

Oral History Project

Rev. Frank Dukes

May 11, 1995

Code: Huntley [H], Dukes [D]

H: This is an interview with Rev. Frank Dukes for the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute's Oral History Project. I am Dr. Horace Huntley. We are at Miles College. It is May 11, 1995.

Thank you Rev. Dukes for coming and taking time out of your busy schedule to sit with us today. Obviously what we are attempting to do is to put ourselves in a position so that there is a possibility of writing the real history of Birmingham and the Movement and we know that you played a prominent role in that. So thank you for coming out to help us.

D: Well, thanks for inviting me.

H: I just want to start by asking some background questions. Where were your parents from?

D: Well, my mother was from Selma, Alabama. My father from Fairfield, Alabama.

H: And you were born where?

D: In Fairfield.

H: In Fairfield? Is Fairfield a suburb of Birmingham or is Birmingham a suburb of Fairfield?

D: Larry Langford would say it's a suburb of Fairfield.

H: How many brothers and sisters did you have and what was your rank order?

D: Well, there were eight of us. Now there are seven. I am the third from the top.

H: All right. So you are the third oldest?

D: Yes.

H: Tell me just a bit about your parents and their education.

D: Well, my father had an 11th grade education. And my mother had about an 8th or 9th grade education because she went to night school to get that far. She was a domestic worker for many years. And after that she became an Avon sales person.

H: What kind of work did your father do?

D: A steel worker.

H: In Fairfield? Tell me then, Fairfield is known, really around the country for any number of things, particularly the steel and for being the birthplace of Willie Mays. Can you describe the community of Fairfield as you grew up?

D: Fairfield was quite a stable community during those days and I'm speaking comparatively now. Most of the persons worked in one of the steel mills or the brick yard or some place. Fairfield Industrial High School, in my opinion, was the greatest high in the world. Academics were stressed, first priority, second priority, third priority as well as discipline. And there are Fairfield graduates holding down very significant professional positions in all of the major cities in this country.

H: There was a gentleman there at Fairfield that set the tone, Dr. Oliver.

D: Professor E. J. Oliver. In my opinion the greatest principal that ever lived. A strict disciplinarian who placed all emphasis on discipline and education. And when we used to go down to Montgomery to compete against high schools from all over Alabama, those were during the days of segregation, there were no Whites to compete against, though it wouldn't have mattered. We would have done just as well or better, I'm sure. But we used to win the majority of the first place ribbons in all of the academic subjects, math, science, biology, chemistry, you name it, we won it.

H: So, you look then at Fairfield as setting a firm foundation for you and the community, the high school?

D: Very much so. For example, if you attended Fairfield Industrial High, if you were absent, you had to go back home the next day and bring your mother or your father or your aunt or uncle or somebody that Professor Oliver knew. Or the same thing applied if you were tardy. So, it was well run, well organized.

H: What do you remember about recreation in Fairfield?

D: Well, there was just, aside from the high school football and basketball teams, those were the only two sports we had in those days. And, of course, the band. And then there was sandlot baseball. Most of the companies like USX at that time it was US Steel, they would sponsor teams. ACIPICO would have a team. Stockman would have a team. They would compete

against each other.

H: What was your community's relationship to the police department?

D: Horrible. There was no relationship. Horrible. The police had one job that was to arrest Black folk.

H: So are you suggesting that the police was not in the community to protect and serve?

D: I am not suggesting that, I am stating it emphatically. No! They were not.

H: So after you finished high school, what did you do?

D: I had a couple of small non description jobs and then I left and went into the army in '49.

H: How long were you in the army?

D: In '49 I went in and stayed a year. I got a discharge in September of '50. Went back in -- got discharged in July rather in '50 and went right back in in September of '50 when the Korean War started. And I got out in October of '51 and I went back in the service in '54 and got out - - was discharged in '57.

H: What did you do between '51 and '54?

D: I worked at the Dodge automobile plant which was a division of Chrysler.

