

# **The Civil Rights Movement in Alabama**

Alabama A&M University

## **Huntsville during the Civil Rights Movement Speakers: Sonnie W. Hereford, III, John Cashin Jr., Fred Carodine and William Pearson**

On behalf of the University of Alabama in Huntsville and on behalf of President Frank Franz, I am very pleased to welcome all of you to this lecture series focusing on the history and impact of the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama. This historic initiative brings to Huntsville, distinguished speakers who will reflect on events of the past and who will share with us their hopes for the future. I must once again commend the faculty from the University of Alabama in Huntsville and from Alabama A&M University, who worked over a period of more than two years to make this possible. The faculty includes, but are not limited to, John Dimmock, Lee Williams, Jack Ellis, Mitch Berbrier from UAH, James Johnson and Carolyn Parker from Alabama A&M. I am very pleased that you could be with us.

Good evening. It is my pleasure to take a couple of moments to acknowledge our sponsors. These are the people who have made it possible for us to do all these kinds of things. They have given us funds and all kinds of support. They are: The Alabama Humanities Foundation, a state program of the National Endowment for the Humanities; Senator Frank Sanders; *The Huntsville Times*; DESE Research Inc.; Mevatec Corporation; and Alabama Representative, Laura Hall. At Alabama A&M, we have the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, the State Black Archives Research Center and Museum, Title III Telecommunications and Distance Learning Center, Office of

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Student Development, the Honor Center, Sociology/Social Work Programs and the History Political Science Programs. At the University of Alabama in Huntsville, we have the Office of the President, Office of the Provost, The History Forum Banking Foundation, Sociology, Social Issues Symposium, The Humanities Center, The Division of Continuing Education, the Honors Program and the Office of Multi-Cultural Affairs, Office of Student Affairs and the UAH Copy Center. Let us give these people a show of appreciation.

**Jack Ellis:** The focus is on the Civil Rights Movement in Huntsville, the event that started at least with the first sit-ins of January 3, 1962, which were carried out largely by students from William Cooper Council High School and Alabama A&M, many of whom had been recruited by a young man named Henry J. Thomas, who was a veteran freedom rider and a field agent for the Congress of Racial Equality, known also as CORE. Thomas also, as some of you may know, had been on the bus that was firebombed outside of Anderson and was beaten as he exited the bus. For several months after the initial demonstrations in Huntsville, the movement mushroomed as students targeted segregated lunch counters throughout the city. From the list of those arrested appearing in the *Huntsville Times*, one can identify around 130 young people who participated repeatedly and over an extended period of time. Though in her 1965 Master's thesis presented here at Alabama A&M and entitled "The Acquisition of Civil Rights in Huntsville, Alabama from 1962 to 1965," Theresa Powers-Shields estimates the number at actually 400 and the total number of known sit-in demonstrations as 260. Accompanying this campaign were weekly mass meetings, the formation of a community

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service committee, known as PCFC, which was chaired by Reverend Ezekiel Bell. Despite foot dragging by the mayor and other city leaders, the movement also succeeded in seeing the appointment of a biracial committee that helped oversee an end to segregation in public facilities two years before the Civil Rights Movement of 1964.

The question I propose tonight that we can discuss is how and why did events occur in this fashion in Huntsville and in what ways was the Huntsville Movement different from, for that matter similar to, the Civil Rights Movements in other areas of the state. For background, I will briefly mention just a few facts starting with the city's rapid rise in population after World War II. In 1960, the population of Huntsville stood at just over 72,000; many of these young, middle-class professionals were from areas outside the south. That same year I saw massive infusion of federal funds into the local economy, aided greatly by the creation in 1958 of the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center which was charged, as many of you know, with developing launch vehicle systems to support the lunar landing program. Within four years, Marshall was producing 30 million dollars in local contracts annually and employees of NASA and the newly arriving aerospace industries were spending another 100 million in Huntsville. In their book, "A Power to Explore: A History of the Marshall Space Flight Center, 1960 to 1990," published in 1999, Professors Andrew J. Dunar and Stephen P. Waring note that because nearly 90 percent of Huntsville's economy was based on federal funds, Washington had more leverage here than anywhere else in the state, simply because few business leaders or political leaders were willing to risk losing such resources. In short, say the authors, "the gospel of wealth had more disciples in Huntsville than the gospel of

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white supremacy.” These facts, no doubt, helped shape the strategies and tactics of the local Civil Rights Movement, as did the ability of the demonstrators to turn Cold War rhetoric on its head by noting how America was spending billions for defense against communism abroad while denying freedom to its own citizens here at home. The signs carried by protestors on the Huntsville Square echoed this message. One said that this is the Rocket City USA, let freedom begin here; another said Khrushchev can eat in this restaurant, but I can't.

Nevertheless, while the success of the local movement owed much to the federal presence, I believe it also reflected strengths within the black community itself. Ten thousand strong in 1960, Huntsville's black residents had developed a powerful sense of community and culture that was flourishing long before the arrival of NASA and German rocket science. It was the leaders of this community, its ministers, its business leaders, its professionals, tradesmen and workers, who defined the terms of the Civil Rights struggle and who provided financial support and council to the students. Their efforts not only helped break the back of segregation in Huntsville's public facilities but set the stage for the successful school desegregation suit filed in March of 1963 on behalf of Sonnie Hereford, IV, Veronica Pearson, Anthony Bruton and Davis Peday. By the way, Huntsville's sit-ins, poster walks, boycotts and visits from the nation's top Civil Rights leaders outraged state officials, like attorney general McDonald Gallion, who succeeded in banning the Congress of Racial Equality from the state, and certainly Governor John Patterson who forced the retirement of Alabama's A&M president of 35 years, Joseph F. Drake.

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At the local level, business and professional leaders seemed stunned as they witnessed the exploding myth of racial harmony in the much-vaunted progressive environment of Madison County. Their surprise may have been an indication of how little they really knew about the black community, a fact that is easily confirmed by one of my students, by the almost complete absence of positive reporting in the local press on the achievement of African-Americans here in Madison County during the 3 or 4 decades prior to 1960. Initial reaction to the sit-ins was thus to be expected. In an editorial from July 9, 1962, the *Huntsville Times* accused black leaders of threatening, “to harm Huntsville’s position in the highly competitive race for industrial and intellectual development.” Similarly, a resolution of the Huntsville Minister’s Association stressed the economic progress the city had made as the space capital of America and added, “We do not want this image marred by the struggle in human relations that is going on throughout America and around the world.” Yet, as Dunar and Waring had pointed out, despite its liberal reputation, at least in comparison to the county’s black belt. Huntsville, its schools, hospitals and other public facilities, were rigidly segregated. Black housing and schools suffered from neglect. Educational and job opportunities were severely limited. African-Americans, they note, made up eighteen percent of the city’s population, yet were less than one percent of the work force at Marshall. The fact of the matter, observed one NASA administrator, is that Huntsville is in Alabama. The Civil Rights Movement here in Huntsville thus poses numerous questions that I hope we can discuss tonight with our distinguished panelists and with members of the audience who

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were there. To introduce our guests and to moderate the discussion, I would now like to call on my colleague, Professor Carolyn Parker.

