jack Minnis drew this chart from the Delta of Mississippi to the Queen’s palace in London—the Queen, a shareholder in one of those devil places in Mississippi Delta.

Audience Member: Delta Pine Land.¹

Julian Bond: What was it? Delta Pine Land. The Queen of England. Other research provided the economic and political status of a state's Black population. SNCC organizers would spend their first weeks in a new community meeting with local leadership, formulating with them an action plan for more aggressive registration efforts, recruiting new activists through informal conversation, through painstaking house-to-house canvassing, and regular mass meetings.

And the organization’s broader definitions of the Civil Rights Movement’s purposes was obvious from its very beginnings here on this campus. Here in April 1960, [Charles Jones](#) declared, “This movement will affect other areas beyond lunch counter services, such as politics and economics.”

A report from the conference concluded with a warning about America’s false preoccupations in the early 1960s. It said civil defense and economic power alone will not ensure the continuation of our democracy. Democracy itself demands the great intangible strength of the people, able to unite in a common endeavor because they are granted human dignity.

Within four months of these declarations, SNCC volunteer [Robert Moses](#) was planning a student staff voter registration project in all-Black Mound Bayou in the Mississippi Delta for the summer of 1961. The work actually began in southwestern Mississippi, but when its workers were driven from the area by violence, by state suppression, and by federal indifference, the organization regrouped in Jackson and the Delta counties in early 1962.

Earlier in [19]61, SNCC’s Nashville affiliate had continued the Freedom Rides when Alabama violence threatened to bring them to an end. After they were released from Parchman Penitentiary, many of the jailed riders joined the [McComb](#) [MS] movement. Several became part of the organizing cadre for the Mississippi movement which quickly followed.

Unencumbered by allegiances to the national Democratic Party, which frequently constrained other organizations, SNCC encouraged two Black candidates to run for Congress. Robert Moses served as the official campaign manager. And then to demonstrate that disenfranchised Mississippi Blacks really did want to vote, SNCC mounted a Freedom Vote campaign in November [19]63. Over 80,000 cast votes in a mock election for governor and lieutenant governor.

¹ Delta & Pine Land Company was one of the largest cotton plantation and seed companies in the Mississippi Delta.

A hundred Northern white students worked in the campaign, attracting attention from the Department of Justice and the national media as Black registration workers had never done—paving the way for the Freedom Summer of 1964.

Freedom Summer brought nearly a thousand mostly white volunteers to Mississippi. They helped build the new political party—the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. They registered voters and they staffed twenty-eight Freedom Schools intended by their designer, Charles Cobb, to provide an education which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives and ultimately new directions for action.

Over the next several years, candidates backed by SNCC ran for Congress in Albany, Georgia; in Selma, Alabama; and Danville, Virginia; and in Enfield, North Carolina. SNCC helped candidates for ASCS [Agriculture Stabilization & Conservation Service] boards in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, North Carolina, and Mississippi. SNCC aided school board candidates in Arkansas in 1965, worked towards solving the economic problems of the Mississippi Negro by organizing the [Mississippi Freedom Labor Union](#) and the Poor People's Corporation.

But among other contributions to electoral politics were the formation of two political parties and the conception and implementation of my successful campaign for the Georgia state legislature.

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party challenged the seating of the regular, all-white delegation from Mississippi at the [19]64 convention. And in 1965, [Mrs. \[Victoria\] Gray \[Adams\] and others challenged the seating of Mississippi's congressional delegation in Washington.](#)

The convention challenge ended when pressures from President Lyndon Johnson erased promised support from party liberals. An offer was made—and then rejected—of two convention seats to be filled not by the Freedom Democrats, but by the national party.

We remember Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer's declaration: "We didn't come for no two seats, 'cause all of us is tired."

Both of these challenges served as an object lesson for strengthening Black political independence, and the organizing and lobbying efforts for each laid the groundwork for the congressional passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Then in 1965, the McComb branch of the MFDP became the first Black political organization to express opposition to the war in Vietnam. State MFDP officials not only refused to repudiate the statement—they reprinted it in the state newsletter, giving it wider circulation and laying the groundwork for future Black opponents of the war in Vietnam.

The MFDP's efforts against white resistance to political equality proved important to Black political efforts throughout the South. An MFDP-directed court suit resulted in the Supreme Court's landmark 1969 decision, *Allen v. State Board of Elections*. For the very first time, the Supreme Court recognized and applied the principle of minority vote dilution—that the Black vote can be affected as much by dilution as by an absolute prohibition on casting a ballot.

The middle 1960s became a turning point in the Southern human rights struggle. Federal legislation passed in [19]64 and [19]65 accomplished the goals of many in the Civil Rights Movement.

Cleveland Sellers wrote, “When the federal government passed bills that supposedly supported Black voting and outlawed public segregation, SNCC lost the initiative in these areas.”

Northern urban riots in the late 1960s made the nation and Southern civil rights workers aware that victories at lunch counters and ballot boxes meant little to Black people locked into Northern ghettos.