H: And where was that?

D: Detroit, Michigan.

H: Detroit. How did you compare Detroit with Birmingham?

D: Oh, it beat Birmingham in a thousand different ways in terms of discrimination and segregation and all that kind of stuff. It was not a panacea, however, but it was a far cry from what we had to undergo here in the south.

H: So you then went back into the military from Detroit?

D: Yes.

H: And you were in the military then until '57?

D: Yes.

H: And after your discharge in '57 what did you do?

D: I went back to Detroit and went back to work at the Dodge automobile plant. And I got laid off in '58 I believe it was. And I came back to Birmingham.

H: And when you came back to Birmingham did you then live in Birmingham or in Fairfield?

D: I lived in Fairfield.

H: Were you married at the time?

D: No.

H: Still a young man, foot loose and fancy free?

D: That's right.

H: In 1958 Birmingham was embarking on, at least preparing for what would take place in the next few years. In '56, of course, the NAACP was outlawed from operating in the State of Alabama. And the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights is developed. In 1958 when you returned, did you go to work at US Steel?

D: No. No. When I came back in 1958, I was hustling in the pool room, shooting craps.

H: Okay.

D: That kind of stuff. And I was waiting to go back to Detroit to work at the Dodge automobile plant when they sent me a telegram to come back. In the meantime I started to Miles in '59. And when they called me to come back to work at Dodge Main, I decided to stay in college. I

didn't go back.

H: So you remained in college, at Miles, between '58 and --

D: Well, I started in '59, the summer of '59.

H: You were a student leader at the time?

D: Yes. I was student government president.

H: How did that evolve? How did you get involved in the student government?

D: Well, you know, when it's time to run for the offices, a lot of the students asked me to run, so I ran and I won.

H: So you were perceived as a leader when you. . .

D: Yes, well you see, I was much older than the majority of the students. You see, I was about 29 or 30 when I went to college and most of these kids were like 18, 19 or 20.

H: You happened then to have been at Miles at a very, volatile time, because in 1960 of course, you had the beginning of the student sit-in movement, although it had began much earlier, but the college students started to get involved. In '61 you had the Freedom Riders to come and Miles then is organizing. Tell me a little about that period between '60 and the demonstrations of '63.

H: Well, I believe it was in '59, the fall of '59, some of the students went down in the park, Kelly Ingram Park to protest and they were arrested. And at that time Dr. Bell was the president of Miles College and his philosophy was 360 degrees away from ours in terms of what we were about.

H: "We," meaning the students?

D: Students, yes. And so that little protest didn't get off the ground really because the infamous Bull Conner was in office then as you may well know and we didn't really get involved again until I would think, probably around late '61 when we started organizing.

H: Right. Were you at all involved or knew what was taking place with the development of the

Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights?

D: No, but I became a member before the demonstrations and the selective buying campaign. But in the very beginning when Rev. Shuttleworth organized it, I don't think I had come back to Birmingham at that time.

H: Right. They organized in '56 and you were away at that time. In '61 when the organizing of students started to take place, what precipitated that?

D: Well, some of the students like in North Carolina were protesting and demonstrating and a group of us felt that we should do the same thing because we were hamstrung by segregation, discrimination and all those other ills and wrongs. So we just got a committee together. U. W. Clemon who is now Federal Judge U. W. Clemon, Shelley Millender, a fellow by the name of Reuther Meredith and Dr. Jonathan McPherson, who at that time was a chemistry professor, who is now the owner of Scott-McPherson Funeral Home. He was our advisor and worked with us in the very beginning.

H: And this is based upon what you saw happening in North Carolina with the four students who started the sit-ins?

D: Yes. We felt that we could not sit idly by and not protest here because the conditions in Alabama were worse than those in North Carolina. And I personally never accepted the role of being subservient to White folks, even as a boy, a young boy.

H: What do you remember. Why do you say that "as a young boy, you didn't accept it?"