**Carolyn Parker:** Thank you, Jack. This should prove to be an exciting evening for us. I'm particularly delighted to have this opportunity to moderate and to introduce our distinguished panel. Our first presenter for this evening is well known throughout the city for his work as a medical doctor, Alabama A&M University and Oakwood College physician, a familiar face on our football field. He served as team physician in the 1960's, 1970's and 1980's, as a professor of anatomy at local institutions of higher learning and most especially, for our purposes tonight, a Civil Rights legend. Dr. Sonnie W. Hereford, III is a native of Huntsville, Alabama, was educated at Council High School (my alma mater as well, proud to say), Alabama A&M University and Meharry Medical College. He distinguished himself by earning highest honors at each stage of his academic career. He began his practice of general medicine in Huntsville in 1956. He served as medical director on the Selma to Montgomery march and assisted Vivian Malone in her quest to enter the University of Alabama, in Tuscaloosa. Dr. Hereford has received numerous awards for his contributions to our community, to name a few; Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta Sororities, the Community Action Agency, the Madison County Midwives Association, Oakwood College and Alabama A&M University's Athletic Department. He is a member of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, the Huntsville Alabama Hall of Fame and was cited for patriotism and dedication by Redstone Arsenal. In 1999, collaborating with Calhoun Community College, he released a video taped account of the Civil Rights Movement in Huntsville titled, "A Civil Rights Journey." His son, Sonnie Wellington

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Hereford, IV, who is right here, will you stand? Just let them see who you are. His son Sonnie Wellington Hereford, IV was first to integrate a public school in Alabama in 1963, what was then called Fifth Avenue School. Dr. Hereford is married to the former Martha Lynne Adams and they are parents of five daughters and one son. Dr. Hereford will share with us a summary of the background of the Civil Rights Movement in Huntsville from his perspective as a highly involved activist. It is my pleasure to present our first speaker to our audience, Dr. Sonnie Wellington Hereford, III.

**Sonnie W. Hereford, III:** Dr. Parker, Dr. Ellis, our distinguished panel, the esteemed president of this university and also our esteemed provost, our fellow freedom fighters, students and friends. It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here with you tonight. We want to talk about Huntsville. Just before I start talking about Huntsville, I would like to introduce a few more people in the audience. She stole a little bit of my thunder, I had planned to introduce some of the people, but I didn't even know Sonnie was going to be here. Sonnie was at a funeral this afternoon in Kentucky and has driven here to be with us. But first, let me introduce my president when I was working at Oakwood and he has come here tonight at my invitation to be with us. Dr. Minette, would you stand up or hold up your hand, please and let them see you? This is the first time I've had the pleasure to see him in the last fifteen or sixteen years. Now, I wanted to just mention my brother who is in the audience, who's been with me seventy years. We've been side by side everyday, even in the Civil Rights Movement. Tom, would you stand up just a minute please and my daughter who has driven all the way from Shreveport, Louisiana to

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be with us tonight. Would you stand up Martha, please? And, Sonnie and Sonnie's daughter is here, would you stand up please? We have three generations here.

Thanks very much for inviting me here to be with you tonight to talk about the Civil Rights Movement in Huntsville. You see, we have sat and we have listened to the people talk about the Civil Rights Movement in other cities and other communities and we've heard about the difficulties that they've had. When some of them spoke, I thought they were writing my autobiography. We were so much alike, but then, there were some ways in which we were different. I'd just like to mention to you about three or four incidents in which it seems like we were so much alike. When Ms. Nash talked about going to jail while she was pregnant, the first thing that came to my mind was my wife went to jail when she was pregnant. When Attorney Chestnut spoke of those long meetings that they sat in until the wee hours of the morning, I thought about Dr. Cashin and how we use to sit in those long, long meetings until the wee hours of the morning. When Attorney Gray spoke about the out of state fees they paid him to try to bribe him to not even try to get into the University of Alabama, I received that out of state fee. They said if you don't try to go to the University of Alabama, if you'll go to any other college in the United States, we'll pay you the difference of what it cost you to go to that college and to go to the University of Alabama. I talked to Dr. Cashin today and he said his father refused to accept that. He sent him to school and paid his way. Dr. Woolfolk, just last week, when she spoke about the superintendent of the schools threatening to fire the teachers, well, we had the same thing here in Huntsville and it just seems like they were just talking about our movement. The doctor has told you about my association with

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A&M, so I want to let you know that I really feel at home here at A&M. When I was a teenager, I used to come to the football games here on Saturdays and then some Saturdays when I couldn't come, I'd be picking cotton in the cotton field. I could look and I could see Bill Grey. I could hear the band and wish I was here.

The next thing I want to speak about, the participation of the people. I go around all over the United States, showing the film and talking to people about the Civil Rights Movement. Sometimes, I forget to ask about people who have also participated. Now, how many people do we have here in the audience who have participated in the Huntsville Civil Rights Movement? May I have a show of hands, please? Those who actually participated in the Huntsville Civil Rights Movement. Okay, very good. How many had relatives who participated, maybe you weren't old enough to participate, but some of you had ancestors and relatives who participated. I think there's a hand. Now, how many people do we have here who've participated in movements in other cities? All right, let's give them a hand. I see one young man back there who is still fighting, I know about your fight.

Now, we know that there is nothing on the face of the earth that is as powerful as a movement whose time has come. I had read about revolutions and my teachers had taught me about revolutions, but the ones that I knew about they were more or less bloody revolutions. There were guns involved; there were knives; there were slings and there were arrows involved. We want to talk to you a little bit tonight about a nonviolent revolution. We want you to see how powerful a nonviolent revolution can be. This is

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very timely because in a short sixty-nine days from now, we will be celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of the Huntsville revolution.

I want to talk to you a minute about how Huntsville used to be, before the movement started and I want to use the format that I used the last time, when I spoke at the University of Michigan. I started off by telling them how things were in the community. The schools in Huntsville were completely segregated. We had poor equipment. We had poor facilities. We had no library, no gym, no lunchroom, no PE period, no PhD's on the staff, no playground and we had no laboratories. Some teachers and students may take exception with me on that, some of the ones who went to Council High, when I say we had no laboratories. We had a room that said, the inscription above the door, "Chemistry Laboratory." But, if you had gone inside that room, this is what you would have seen. You would have seen about ten or twelve test tubes, ten or twelve reagent bottles, one beaker and one Bunsen burner. That is not a laboratory, in my opinion. Now, I want to show you something. They say a picture is worth a thousand words. I sat down, my wife and I drew this picture. You see where it says "MS," that's my school. You see where it says "CD," that's the city dump. Now can you imagine how it was? We didn't have air conditioning. Can you imagine in September and in May how it was to sit in those classrooms when some of us didn't want to be there in the first place. Can you imagine that? Now, if it cost me my life, I couldn't tell you which one was put there first, the city dump or the school, but my contention is that whichever one went there first, the other one had no business being put there. Do you agree on that?

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There were no buses for black children. The buses were for the white children. The only thing I remember about a school bus is that if it passed by me fast, it blew dust in my face. If it passed by me slowly, rotten eggs and rotten tomatoes came from the windows and hit me in the face. That's what I remember about a school bus. Now, the powers took our own tax money and hired the best legal minds in the United States to keep us from getting our own freedom and the things that we deserved to keep us from getting the things that we actually deserved. Now, you've heard the expression on the street, a double whammy. Well, if it keeps the schools segregated, you automatically keep the boy scouts and the girl scouts segregated. You see what I mean. Because the troops come from the schools and the job. The black people were the last to be hired and the first to be fired. And, then when they were given a job, they had different pay scales. Just to give an example, a white man and a black man working on the same job, the black man 25 cents an hour, the white man 40 cents an hour, the same job. I know you've heard this before, they bring a white person on a job and ask the black person to train him, a brand new person, and in the next two weeks the white person is the black man's supervisor. I know you've heard that before. Now, the jobs that were available were janitor, delivery man, minister, teacher, porter, errand boy and construction worker, but you could not have any supervisor position in the construction work. There were no policemen; no firemen, no bank tellers, no clerks, no meter maids, and no sales people whatsoever. There were no black people in the national guard, no black people holding political offices and I was 30-years-old before I saw my first brown mannequin in a store

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window and that was in Honolulu, Hawaii. I had never seen a brown mannequin in my life, scout's honor.