SNCC had long believed that its work ought to be expanded to larger cities in the South and outside the region. Executive Committee minutes from December [19]63 quote [James] Forman asserting, “SNCC is going to have to go into the poorer sections of large cities to work.”

My campaign for the Georgia House of Representatives in [19]65 was in part an attempt to take the techniques SNCC had learned in the rural South into an urban setting and to carry forward SNCC's belief that grassroots politics could provide answers to problems faced by America's urban Blacks. In keeping with SNCC's style, a platform was developed in consultation with the voters. The campaign supported a \$2 [\$20.39 in 2025] minimum wage, repeal of the right-to-work law, abolition of the death penalty.

When the legislature twice rejected me, objecting to my support of SNCC's anti-war position, the resulting two campaigns gave SNCC a chance to successfully test its critique of American imperialism at the ballot box. That campaign, like the MFDP, enabled SNCC to provide a political voice for the politically impotent and inarticulate Black poor.

In 1966, in Alabama, SNCC helped create a Black political party called the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, an independent political party which would prove to be a factor in Alabama politics for years to come. It was formed in reaction to the racism of the local and state Democratic parties. Like the MFDP, the Black Panther Party—the so-called Black Panther Party—was open to whites, but no whites in Lowndes County would participate in a Black-dominated political effort.

Concurrently with these organizing efforts, SNCC was reassessing its concentration on the South. At a retreat in May of [19]66, [Ivanhoe Donaldson](#) argued in favor—that's so odd to think

about Ivanhoe and arguing in the same sentence. Ivanhoe Donaldson argued in favor of SNCC replicating its successful Southern political organizing efforts in the North, and the staff agreed.

Donaldson and Robert Moses suggested that techniques learned in Southern campaigns could be employed to ease SNCC's passage into Northern cities. Organizing for political power and community control could mobilize Northern urban dwellers, they contended. [Michael Thelwell](#) proposed in 1966 that the organization should move, quote: "to the ghetto and organize those communities to control themselves."

The organization must be attempted in Northern and Southern areas, as well as in the rural Black Belt of the South, Thelwell said. So projects were established—in Washington, D.C., to fight for home rule; in Columbus, Ohio, where a community foundation was organized; in New York City's Harlem, where SNCC workers organized early efforts at community control of public schools; in Los Angeles, where SNCC helped monitor local police and joined an effort at creating a Freedom City in Black neighborhoods; and in Chicago, where SNCC workers began to build an independent political party and demonstrated against segregated schools.

In each of these cities, the Southern experience of the SNCC organizers helped to inform their Northern and Western work. As chair, Marion Barry had written to members of Congress in 1960 to urge immediate action to provide self-government for the voteless residents of our nation's capital, the District of Columbia—were you thinking about it then?

In February 1966, Barry, then director of SNCC's Washington office, announced the formation of the Free D.C. Movement. He wrote then, "The premise is that we want to organize Black people for Black power." He and the Free D.C. Movement conducted a successful boycott of Washington merchants who did not support home rule.²

In New York, SNCC worker William Hall helped a Harlem group working for community control of Intermediate School 201 in the fall of 1966. His work laid the groundwork for later successful protest for community control of schools throughout the city.

In Los Angeles, SNCC worker Clifford Vaughns described his work as a manifestation of self-help, self-determination, and power for poor people.

So as the focus of the Southern movement had changed, so would the aim of the Northern organizer. Desegregation had proven both elusive and insufficient to the problems of American Blacks—North or South. Their ability to control their own communities and to direct the communities' elected officials had become paramount, both in rural Mississippi and in urban New York.

² The Free D.C. Movement, alongside this activist, leveraged a boycott of local merchants in Washington, D.C., to pressure businesses into supporting home rule—the right for D.C. residents to govern themselves rather than being ruled directly by Congress.

Just as concern for social change had never been limited to the Southern states alone, SNCC's concern for human rights had long extended beyond the borders of the United States. From its first public statements, it had linked the plight of American Blacks with the struggle for African independence.

At its founding conference here at Raleigh, it first announced its identification with the African liberation struggle: "We identify ourselves with the African struggle as a concern for all mankind." And at SNCC's fall 1960 conference in Atlanta, a featured speaker was the brother of Kenya labor leader Tom Mboya.

SNCC chairman John Lewis told the March on Washington in 1963, "One man, one vote is the African cry. It must be ours." And in December [19]63, SNCC workers in Atlanta conferred with Kenya leader [Oginga Odinga](#). And in September 1964, an eleven-member SNCC delegation went to Guinea as guests of that country's president, Sékou Touré. Two members of the group toured Africa for a month following the Guinea trip. In October, two SNCC workers represented SNCC at the annual meeting of the Organization of African Unity in Ghana.