D: Because occasionally I would get in fights with White boys about calling me "nigger" and I would fight at the drop of a hat. And then, you know, you would walk on the sidewalk sometime and you approach a White person and they would want you to move off and let them by and I refused to do it, and stuff like that.

H: What did your parents say about that kind of behavior at the time?

D: Well, my mother and in particular my grandmother, always told us not to pick a fight, but don't run from a fight. If anybody accosted us, to stand our ground. Be the person Black, White, Green or Brown.

H: So when you arrived at Miles College with that kind of background, and with what had started to develop and students starting to get involved in the struggle, you basically were already primed already for that kind of activity?

D: Yes.

H: What actually precipitated the Selective Buying Campaign?

D: Well, Dr. Pitts got word that a group of students were getting ready for some direct action so he sent for us and he wanted to know what we were going to do, what we planned to do because he was not going to fight us. Rather he was going to advise us because he had had a lot of experience in that kind of thing down through the years. And he wanted us to protest like we wanted to protest but he wanted us to do it in an organized fashion and to do it in such a way that hopefully, we wouldn't get killed off the bat. So we started to meet, and then Dr. Pitts, if you have heard anything about him at all, you know he was one of the world's greatest diplomats and a brilliant man. He had a good relationship with the White leaders in Metropolitan Birmingham as well as the Black leaders. He talked with a bunch of the White power structure persons and we started to having meetings with these White businessmen in an effort to get these stores desegregated, hire Black salesman, Black firemen, Black policemen, everything we have now. We started to meeting with these gentlemen in an effort to try to get them to use their power to bring this about.

H: Does this precede the '63 demonstrations?

D: Right.

H: Because those were some of the demands that were being generated.

D: Right. Well, had it not been for the success of the Selective Buying Campaign, actually it was a boycott, but in those days, a boycott was illegal, so we had to call it selective buying. Had it not been for the success of the Selective Buying Campaign, there wouldn't have been the demonstration of '63 because the Selective Buying Campaign got the Black populace of Birmingham ready for direct action.

H: Tell me, why do you think that there was such a difference between President Bell and

President Pitts?

D: Well, Dr. Pitts was a visionary. Also, he had never accepted the role that had been forced upon Black people by the White power structure across this country. And Dr. Bell philosophically I would think, or maybe from a more of a practical standpoint, if not philosophically, had acclimated himself to blend in and follow the rule of law as set forth by the White folk.

H: Was Bell originally from Birmingham?

D: I think he came from Georgia. I know he lived in Georgia most of the time when he was president here.

H: And Dr. Pitts, was not originally from here?

D: No. No. He was from Georgia.

H: Right. Explain to me how the organization of the Selective Buying Campaign took place.

D: Well, we started to meeting first of all with some of the White power structure. The late Sydney Smyer, James A. Head, I think he's still alive. Emil Hess of Parisian's. The president of Loveman's, the president of, a fellow named Roper Dial, who was president of Sears, Roebuck. It must have been some seven or eight.

H: You say "we", who are you referring to?

D: Well, that would have been U. W. Clemon, Shelley Millender, Wrother Meredith, Dr. McPherson and myself.

H: All Mileians?

D: Yes.

H: And this is the initial contact with the "power structure?"

D: Right. Right.

H: And how did those meetings go?

D: Well, in the very beginning they got off to a shaky start because the White power persons were trying to tell us to wait and things would work themselves out and we couldn't buy that. And they were telling us that they didn't have any power to change anything in Birmingham because they lived in Mountain Brook and Bull Conner was a beast and that they were afraid of him, and all that kind of stuff.

H: So they were portraying that difference then between the business community and the government of Birmingham?

D: Right.

H: And they wanted you to slow your pace?

D: Exactly.

H: And allow them to do certain things?