Voting. We were disfranchised on the basis of illiteracy. Even though some of us had Bachelor's, Master's and PhD degrees, we were still disfranchised and this is what one had to do if one wanted to vote. If you go to the voter's registration place, you had to take someone with you who was already a registered voter to vouch for you. You had to take a written test, an oral test and then interpret the Constitution of the United States to the satisfaction of the examiner. Now, in some cities, if you passed all of that, they had a jar of jellybeans and then you'd have to guess how many jellybeans was in the jar. Now, say for instance you pass all of that including the jellybeans, then you have to go to the courthouse and pay your poll tax. After you'd done all of that, if you didn't pay your tax, you still couldn't vote. On the street, they called that a double whammy because if you are not a registered voter, then you don't get a chance to serve on a jury. Now, I don't know how it is today but that's the way it used to be in Huntsville, Alabama. The jury pool was taken from the list of registered voters and I know that to be true because I called two lawyers yesterday and asked them about it and I didn't want to come out here and tell you that if it weren't true.

Now, on public accommodations. There was no access to any of the arenas, no access to any of the ballparks, skating rinks, the bowling alleys, the golf course, and not even to the library. You couldn't go to Shoney's and you couldn't go to McDonald's. I know you would not have liked that. In the medical community, we had a county here of about 75,000 people, twenty-five percent black, with 33 white doctors. We had one black

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doctor when I came to town. In the town, I made the 35<sup>th</sup> doctor. All of the white doctors had separate waiting rooms and then the black patients had to wait until the white doctors finished their white patients and then they would take a black patient. I want to relate to you a little incident that one of your professors here on the campus told me about. He said, "Dr. Hereford, I went down to this white doctor's office to take an insurance examination and he said they told me to be sure and be prepared to give a urine specimen and so I purposely didn't go to the restroom before I went down there and he said the nurse gave me a little bottle about that tall and she sent me into the x-ray room." He said, "Dr. Hereford, I didn't mean to wet the doctor's floor, but when I got through filling the bottle I couldn't stop." And so, this is the thing that used to happen to us. The hospital had separate wings for black and white. On the black wing, they had about 13 to 14 beds and after those get filled up, then they put patients in the halls. They had to stay in the hall. After the patients had delivered, all of our post partum patients were sent in one room, just one big room for all of the post partum patients, and when I first got to the hospital they had one room for the emergency room, the operating room and the delivery room, and you can see how you can run into problems with that. They had separate pay scales for the workers. All of the white workers made more than the black workers and they had no place whatsoever at the hospital for the black doctors, the black nurses and the black workers to eat. And, nobody seemed to give a damn that they didn't have anywhere for them to eat. When I started over there, the head of the staff told me, "Dr. Hereford, you can admit your patient's to the hospital, just like Dr. Drake does, but now you can't become a member of the staff because in order to become a member of the

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staff, you have to be a member of the county medical association.” Well, in order to become a member of the county medical association, you had to be white. So, in that way I couldn’t be a member of the staff. He said, “Now, you must come to the meetings, but you can’t vote, you can’t make a motion and he said be sure you don’t come before seven because the white doctors are going to eat at 6:30 and for God’s sake don’t come in while they’re eating and if you do come in, don’t let that waitress pour you a cup of coffee.” Now, that’s the type of things we had to go through with. Now, Dr. Ellis is looking at me. I don’t know if he’s looking at me about time or not, he says no. I like that. I want to talk to you awhile. Thank you, Dr. Ellis. We yielded five minutes of his time to me.

Well, you finally get tired of having those things. We were eating tonight, we were sitting at the table and we said yes, sometimes you get tired but sometimes you can’t do it by yourself, you want some help and you want a leader. We were waiting on a leader. We wanted somebody to get it started, but we didn’t quite know how to get it started and I wanted to do something about it. I was just sick and tired about how they treated me, not only at the hospital but all over the city. I was just sick and tired. So, on January 3, 1962, Henry Thomas, representing COA, came from New York. He recruited students from Council High and Alabama A&M. He started sitting in at some of the local lunch counters. They were immediately arrested because they had a law back in those days that said that any merchant and any land owner that did not want you on his property could order you off and if you didn’t leave in a reasonable length of time they could call the authorities and they would arrest you. And, so, they did that. They

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arrested these kids and that was their reason, just because the man didn't want them there. So, they arrested these kids and we went and we bailed them out. Dr. Cashin and a lot of other people went and signed their bonds and we bailed the kids out and then a night or two after that we decided that we better call a meeting. We'd get together and we'd organize and we'd form a committee to try to continue with the demonstration and to try to make sure we could get these kids out of jail when they needed to come out of jail and just to see what we could do about integrating the city.

I'll tell you a little bit about the committee first, and I'll be looking out the corner of my eye at Dr. Ellis every now and then. We started with what we called a community service committee and we decided that we'd have a chairperson and two vice-chairpersons and a least one of those individuals ought to be lady. So, we worked that out. We had subcommittees in the community service committee. We had a negotiating committee; we had a finance committee; we had an education committee, a committee on jobs, committee on public facilities, committee on housing and we had a psychological warfare committee. Indeed, we would meet whenever necessary and we'd meet wherever we could. One thing I want to point out, every single meeting we had and every single demonstration we had was opened with prayer and closed with prayer, every single one. Even if we had a called meeting where we were going to vote on one issue, it was opened with prayer and closed with prayer. That's the way we approached it. Okay, she's telling me I have five more minutes.

I'll talk to you about the leaders in the movement. We had a professor from here on the campus, Attorney Blackwell, who was an economics and political science

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professor, and he was the only one who had had any experience. He had been in the Greensboro situation. We had Mr. Harris who was manager of the Atlanta Life Insurance company, and Mr. Nimms, who was the owner of a local funeral home; Reverend Ezekiel Bell, a new pastor of Fellowship Presbyterian Church, and Dr. John Cashin, a local dentist who was an activist and made tremendous financial contributions to this movement. I know he isn't going to say it and I hope I don't embarrass him when I say it. He gave more money than any other 50 people in the city to help this movement. Now, you want to know how did I know, I was the treasurer and I knew where the money came from and I knew where it went. They had Dr. Hereford, who was a physician and an up and coming photographer who was going to take these pictures of all the demonstrations and everything and then one day I got up in a meeting and said that if anybody was injured or if anybody became ill while they were demonstrating that I would take care of them at no charge to them. We had Mr. R.C. Adams who had done a lot of work in voter registration, Ms. Ray, who was an activist, and we had our student leaders like Mr. Pearson and Dr. Dickerson, Ms. Frances Simms, Mr. Steel and Mr. Benton. Is Mr. Steel here tonight? Mr. Steel has been coming to most of the meetings.

The other thing I want to say is that it was lack of experience. We had not had any experience and we were just sailing on uncharted waters. We didn't know what in the world we needed to do and when we left home we didn't even know if we'd returned home. We didn't even know if we'd have a home to return to when we got back to. So, we had no protocol and we had no instruction manual and no guidebooks and we were

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just trying to see what we could do to try to bring about the integration. We had a small group of demonstrators without any money and it was against the might of the city, county and state government. We had white supremacy in the city that were egged on by the governor and the gubernatorial candidates and they knew that they could do anything they wanted to us and they would not have to suffer any consequences for doing that. So, that's what we were up against. Now I guess they're telling me I'm close to time. We went to the mayor and we asked the mayor to integrate the lunch counter, the drinking fountains and the restrooms. That wasn't much, was it? He refused us. He said, "I can't do that. They're not going to lose the customers they've had for the last 15 to 20 years just to accommodate you people. We can't do it." We then asked him to establish a biracial committee. We thought if we could get him to establish a biracial committee and have white people and black people to come to the bargaining table and sit down and talk we thought we could work it out. Every single move that we made was geared toward getting to the bargaining table. We felt that if we could just get them to the bargaining table then maybe we could coerce them into doing what was right. We might be able to bluff them into doing what was right or we might be able to shame them into doing what was right. Everything that we did was geared toward that end. And so we finally got some black members and the mayor said he couldn't find anybody white who would serve. He worked and worked and after the demonstrations kept going, we had to boycott. When the two doctor's wives got arrested, there was so much publicity all over the United States, then the mayor found some white people to serve on that committee. Now,

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if I could take about another thirty minutes..., I'm sorry, thirty seconds, I'll give a little chronology about how things happened.