SNCC's January 1966 anti-war statement claimed the United States was deceptive in claiming concern for the freedom of colored people in other countries, such as the Congo, South Africa, and the United States itself. Singer [Harry Belafonte](#) organized a supportive reception at the UN with fifteen African diplomats for SNCC personnel, and on March 22, 1966, [seven SNCC workers were arrested at the South African consulate in New York](#)—preceding by twenty years the Free South Africa movement that later saw hundreds arrested at the South African Embassy in Washington, D.C.

At a June [19]67 staff meeting, SNCC declared itself a human rights organization dedicated to the liberation not only of Black people in the U.S. but of all oppressed people, especially those of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. SNCC chair [Stokely Carmichael](#) visited Algeria, Syria, Egypt, Guinea, and Tanzania in mid-[19]67. In November [19]67, [James] Forman testified for SNCC before the United Nations Fourth Committee against American investments in South Africa.

For many on the staff, at the close of the decade of the 1960s, nearly a decade's worth of hard work at irregular subsistence-level pay under an atmosphere of constant tension, interrupted by jailings, beatings, official and private terror, proved too much. When measured by the legislative accomplishments of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, SNCC's efforts were successful. But the failure of the MFDP to gain recognition at Atlantic City predicted the coming collapse of support from liberals.

The murders of four schoolgirls in Birmingham and Medgar Evers in Jackson in [19]63, of civil rights workers and others in Mississippi in [19]64, of Martin Luther King and others in 1968,

argued that nonviolence was no antidote in a violent society.³ The outbreak of urban violence at the decade's end further produced a sense of frustration and alienation in many SNCC veterans.

Throughout its brief history, SNCC insisted on group-centered leadership and community-based politics. It made clear the connection between economic power and racial oppression. It refused to define racism as solely Southern, to describe racial inequality as caused by racial prejudice alone, or to limit struggles solely to guaranteeing legal equality.

It challenged American imperialism while mainstream civil rights organizations were quiet or curried favor with President Lyndon Johnson. They condemned SNCC's linkage of domestic poverty and racism with overseas adventurism.

SNCC refused to apply political tests to its membership or its supporters, opposing the red-baiting which other organizations' leaders endorsed and condoned. It created an atmosphere of expectation and anticipation among the people with whom it worked, trusting them to make decisions about their lives.

SNCC widened the definition of politics beyond campaigns and elections. For SNCC, politics encompassed not only electoral races but also organizing political parties, organizing labor unions, producer cooperatives, and alternative schools.

It initially sought to liberalize Southern politics by organizing and enfranchising Southern Blacks. One proof of its success is the increase in Black elected officials in the Southern states from 72 in 1965 to 388 in 1968.

But SNCC also sought to liberalize the ends of political participation by enlarging the issues of political debate to include the economic and foreign policy concerns of American Blacks.

SNCC's articulation and advocacy of Black Power redefined the relationship between Black Americans and white power. No longer would political equity be considered a privilege—it had become a right.

Part of SNCC's legacy is the destruction of the psychological shackles which had kept Black southerners in physical and mental peonage. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee helped to break those chains forever.

But SNCC also demonstrated that a band of brothers and sisters, young and unskilled, could create social change—and they demonstrated for all time something that is generally an objectionable feature of these kinds of associations.

³ The murders of four schoolgirls in the 1963 Birmingham church bombing and of Medgar Evers in Jackson that same year, the killings of civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in Mississippi in 1964, and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, all underscored a grim truth: nonviolence offered no immunity in a society so deeply steeped in racial violence.

And that's when the old gray-haired, stoop-shouldered generation—that's me—passes a symbolic torch to these young, bright-eyed children—that's them. This happened at the 30th anniversary of the March on Washington, where there were more people on the podium than there were in the audience.

And I was nauseated by it because I thought back to the early days when you were with the NAACP in Memphis [TN], at LeMoyne [Owen College], when the rest of us were struggling. Nobody handed us a torch. We had to reach out and grab that torch and peel those fingers one by one—the people who had the torch. The people who had the torch didn't want to let it go. If we hadn't taken it, they'd be holding it now.

Now I'm saying to these young people, if you want these torches, you got to come get 'em. This is not a relay race. We're not handing you any torches. Thank you all very much.

Walter C. Jackson: I believe [Martha Norman \[Prescod\]](#) has a few announcements to make. Where is Martha? Martha Norman has a few announcements to make.

Let me thank Julian Bond. I sat through his lectures at Harvard and they're all just that inspiring. He had the class in the palm of his hand the whole time.

Audience Question: [indistinct]

Julian Bond: Is there a record of the conference?

Audience Question: Seeing as some of us are gonna make sure that there are some records of this conference? I'm making a request. Is that speech going to be part of the record?

Julian Bond: I'm sure it'll be. And it's been videotaped, as other sessions here have been videotaped, and I don't know what's going to come of the videotapes, but—

Martha Norman Prescod: Is Bob Moses here? We need Bob Moses and Diane Nash.

(VIDEO ENDS MID-SENTENCE)