D: Well, they hadn't planned to do anything. They were really stalling. Like the stall had been on for hundreds of years, you know. But, while we were having these meetings, I guess after we had met about, five times, we saw that they weren't going to do anything but stall and we were getting ready to start our Selective Buying Campaign and we told them this, but they didn't believe that it would work, you see. So we started the Selective Buying Campaign.

H: As a result of their inactivity?

D: Yes. Well, we had done our research and we knew that department stores operated on a 15% margin of profit and we knew all we had to do was cut into the margin of profit and that would make the owners of those department stores or managers or presidents, what have you, have another thought about trying to give us some redress of our grievances. And when we started the Selective Buying Campaign after about five or six weeks, Birmingham was lily white downtown. You didn't see any Black people shopping at all. And when we first started, some of those businessmen had pushed Bull Conner to try to get him to change the laws here and Bull Conner said, "We aren't going to change anything because those niggers are not going to stay out of downtown shopping, they'll be back." And when they didn't go back, Miles College in

the meantime had started a March of Dimes drive to get books for the library and we had to get a permit to march for this fund raising drive and Bull Conner denied us the permit. And from that we got national and international publicity and that helped to start the ball to really rolling. And during that period of time, some of the stores desegregated the water fountains and the restrooms but they didn't hire any Black salespersons or anything like that.

H: What was the mechanism that the students used to get Black people in the communities that were not part of Miles College involved in the Selective Buying Campaign?

D: Well, we ran thousands of, hundreds of thousands of leaflets listing what we were protesting about. We wanted Black firemen, Black policemen, Black folk at Social Security, Black folk at Internal Revenue, all the jobs Black folk now hold was what we were asking for plus desegregating restaurants. Because at that time, the only jobs that Black folk could get in Birmingham, you either had to be a preacher in a Black church, teacher in a Black school or an insurance salesman. There were two public health workers who doubled as social workers. A lady named Mildred Feldon and another gentleman whose name I can't recall. But aside from those two individuals, nobody else worked out in the White community or had their office headquarters in the White community. Because they worked in the Black community, they didn't deal with the White folk who needed their services.

H: Although there were many Black domestics that worked in White homes?

D: Right. Well, most of the time, we could always tell Thursday in downtown Birmingham because that was the maid's day off in Mountain Brook. And all of those ladies would come downtown to shop and go to the restaurants and bars and different places.

H: Well, were there any difficulties with any of the people. Did you have to persuade anyone not to use the stores at the time of the SBC?

D: Well, we would have meetings out in the community sometime with groups and explain our situation. And we just kept these leaflets flowing. See, we would get up early every Sunday morning maybe like 4:00 o'clock. And we would have the back seat and trunk of cars loaded with leaflets and we would go around, and at that time, churches didn't lock their doors. So we could go in the churches and we would put leaflets on all the benches so when the people got to church they could read them. And then we would put them in all of the public places. And then we would go into the White banks and leave them on the table where you wrote out checks and

stuff. So we got the word around.

H: Was the Alabama Christian Movement involved with you at that point?

D: No.

H: When did they get involved with the Miles students?

D: Well, before we even started our meetings, we met with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights and Rev. Shuttlesworth and told them what we were about because we needed his blessing in order to start our program. So, that's how we got involved with them. But the actual mechanics of SBC was conducted and operated by Miles College students and some of the Black ladies from the Birmingham community. Folk like Deenie Drew and Ruth Barefield Pendleton, and Dr. Montgomery's wife, Althea.

H: What were their roles?

D: They helped us. They furnished transportation and Deenie Drew, as you know, looks like a White woman and she could go places and get stuff for us and go into the White Citizens Council meeting and stuff and get information and bring it back.

H: So she actually went to the White Citizens' Council meetings?

D: Yes.

H: So they were very supportive of the efforts here?