Our movement was 99 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, eight years after Brown vs Board of Education, seven years after Ms. Rosa Parks, one year after President Kennedy was inaugurated. So, January 3, we said was the first sit-in and in February we began to start thinking about boycott. March 19<sup>th</sup> of the same year Dr. King came, he spoke and helped solidify the community. March 30<sup>th</sup>, the restrooms at the courthouse were integrated. April 11<sup>th</sup> was when the two wives were arrested. April 22<sup>nd</sup>, we had what we called Blue Jeans Easter and May 13<sup>th</sup>, the city parks were peacefully integrated. About the middle of May, Dr. Cashin's mother-in-law and her friends picketed the New York Stock Exchange and passed out leaflets. Then, on June 5<sup>th</sup>, two of your professors from here and my wife and I went to Chicago and we picketed the Mid-West Stock Exchange and passed out leaflets. When the mayor and the City Council found out about these things, they decided they would have what they would call a trial integration. So, on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup>, they had a trial integration of the lunch counters and the restrooms. In October of that same year, we filed a petition for the school integration. In February of the next year, we filed a suit. In August, the suit was heard and won, and on September 9, 1963, we had the first integration of any public school in the State of Alabama, and that happened here in Huntsville. There were some misconceptions about what was happening and it seemed to be the consensus of opinion in these instances that some people think that if I give you some of your freedom I'm going to automatically lose some of mine, and you know that isn't right. Another thing,

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they thought I was trying to get into the country club, and I wasn't trying to get into the country club. I was trying to get into the library and into Shoney's. And, the last misconception, if they had just looked at my name a little bit closer they would have seen that my middle name was Wellington, and not Bonaparte.

**Carolyn Parker:** Our next speaker, Dr. John L. Cashin, Jr. is a dentist who has devoted his life to the struggle for civil rights for African-Americans, especially in the state of Alabama. He founded the National Democratic Political party of Alabama, NDPA, and was responsible for the election of the first African-American candidate to public office. He ran for governor of Alabama as a work pool strategy, getting other black candidates to local and state offices. Dr. John L. Cashin, Jr., is currently president of TRP, which is critically involved with promoting public health education and HIV/AIDS program implementation in the economically challenged counties of the State of Alabama's black belt. He writes a weekly column, "Down Home," and he provides for the National Negro Newspaper Publishers Association. Dr. Cashin has worked with the Research Institute at the University of Alabama School of Medicine in Teenage Pregnancy Prevention research and with Dr. Emanuel Shelton on his Detergent Diet Nutrition Program. At Alabama A&M University, he has taught biology as well and was involved in selective enzyme cancer research for the removal of viable cancer nutrients. Dr. Cashin is also Executive Director of Southeast Alabama Rural Business Enterprise, which is a cooperative venture with the Tuskegee University Department of Agriculture, a nutritional, environmental, ecology and economic stability. Dr. Cashin is a graduate of Fisk University, Tennessee State University and Meharry Medical College. He is the

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recipient of numerous awards and citations from a plethora of local, state and national organizations. He was the first national Omega man of the year ever from Alabama, designated in 1971 by his fraternity, Omega Psi Phi, the 2000 Humanitarian award of excellence from the New South Coalition and the 2001 Presidential loyal alumnus and political activist award and the 2001 research service award from Tennessee State University. Dr. Cashin is married, the father of three children, three grandchildren and has many hobbies. He is instrument pilot, amateur astronomer, expert photographer, and historian. I am proud to present to you Huntsville's preeminent freedom fighter, Dr. John Cashin, Jr.

**John Cashin Jr.:** Thank you Ms. Carolyn, that is, Ms. Parker. I call her Alma's daughter. That was a very interesting little review that Dr. Hereford gave. As a matter of fact, he mentioned some things that I had almost forgotten about, bringing tears to my eyes because those were some rough days. But, we enjoyed it; we had a lot of fun. And we knew we were on the winning side. I was supposed to be giving something like a perspective on this movement and so forth. I was such an active participant that perhaps I get choked up with emotion and can't give a correct interpretation, because I would be biased. But, I did want to quote one of my favorite people, a guy that I worship, I call him St. Fred. I'm sure you have all heard of him. Frederick Douglas is his real name. Actually, it was Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, but we called him Frederick Douglas. One of his most famous quotations is, "Let me give you a message about reform. The whole history of human progress shows that all concessions made to her August claims have been borne of earnest struggle. The conflict has been exciting, all

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absorbing and, for the time being, putting all other tools to silence, it must do this or it does nothing. Where there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to favor freedom and yet deprecate agitation are like men who want crops without plowing up the ground. They want the rain without the thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar that's many waters. Now this struggle may be a moral one or a physical one, or it may be both moral and physical, but it must be a struggle for power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did, it never will. Find out what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong that will be imposed upon them, and these will continue until they are resisted with words or with blows or with both. For the limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those they oppress, a great object lesson for us." That was the spirit we carried back in 1962. We were sort of like accidental leaders because you'd have to put it in the perspective of the fact that Alabama was the only state in the union where the NAACP was outlawed. How many of you remember that? It was actually a crime to be a member of the NAACP in the state of Alabama, punishable by a \$1000.00 fine and a year in jail. And that's what we were up against. Of course, that was just a little side product of the Alabama constitution of 1901, but I'm not supposed to be talking about the constitution of 1901 tonight, but I can go on all night on that since that thing has taken on 700 and some amendments. 700 and how many amendments, Joe? I'm talking to the editor of the Huntsville Times. That's the number of amendments the Alabama constitution has. I really don't want to get on that because it's a real sore point for me.

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But now, let's get to the perspective that we had in 1962. It's funny to me because this guy, Hank Thomas, came to my office first and said he was tired and wanted to do a little testing. I said, "Sure, by all means." I thought Huntsville was really going to be all right. I said, "Go to the bus station first," because we had already had a Supreme Court ruling. Let's turn it back just a hot second because it's very important you understand that because the NAACP was outlawed, we had to form our own organization, or own ad hoc of the station that we controlled and, believe me, it's the best way to handle it because it developed a leadership cadre that we didn't have before and when I say a cadre, we had some pretty tough characters. They had to be tough to undergo all of the things that we did; but we did overcome. I'm looking at little Sonnie, a tough cat. I see a few other faces here that I recognize very well from those days. It was rough, but now I'll have to quote somebody else, a fellow by the name of A. Philip Randolph. He was the patron saint of Randolph Blackwell. Randolph Blackwell was the economics professor here at Alabama A&M whose students were in jail or were demonstrating. They also were making A's in class attendance, too, but Randolph Blackwell was a graduate of Howard University law school, that's another story, but he was a disciple of a fellow by the name of A. Philip Randolph. A. Philip Randolph is a character to be remembered. How many have seen the statute of A. Philip Randolph in Union Station in Washington, DC. If you haven't, you need to go and take a look at it because on the pedestal of this statue it gives his credo. It says, "At the backward table of nature there are no reserved seats. You take what you can get and you keep what you can hold. If you can't take anything, you won't get anything. And if you don't get anything,

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you won't keep anything. And you can't take anything without organization." And that's what we had to do. We put together an organization. I guess pretty much we were pledged to see it to the end. I really think that we outsmarted them, but they did not believe, the opposition; when I'm talking opposition I'm talking about everything white in this city was opposed to what we were doing. The Huntsville Times had an editorial, "It's time to call a halt." I remember the day that R.C. Adams jumped up in a meeting and said, "Let's boycott the Huntsville Times." You remember that? Anyhow, we used several devices that got the people's attention. So, as far as voter registration was concerned, this became a SCLC trait, too. We had a mule that was paraded around downtown with signs on him that said "I can't vote because I'm a mule, what's your excuse?" If you remember some of the magazine articles from back in that time, that mule got around. It was pretty good strategy.

Now, I really wanted to make a few other quotations there because it does not pertain to what we were doing ad hoc at that particular time, but it does indeed call attention to the struggle that's going on right now, and that's the struggle for a new constitution for the state of Alabama. I spoke just briefly at a gathering in Birmingham the day before yesterday at which I called attention to the fact that we do have an opportunity. We've got a window out of this mess that we're in and Huntsville, Alabama can be the key, and this is one of things I'm pleading Joe Hyman, everybody, Lee Rubin, everybody who's in the news media who was engaged in the technology that we had. Just remember, Huntsville, Alabama is the repository. This is the birthplace as what is known in the world of science as zero to sex technology. Zero to sex technology. We

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should be arrogant. We put the man on the moon from Huntsville, Alabama, and you should understand that NASA, those programs would never have come to Alabama had it not been for what we did with the community service committee. We desegregated everything in Huntsville. Huntsville, Alabama was the very first city of any size in the United States to desegregate. Huntsville, Alabama, it was a pioneer role and it played then, it was a pioneer role that was played when we put the man on the moon; of course, now it's Johnson Flight Center, Nixon's thing in Texas and California, but still the repository of technology of excellence was right here in Huntsville. As a matter of fact, when those boys in Texas and California get in trouble, they still have to call Huntsville. Am I right? So, Huntsville is probably the only city where nerd is not a bad word. We've got more nerds per square inch in Huntsville and they're proud of it. But in any case, I want to call attention to this situation by giving a quote from Thomas Jefferson. His statement was, "In questions of power that no more be heard of confidence in man but binds him down from mischief with the chains of the constitution." Shall I repeat? "In questions of power, let no more be heard of confidence in man, but bind him down from mischief with the chains of the constitution." We can write a perfect constitution with the technology; all of the world's knowledge is available right to us at our computers and whatever we have. We can lead the world into an entirely new phase, just starting from right here, Huntsville Alabama. We've got the answers. It's time for us to really flex our muscles and become what we're supposed to be. This little group sacrificed. We caught hell but we did bring Huntsville into the focus. We can have fairness and law and order even in Alabama because we did it without bloodshed. It

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didn't happen any other place. So, I would probably rather participate in a question and answer session. I don't have to yield any time, I don't think I've taken my fifteen minutes. I wanted to just take more time and just show off what kind of ego I have. No, in all seriousness, this is a wonderful occasion. I see faces in this audience. I see green eyes in this audience, it reminds me of ... How does it go? No, not good old days, for the wisest purposes, the creed is implanted within us, an instinctive disposition to revere the illustrious of our kind. To win this admiration is the most powerful incentive to action. It is the ardent desire of passionate natures. The sweet incense of popular applause is more delicious than wine to the senses of man. Deservedly pained, it heals every wound and soothes all pain. The mere hope of it will steal him against disease, neglect and oppression. To bestow this reverence is a pleasure hardly less exquisite. While we commune with the intellects and contemplate the virtues of the greats, some portion of their exceeding light descends upon us. Their aspiring spirits have raised us to higher levels. But, to yield our homage to those who do not deserve it, is to pervert a pure and noble instinct. We cannot worship the degraded, except by sinking to lower depths of degradation. So, Huntsville, Alabama, we cannot worship those evils of the past. We cannot gloat that we have suppressed one third of the population and we have gained a few little pennies here and there. We can't worship the degraded, except by sinking to lower depths of degradation. So, to my mind, it's the only way we can go. A perfect system, a perfect government, a perfect constitution, all of this is within our grasp. I'd like to feel that it started right here in Huntsville, Alabama. Thank you.

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**Carolyn Parker:** Thank you, Dr. Cashin. Dr. Fred Carodine has a long history of activism on the job, in the community and in his civic organization. His indelible mark has been made on our cities, particularly in the arena of human relations and improving the educational opportunities for minorities. Dr. Carodine is a native of Tuscaloosa, Alabama and a cum laude graduate of Alabama A&M University. He earned his doctorate in public administration from NOVA University in Fort Lauderdale, Florida and completed further studies at Wayne State University, the University of Alabama in Huntsville, California State Polytechnic College and Alabama A&M University. During the early period of the Civil Rights Movement in Huntsville, Dr. Carodine provided invaluable services and funds from his entrepreneurial efforts as owner of a printing shop. As the focus of the movement shifted around 1964 to the education arena, particularly the integration of schools, he began to concentrate his efforts on working with the NAACP towards satisfying this goal. Dr. Carodine has enjoyed a lucrative career with the federal government, holding increasingly responsible positions and retiring, about ten years ago, as chief of the operation research division test measurement and diagnostic equipment. His community service activities have impacted the likes of the Boy Scouts, Harris Home, NAACP, Alabama A&M University and the Interstate Mission, to name a few. He is a deacon at First Missionary Baptist Church, Sunday school teacher, member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity and the Athletic Booster Club. Dr. Carodine is married to the former Nell Bailer and they are parents of three sons and one daughter. I am proud to present to you one of Huntsville's premier activists and my dear friend, Dr. Fred Carodine.

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**Fred Carodine:** Good evening. I guess just about everybody stole my thunder. I'd like to take the opportunity to sort of put in perspective as I saw the movement and as I participated in some of the events that happened. Earlier, when Mr. Ellis stood up and introduced the overall program, he suggested that Huntsville was more interested in learning at the time of the sit-ins back in the early 60's. That is true. There were certain events, in my opinion that helped to make Huntsville behave in a fashion that Dr. Cashin just mentioned, there was little bloodshed. One of those events, and I'll try to make the event oriented, was the election of President Kennedy and his choice of Lyndon Johnson as his vice president. Now, that may not seem like much in the beginning, but the Kennedy approach was one similar to what Dr. Hereford had mentioned. Give them what they want. Find two or three black people who could give and they would deliver the vote and you didn't owe them anything until the next election. If you think I've made a mistake in that arena, if you look in the book "Nixon's Piano" on page 192, you'll understand what Robert Kennedy had said. Once he was elected...well, he was elected because of the event of Robert calling when Dr. King was in jail. Nixon's chauffeur told Nixon that, "You know, we were doing all right until that call was made about King in jail." But, what good could that do? What it did, was that when Kennedy was assassinated, Johnson took over his program and his efforts were directed toward carrying out a program and maintaining Kennedy's legacy. In that sense, King was determined that we would suffice in this particular city. One of the reasons it was this particular city is because early on in 1960, NASA had been pulled out of ABMA and the word had come down basically that we're not going to have the kind of things going on