D: Yes. They worked real hard. As a matter of fact, we had a big meeting once at Deenie Drew's house of all the significant number of Black professional women, who at that time was mostly school teachers. Because most of them had charge accounts at Burger Phillips, Pizitz, etc. Black women traded at most of the department stores and we had a meeting with those women and told them to stop going into the stores shopping. Stop buying any kind of clothing from them because we wanted the SBC to be a success. And we would say things like, "If you go in Loveman's or Pizitz' and you spend \$500 you can't go up on the mezzanine and spend a quarter for a glass of tea." And they could see the difference.

H: The demands that you made that resulted in the development of the SBC, how successful were you in realizing them?

D: Well, as I said earlier, what we really got out of the SBC was unification of the Black community psychologically and philosophically and in terms of like the desegregation of stores and all this kind of stuff. All that we got was the desegregation of water fountains and the restrooms.

H: So you laid foundation for SCLC and the Alabama Christian Movement?

D: Right. Well, in the middle of the SBC, Dr. King sent Wyatt T. Walker, Andrew Young and Bernard Lee out here to Miles College to confer with me. And what he wanted me to do was to let him know when I felt that Birmingham was ready for a non-violent demonstration. And on the strength of the success of our SBC we notified Dr. King that Birmingham was ready, Black Birmingham was ready. And that's when he came to Birmingham and met with the Black leaders and so forth.

H: You mentioned that you had the blessings of Rev. Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement. Were you getting any physical assistance from the Movement during those days?

D: Well, as I recall, you know, you are talking 30 something years ago. We just went at it on our own and we would go to the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights meetings every Monday night to let the people know what was going on and what we were doing. And we got their blessing. But the majority of all those leaflets being handed out and all that kind of stuff was done by Miles College students and some of those ladies that I had previously mentioned.

H: So you attended the Movement meetings, the Alabama Christian Movement meetings on Monday night?

D: Yes.

H: Can you describe what those meetings were like?

D: Well, they were really church meetings, and there would always be a main speaker, somebody would preach and then there would be some other people who would talk about the segregation and discrimination and all this stuff that we were encountering. And this was the gist of the

meeting from meeting to meeting.

H: Were you aware that Birmingham policemen were present?

D: Yes. They sat down on the front bench with tape recorders and recorded everything that went on. And we said what we wanted to say and they recorded it. Oftentimes the police who would be recording what was being said, and when collection time came around they would put money in the collection plate.

H: That's interesting. Did you go to jail?

D: Yes. Twice.

H: What were the circumstances?

D: Well, in '63, Easter Sunday, N. H. Smith, A. D. King, John Porter and me, we led the march in '63 from Thurgood CME Church. At that time it was on 7th Avenue and 11th Street and we led that particular march and we got arrested. After we had gotten about a couple of blocks, Chief Jamie Moore and his storm troopers came down on us and we all got arrested.

H: How long did you remain in jail?

D: On that account, I was in for five days. And then the next time I went to jail was when we had a trial and Bull Conner had issued orders to the judge to fine all the "niggers" \$100 and six months, 180 days. Judge Brown was adjudicating the trials and in the middle of this particular trial he died. Had a heart attack and died.

H: On the bench?

D: On the bench. And we had prayer for the fallen brother. And as soon as they hauled Judge Brown out, Bull Conner sent up for Judge Conway and as soon as Judge Conway sat in the seat that Judge Brown had died in, Bull Conner said continue to giving all the "niggers" \$100 fine and 180 days and we went off to jail.

H: So he was really in control?

D: He ran Birmingham. There were two other commissioners but he ran Birmingham. They were

more or less figure heads.

H: What were the circumstances of your arrest that time, the second time?

D: Well, the second time, was we went to jail because we weren't going to pay the fine.

H: Oh, I see. Were there other instances of your being arrested?

D: Going to jail?

H: Yes.

D: That was the only time I got arrested.

H: Did others in your family participate?

D: My younger brothers and sisters were in the marches but none of them ever got arrested.

H: What was the reaction of your family to your involvement?

D: Oh, my family was 100% behind me. Because as I told you earlier, we didn't pick fights but we didn't run from fights. We would get in the middle of it. 100% support.