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in other parts of the south here in Huntsville, or they would pull out. Reverend Ezekiel Bell, Randolph Blackwell and the coordinating committee capitalized on that in the sense that the signs that they took around addressed that issue. We'll move the arsenal away from Huntsville. The city of Huntsville then, was somewhat forced to listen. The population of Huntsville increased between the 1950's and 1960's well over about 400 percent. Between 1960 and 1964 it increased over the 1960 time frame, another 200 percent. So, Huntsville was a growing community, which could not stand to have bloodshed, if the city founders could stop it. Earlier, one of the panelists asked, how many people had participated in the early movement. One of the persons who raised his hand, I hope he won't be embarrassed, was Chuck LaLange. I worked in his campaign once years ago to try to get him elected mayor for the city of Huntsville. He was with the Inner Faith Mission Service and I guess that's when I met him. I guess you still are, aren't you? But anyway, there were a number of things that took place. One event, as I said, was the fact that Kennedy was elected. He chose Lyndon Johnson. What happened after his having chosen Lyndon Johnson was that Lyndon put the B on the Huntsville community. Industries were moving into the city. Each industry, according to its number of employees, paid into a fund. That fund was handled for the most part by a committee called AHAC. It was made up of Association of Huntsville Area Contractors. It did some good and some bad. In the good part, it gave the black community, through some of its more activist people, a way of expressing itself and getting it up to the city founders. On the bad part, whether we want to admit it or not, Milton Cumming understood the black community. He knew the black family. He knew who to touch and

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who not to touch. Correct? He knew who to touch and who not to touch. And so it was that he was going to keep a cap on everything, but it got out of hand. What happened? During the sit-ins, both predecessors mentioned Randolph C. Blackwell. Randolph was my next-door neighbor. We both were working out here. I was not in the sit-ins other than the fact the Rev. Ezekiel Bell, who is my frat brother, who the Presbyterian Church had sent here to found Fellowship Presbyterian Church, had solicited me for the sit-ins and I told him I was willing to do it, but I couldn't promise that I wouldn't fight back if somebody hit me. So, he told me to collect money. My job was to try at A&M University, here on the campus, to collect money and I would turn it over to him. At the time of the trial integration, there were I don't know how many, one, two, three, at least three drive-in theaters that I knew about. One was just north of us here on Meridian, one was just south on Meridian and one on 72. My family and I were chosen to go to the one on 72. That's the one we integrated. We went there to integrate but by 1964, after the Herefords and so forth had integrated the schools, something happened. I'm sorry, it was 1965. The NAACP legal defense fund after the NAACP, Dr. Cashin was allowed back into the state of Alabama had an interest in this particular area. There were several people who had worked with the NAACP during the time frame that was outlawed. They kept it alive underground. Among those people were, Reverend Lacey and James Pickett, at least those are two that I can remember. They became presidents of the NAACP. About 1965, a young man came to Huntsville named McKinley Bailey. One of the reasons Mack and some others came to Huntsville was this organization, AHAC, was trying to get minorities on board, so they claimed, as employees. The problem that came

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to industry was, we need black engineers; we can't find any. Well of course you couldn't find any. Dr. Hereford just explained why you couldn't find any. There had never been any black engineers that could be hired. So, why would a black person go to an institution and take engineering when there was no job market? There were no black engineers, or very few. McKinley Bailey was one of the few. There were one or two others. But, every time, they went outside of the state trying to find employees, nobody wanted to come to Alabama. They didn't want to come to Alabama for several reasons. One, there was no housing. Two, they'd heard about the city and other things that were going on here. Now, they bring in this man, McKinley Bailey. There's another man, Les Jackson, who, in Mobile, had tried to bring us and for whatever reason, he had put them off but finally, he came up. But what McKinley Bailey did was to become president of the local chapter of the NAACP. Now, there were not that many NAACP members, not near as many as there are now. The NAACP was a viable organization, ready to fight. It was composed of McKinley Bailey, Fred Carodine and Ed Russell. But very seldom did they show up at meetings. But, the strategy that was put forth was to try to integrate the schools with contacts with a legal defense fund person who is a regional director, Allen Black. Allen Black's office was in Memphis and we were tied in, I believe, the guy at the Justice Department's name was Schira, I believe that was his name. But what happened then was that we began to move to try to get the schools integrated more fully. The city proposed one grade at a time. We did not go along with that at the time. The information that we had received was that we'd make our input to the legal defense fund and we'd communicate with the Justice Department. So, when we did not buy that, we of

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course would end up sometimes later instead of going one grade at a time, which the city had proposed, they had to integrate three grades at a time.

The other big issue was one that had been raised about pay. Black teachers did not make salaries the same as Caucasian teachers. As a consequence, a number of the engineers and scientists that were moving into Redstone who were males, of course their wives were Caucasian, were working in the various predominantly white schools and of course they were making more money than the black teachers who had degrees and credentials for Alabama. Some of the Caucasians did not have credentials because they had not taught in Alabama and they had not satisfied Alabama's criteria. And so it was that even though they were on a Type B certificate, they were making more than the black teachers. Well, what happened, once you had to integrate you had to do what? Integrate the salary. So, as we begin to work that particular problem two things happened. If they were considered a very good black teacher in that particular school wherever they were working, they were moved to a predominantly white school. The others were allowed to stay where they were. The Caucasian teachers who were being hired and who were just coming out of college, for the most part, went to these predominantly black schools. As a consequence, we had a program that was started by the federal government, called EFFA, which was supposed to help elevate these schools that were behind. All of a sudden, a number of Huntsville schools were behind. They were behind because they put a large difference between the behind group and they could get money from the federal government to sustain this.

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Let me move a little off. There are one or two things I'd like to mention. Also, about 1963, there was a student from Alabama A&M named Carl Bailey who went into the city of Huntsville and requested to become a policeman and that was a no, no. They told him they didn't have any janitorial jobs. He said he didn't come to be a janitor; he wanted to be a police officer. Well, he was later hired, our first black policeman. Bailey, a John Christmas and the late Reverend Huggin, they put them all in a car. They were not to arrest a Caucasian person, but they could only go down into predominantly black neighborhoods. Well, the dispatcher would get on and say, "Now, you go down to that Negro area and do so and so." Well, they got a little tired of this and they went in to see Chief Spurlock. Spurlock fires them and now the paper had played up the fact that they had hired these guys, now all of a sudden they had to get some more policemen. So they sent out to A&M and got two people, Holyfeld, Staten and finally following that they got a guy named Aaron Wright. They replaced those three and after having replaced those three until this year, this is the first time that a black police officer in the city of Huntsville has ever gone beyond the entrance position of patrol. I don't mean a whole other job, but Huntsville promoted a sergeant this year and it's the first time. That is a disgrace, thirty-some years. I know my time is up and I yield.

**Carolyn Parker:** Our next presenter will share with us his perspective as a student activist. Mr. William Pearson was probably Alabama A&M University's most committed member of SNCC during the early 1960's, along with Ms. Frances Fell. He made many sacrifices in his personal life in order to follow through on the very demands of the life of a student activist. Mr. William Pearson is a graduate of Parker High School

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in Birmingham and entered Alabama A&M University in 1958. As the Huntsville movement developed, he could be found working with practically every aspect of the movement, strategy sections, sit-ins, marches and other demonstrations, all of this while at Huntsville, but he was also heavily involved in the sit-ins and marches in Birmingham. Mr. Pearson later earned his degree in history from Alabama A&M University and continues his dedication to the betterment of our city through his work with our youth. He teaches and coaches at Davis Hill Middle School, has a long list of successes producing championship teams for our Parks and Recreation Department and the YMCA. Mr. Pearson is cofounder and vice-president of the Alabama Masons, designed to develop the talent of young men, 12 to 17 years of age who are interested in basketball. Sponsored by Nike, Inc, this organization finds scholarships for young people who want to go to college. When asked, "What's in it for you," he replied, "I don't want anything. My greatest reward is to see these young guys turn out to be decent men." Mr. Pearson is married to the former Selena Pollard and the father of two sons, Christopher and Reginald. I present to you, ever the activist and community servant, Mr. William Pearson.