H: You were still a single man at the time, during these demonstrations?

D: Yes. I was a bachelor as a matter of fact until I became 37.

H: What church were you a member of at the time?

D: At that time it was called First Baptist Annizburg, but now it's called Antioch and it's down on 54th Street here up in Fairfield.

H: What was the level of involvement of the church and your pastor at that time?

D: Well, I was a member of the church but I was zooming around, doing everything, going everywhere. I wasn't really active in the church, at that time.

- H: Right. I know later on you would become a minister and we will talk about that in a minute. But how would you say the community of the Birmingham Metropolitan area benefitted from the Movement that was organized by yourself and others that you discussed?
- D: Oh, as I said earlier, the two main things, as I see it was that we were able to get the folk philosophically and psychologically ready. We wanted them to have courage and not be afraid to protest, and that was achieved.
- H: Usually when we start talking about the Movement here in Birmingham we usually end up in 1963 and we know that the Movement continued. What were you doing after the demonstrations of '63?
- D: Well, I finished Miles in May of '62 and Dr. Pitts hired me as Director of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs in June of that same year. So even during the time when we were in the SBC I was working here at Miles College. So I continued to work here to help Dr. Pitts build this institution.
- H: Was SNCC ever involved with organization here at Miles?
- D: No. SNCC, CORE, all of those groups would come through here from time to time and talk with us and they wanted to get involved in it, but we believed that we would be more effective if the students who were involved in the fight were from Birmingham.
- H: So, did you discourage people from outside from participating?
- D: We didn't really discourage them, but what we told them was that this was a home grown movement and if they wanted to give us their support, fine. But in terms of the mechanics, we would operate that.
- H: How many students were involved with Miles at the time? I know in terms of your negotiation you had just a few people involved, but at the height of the Movement, for instance, at high schools and the junior high school, kids left the schools and became involved in the demonstration, how did that transpire here at Miles?
- D: Well, after we got the SBC going, on one weekend we got a petition and we got all of the Miles College students we could find to sign it. So I would imagine, some 600 or 700 signed it. And

then we got citizens from the community to sign it. And we took that petition down to the courthouse, city hall and presented it to Bull Conner and Jabo Wagner and Art Haynes who were the other two commissioners. And the group who took the petition down there was U. W. Clemon, Frank Dukes, Jonathan McPherson and Shelley Millender and we had alerted the press that we were going to be there, so the press was there when we got there. So when they got through with the city's business, Bull Conner wanted to know if anyone else had anything they wanted to say. So Clemon was our first spokesman. And Clemon got up to talk about we wanted Black policemen, firemen and internal revenue employees just everything that we got now. And Bull Conner cursed Clemons out and called him a bunch of niggers and told him that before there would be Black policemen in Birmingham, niggers would be deacons in the First Baptist Church. That was the big White First Baptist Church up on 21st Street and I think 4th Avenue at that time. And McPherson got up and made his speech and then I got up and made my speech and some of the Black persons in Birmingham who were in cahoots with the police department had told Connor that Dukes was outsider from Detroit stirring up the Negroes in Birmingham.

H: These are Black persons?

D: Yes. Snitches. Had told Bull Conner that I was not from Birmingham. That I was from Detroit down here stirring up trouble. So Bull Conner told me, he said, "Well, if you don't like the way I run Birmingham, why don't you leave and go back to Detroit." I said, "This is my home town, just like it is yours and I'm going to stay here until we get it right." And he didn't say another word.

H: So he reacted to Clemon but he didn't react to either of the others?

D: He reacted to McPherson, too. I just don't remember the terminology that he used. But he didn't say anything to me other than what I said.

H: Do you remember what happened after that?

D: Well, we had a press conference down at Thurgood CME church and they wrote it up and it was on TV and all that. That was about the size of that.

H: But then, that is part of that organization to get other people involved?