**William Pearson:** Fellow panelists and audience. You know, I started to write stuff down but when you're talking about something like this, it's from the heart. It comes from here. As a 17-year-old college student, raised in Birmingham, Alabama, never went to school with a white guy. My graduating class had 450 students. Later on, they talked about buses. I thought everybody was bused. There were only three high schools there. They bused people from all over Birmingham, four thousand five hundred of us in one

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school. We graduated two times a year, January and May, and then usually in the 9<sup>th</sup>. When I was about 15-years-old, I had a job at a bowling alley. Getting off one evening, a policemen stopped me, told me, he said, "I want you to stay out of my alleys and off of my streets." I had to quit my job. I couldn't work. I came up at a time where I lived at the bottom of what they called Dynamite Alley, Dynamite Hill, where Arthur Shores was a lawyer there. I went to school with his daughter. I also went to school with Angela Davis. We were always aware of what was going on. We were just waiting for a time. Some of us went to the left, some of us went to the right, but we were always aware.

Hank Thompson came here at the foot of this hill, called a group of us in and said, "Hey, you know what they're doing in Greensboro and you know what the students are doing all over the country. What are you going to do?" I said we're going to do what we have to do. We were committed to making something happen. We were committed to doing it in a nonviolent way, afraid, yes, because you never knew. I had a guy tell me one day; He said, "Brother, you don't know what it is to be black." I said, "Brother, I was black when black wasn't cool." You know, afraid, went to jail, I forgot the times, ten, twelve, fourteen, fifteen; I don't know. I had the record, that's right. I remember one time Ms. Joan Jackson who was our advisor, you see they had their committee and we had our committee; that was our lady, loved her, bless her. We would meet and we would decide what to do and we would go to these guys. This is family here. They took care of me. The little bit of a man that I am they helped to mold that. I had no parents here; they were dogging my parents in Birmingham. My mother said, "I don't know if you should be doing this," but daddy was an ex-marine. He said, "Son, do what you got

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to do,” and that’s exactly what I did. I don’t need much time. The only thing I can say is that I did what I had to do and I did it from my heart. But, you young guys, they are there, out there now. There should be more of you in this audience to understand and to realize what this world is coming to. What we marched for and what we fought for, if you don’t go out and get some of your fellow students together, you’re going to be on the back of the blood wash. You’re going to be drinking colored water like I drank. I had fun in school, but you have to be committed to make things better. I see my wife out there, Selena, it’s 28 years, and my son, Reginald is a 7<sup>th</sup> grader at Ed White, which was an all white school when I did this, straight A student. So now I know I did it for a reason. Thank you.

**Carolyn Parker:** We set aside a few moments for questions and answers, or I should say questions and responses, so if you would like to address anyone on our panel in terms of asking a question, I recognize you now. I saw this hand first.

**Q:** (inaudible)

**A:** The school system hasn’t made any inroads to improving the school system. I had the opportunity of meeting with a lot of young men. I see them on the street and they said they stopped school at sixteen. It’s something being done about the GED. The GED is going to be changed the beginning of the year and what is the movement, what is the struggle. There is no gain without a struggle and there is no gain without any pain. I participated in quite a few things here on this campus and I’m surprised to see the low attendance. What can we do to get more people involved? What can we do about pro ration with what’s going on right now. We’re worried about terror, and I grew up in

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Louisiana, Mississippi and the south and, like you said, the things that went on in New York, black people grew up and lived in that terror. We still live in some of that terror. We talk about anthrax. We've got to start doing something about what's going on on a daily basis and I think that this movement and this struggle have to come to the young people. The older people participated in the NAACP. I participated in a drive and come to find out there's sixty to seventy thousand black people here and you have less than three hundred to five hundred people participating. Where does the struggle go from here; I don't know.

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay. First, I'll say you did make some valuable observations, but these gentlemen will try to answer your questions.

**A:** Well, I'm going to try and answer it like this, plain and simple. We've got to have a new constitution in the state of Alabama. That is the root of the evil here. I would say that the NAACP, or any organization in the state of Alabama, needs to be working very hard for a new constitution convention. That is the basic medication I would prescribe to this illness we have and I think it's very good advice considering the experience and the professional education that I bear. Without a new constitution, there is no way that we can continue in the state of Alabama the way that we have. It's got to be changed. It's got to be brand new; and, of course, I may sound like a broken record, but that's it.

**Carolyn Parker:** I saw a hand right here. They say it's impolite to point but that's the only way I can designate the person.

**Q:** My question is simply people are so headstrong to oppose anything, whatsoever other than when they have a concern about NASA at Redstone Arsenal. What brought the

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white people around? How could they have changed without? I know what white people can do and black people too, when you get so headstrong you're ready to, "I won't do a thing they tell me," and to bring those people around and in two or three years, you're talking 1962 through 1965, how did they come around like that? I can't believe it.

A: I'd like to answer that. It's one of the few I can answer. It was economics. It was the boycott. It was the boycott that really, really, brought them around and we decided to have the boycott, we had workshops; I had that included in my papers, but they wouldn't let me talk to you about it. We had workshops on how to conduct a boycott. You don't call a merchant and tell him if you don't do such and such a thing I'm going to boycott you, you let that guy go. Then, Christmas or Easter, let him buy his stock and buy all of his stuff and then you tell your people, don't go down there and purchase anything from him. The first thing he knows, he's got all of this stuff on his shelves and he can't turn it into money and he's got to pay the bank for that money that he borrowed. That was what did it. The boycott was more successful than you could ever believe. I just found out about it later and Dr. Cashin's wife and I discussed it and I know what she said was right and the things I thought were right. We had at least five groups of people that were participating in that boycott that I didn't know about when it was going on. We had about ninety-five percent of black people that were absolutely, positively not going to buy. We had another group of white people who were in the labor union and we had picket lines and they would not cross our picket lines. We had some white people who came down there to jeer us; we had some white people who came down to cheer us and we had some other white people who just didn't come to the city of Huntsville because of

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the commotion down there and so that over-compensated for that other five percent of black people that didn't buy. It was the boycott that really, really made them come around.

A: Not just the boycott, but there's a little stunt that we put on there too. We had almost simultaneous demonstrations, Chicago Board of Trade and New York Stock Exchange. Picket lines. Don't do business in Huntsville, Alabama. It's bad business. That made the New York Times and that word got out all around the world. That just showed most of our potential. That's all. Apparently you had another part to your question?

Q: How did you handle the hot heads, the ones who were ready to break in?

A: They were not allowed to join our organization. Oh, you're talking about the white people?

Q: The white people, how did they get put in their place?

A: What do you mean, "Put in their place?"

Q: How did you stop them?

A: We were prepared to take whatever, they did not, as I recall we only had one incident of violence with Evelyn Sawkowski. The word was out to the city fathers, if that's what they could be called, there was to be no violence. That doesn't mean they're going to keep that. If you look in the paper when Sonnie Hereford, IV went to school, the first time he went he was turned away. Governor Wallace had set up... that's another story too... yes, that's another story, but what happened was the city fathers wanted the money and were not about to let Spurlock and his group get out of hand. There was a soldier who came up with his invalid child and he wanted to go to school, even though a black

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kid was going to school. There was another lady who told the police that, yea, they said, “we don’t want you to start any trouble, just go on back home.” She said, “You’re making the trouble.” But that’s because of the city fathers. They didn’t want it either. They contested it. They sent letters to representatives and everything. The point was they wanted that green dollar.