D: Right. And it gave a lot of Black people courage. Because people, both Black and White,

were literally afraid of Bull Conner because when the news got out that we were going down there to challenge Bull Conner, people were calling our homes and begging us not to go.

H: People like who? Friends of yours?

D: Black folk and White folk who knew our families would call and say, "Don't go, or else you are going to get killed down there." But we were committed.

H: So there was real concern about the safety of those who had nerve enough to challenge the status quo?

D: Yes. Because it was a dangerous thing to do.

H: Well, were you or your family ever physically threatened with violence as a result of your activity?

D: Not to my knowledge, that I can recall.

H: Then, what about faculty other than Dr. McPherson?

D: Other than Dr. McPherson, Abraham Woods. I can't think of any other faculty member who actively participated and who went to jail and all of that kind of stuff other than Abraham Woods.

H: What about activity on the campus? Were they supportive in terms of allowing students to do certain things. Well, as far as I knew, none of the faculty members fought the students. As a matter of fact, the faculty cooperated, because President Pitts was helping us spear head this thing, so they worked with us from that standpoint.

H: What would be your most vivid memory during this struggle when you were making this effort to organize people, develop the SBC, what stands out in your mind more than anything else?

D: I would guess, when we first started meeting with those White power structure gentlemen at our first meetings, they addressed us all as niggers and about the third meeting we became boys and about the fourth or fifth meeting we were on first name basis. And you have to have been under bondage to understand why that would stand out.

H: You now had been away from Birmingham, you had been in the military, you had lived in Detroit, others, I guess, Dr. McPherson had probably been away. I am not sure about Millender and Clemon. They were younger. What do you think provided the courage for those of you who had been away, but more so those who had probably not been away from Birmingham?

D: Well, I didn't get my courage because I had been away.

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H: ... I had the same experience. I was older when I went into college. Younger people would sort of flock around you. You were sort of a catalyst for others around you because of really, your background.

D: Yes. Well, one of the things that engendered the Miles College students to get involved was, David Lowe, a producer with ABC. He came down to Birmingham with a camera crew. I'm sure you read about it. They did a documentary on the race question here in Birmingham and they showed it all over the country and it was called "Who Speaks For Birmingham?" And many of us spoke and of those of us who spoke, included citizens from the Birmingham community, ABC-TV highlighted what I said and what Shelley Millender said and a few others. And for the students at Miles College, to see us on the screen, defying the White power structure and the Klan and all these people, they got courage.

H: So that courage was infectious?

D: Yes.

H: And really, people became proud of being able to do what you all were doing and so therefore they sought to take part?

D: Right. And then everybody was hungry for some freedom because we had none, you know.

H: Are there any issues that we have not touched on that you would like to just mention before we end our session today?

D: Nothing, other than if it were possible for Bull Conner to be alive, I would like to see him around here to see Federal Judge U. W. Clemon on that 7th floor up there looking out over Birmingham and who he said, "Better leave out of Birmingham and if he ever came back down there, he was going to have his head beat to a mush." And to see the mayor, who is Black, the police chief who is Black with four or five deputy police chiefs who are Black. The fire is Black. The head of the sanitation department is Black. The fight for Freedom, Justice, and Equality was not in vain.

H: Change is your greatest revenge?

D: Exactly. And it does my heart a lot of good when I go into department stores or Internal Revenue or Social Security and see Black folk who are supervisors and all that kind of stuff. Managers. Before the demonstrations and selective buying campaign, when you saw a Black person in a building downtown he had a mop and a broom, or she had a mop and a broom.

H: So all of that changes as a result of the people developing courage to stand on their own two feet?

D: Right. With prayer.

H: With prayer. It's been a pleasure, Rev. Dukes to have you with us today. And I certainly do appreciate it. We would like to, probably at some later date, after we have gone through all of this, we may want to sit down with you again, but I want to thank you for coming today and we certainly do appreciate it.

D: Thanks for inviting me.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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