**Carolyn Parker:** I think William wants to address that.

**A:** Yes. They tried everything they could, including coming to the school, getting with the governor and telling us they were going to put us out of school if we marched. The main thing is if you’re committed to something and you’ve committed to doing it a certain way; we were committed to nonviolence. They knocked one girl off of a stool. You know, the mind is a strong thing. There were people there jeering but when you show no fear, and then they never wanted to get in the newspapers, so they had to keep it down, the city fathers had to keep it down. They didn’t want it in the paper.

**A:** There was a little humorous twist there. One of the ways that we were able to see to it that the crowd didn’t get out of hand is on our first demonstration we had members of the Alabama A&M football team with the signs. They were some burly guys. Wonder why they wouldn’t be fool enough to tackle them. That was the initial march we had, big, burly six foot three, two hundred and fifty pounders. Even the redneck would take his chance on something else.

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay. I saw a hand here first, and then the next one. Right here, young lady, you’ll be next after this gentleman.

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**Q:** Could you tell me the difference between socioeconomics for the minority groups in this community now as it was then? I don't see many black-owned businesses in this community. Could you explain that?

**A:** We've got some black millionaires in this town. We've got quite a few as a matter of fact. Yes, they're quite a few doing well. I'm not one of them, but I know a few.

**Carolyn Parker:** This young lady, then Ms. Deshield.

**Q:** How did you deal with it? I can't imagine trying to go to school and having people treating me like that? I know you all were close and you talk about being committed, but there has to be more to it than that.

**A:** How did we relieve the stress, is that what you're asking? Now for our students, and this was Dr. Cashin's wife's idea, she said, "I think about every three or four weeks we ought to have some entertainment for these students and when these students are out here protesting and marching and demonstrating, we ought to give them something to look forward to that they're going to be doing," so during our movement, the real active part was about seven months, we had two dances, we had three parties and we had a 4<sup>th</sup> of July picnic for the students, so we kept something for them to do and they always had something to look forward to.

**Carolyn Parker:** William, would you like to address that?

**A:** We had a lot of fun too. We had fun together. You know, we were all close friends and when we partied, we partied hard. We demonstrated; we demonstrated hard.

**A:** I'd like to say something else to. I'd like to say something about the closeness of that group. Some of my fraternity brothers may not like for me to say this and some of my

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church members may not like for me to say this, but I've been on a lot of organizations but I have never been in any group that had a greater closeness than that group, and more love and respect for each other than that group that we had.

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay. Ms. Deshields had a question.

**Q:** I want to commend you, Dr. Ellis, for the inclusion of my name in your report and I did write the Acquisition of Civil Rights in Huntsville, Alabama from 1962 to 1965. My question and concern is that I have no documentation about this. You have not done any research on it, but you made the statement that Dr. Drake was forced into retirement by Governor John Patterson. I was a student here at A&M at that time

**A:** I know that story very well. Yes.

**Q:** You're agreeing with it or disagreeing with it?

**A:** The way Patterson treated Drake.

**Q:** That he forced him into retirement.

**A:** Yes, he was forced into retirement without any doubt. As a matter of fact, it was during the sit-ins and John Patterson said that he was going to name a president who would make those children study and make them behave, and to really follow on his path, he named the wrong man.

**Q:** I did see John Patterson in a subsequent meeting in Birmingham many years later and he had done a 180 degree turn and I could see in my lifetime that transition.

**A:** A whole lot of them have done 180-degree turns. George Wallace was in 438 when he changed his mind.

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**Q:** Well, one final statement, Carolyn. That is that my recollection of Dr. Drake's retiring was based on the loss of his health and that forced him to retire, but I may not be accurate on that, but I'm raising the question.

**A:** He was ill and in the hospital when the sit-ins broke out and that is when Governor Patterson decided that he would fire Drake and name a new president, and he named Leon Bonner. Leon was president for about three days I recall. Let me make one comment with respect to that. It is my understanding at the time that Dr. Levi Watkins and Dr. Drake were under fire. There should be a letter where Dr. Drake sent a letter to Watkins telling Watkins to stand his ground, to use his words. Dr. Drake became ill with meningitis, if I remember correctly, and during his illness, I don't know if he died out of office or if Patterson fired him. No, Patterson fired him. But, it is due to his illness, in my opinion, at the time. That's what we received. I don't know if it is true. Patterson made the public statement that he was going to fire Drake and he was going to get him a new president that would make those children behave and make them study. I just want to confirm what Dr. Cashin said. Most of that information is from the Huntsville Times and, in fact, according to the Huntsville Times, Dr. Drake heard about his forced retirement on the radio. He didn't even know it was coming. He was deeply hurt by this and the quotation that Dr. Cashin is referring to is that Governor Patterson said that he wanted to hire a new campus administrator who said, "Will require discipline, make the students behave themselves and make them study." Furthermore, in an about face, the Huntsville Times generally either ignored some of the demonstrations or put them on the

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third or fourth page. In this case, they had a very lengthy editorial denouncing the governor for this mistreatment of Dr. Drake.

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay, we'll take three more questions. I have this lady and there was a lady in the back and this gentleman here.

**Q:** My name is Peggy Bavenovich and one of the questions I have, I saw that excellent movie that's been made of the whole experience of Huntsville and my question is, are you saying there were no idealistic whites in Huntsville that supported you?

**A:** There were some idealistic whites that did support us. As a matter of fact, a great contingent came out of the Unitarian fellowship but so far as real active participation, a few from the Human Relations Council were with it, but the Unitarians were probably the strongest bunch of all. So far as the local whites are concerned, a lot of us had white friends, but they didn't want to get exposed. As a matter of fact, we had some difficulty getting membership in the biracial committee, but in the final analysis, there were two merchants, I guess you could call them business people that did indeed support things behind the scenes. One of them was Woody Anderson. I guess Woody would have conniptions if he knew I was discussing him. You see, Woody owned the Kings Inn, and that was one of the first places that opened up, and the other guy was Boots Ellis who had Boots Lounge down on the Parkway.

**Q:** How about newcomers?

**A:** Newcomers, the newcomers pretty much stayed on their own. They were pretty much here for business, and we had lot of engineers. They were very busy getting ready to put the man on the moon and when John Kennedy said we're going to put a man on the moon

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by 1970, he gave Huntsville the job and we did it by 1969. But we were a very busy community. Then, of course, Sputnik was up there beep, beep, beeping so we were really under the gun. So, we didn't want to rock the boat, but we were not going to allow the same things to be in place. There were some very, very dedicated whites; I have to admit that, but so far as locals who were concerned, there was a narrow few.

Before you say that, I'm glad she mentioned the movie. I had planned to make this commercial and they didn't tell me to say it or not to say it. Tom, would you bring it up here please. She mentioned the movie. Evidently she must have liked it. How much are they? \$20.00, \$50.00? No, \$30.00.

**Q:** How can we as youth realize the struggle that is current. Many of the students at A&M have no idea about this Civil Rights Movement because we were looking for it. We attend Oakwood College and our pre-law found out about this. Many students don't know what's going on so how can we get motivated and be informed on these kinds of forums that are taking place?

**A:** Sessions like this. She didn't know about the program, is that what she's saying? Well, that is not surprising to me at all. As a matter of fact, if you will flick on this printed program, I'm not on there.

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay. We have a question right here, the former president of the college.

**Q:** I have been greatly inspired by the wonderful tales given by the gentleman on this panel. I admire their report and what they did over the years. For the second time in the last four days a visit of Dr. Martin Luther King to Huntsville was mentioned.

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Dr. Hereford, I think is an expert on that. He mentioned it tonight. It didn't have a relationship to what the committee and group were doing in Huntsville. He inspired the Oakwood audience where he spoke. He gave us a preview of his "I Have a Dream" speech where he gave it at Oakwood first, went up to the Washington Mall and inspired the leaders of the nation and we know what happened thereafter. I would like to have

Dr. Hereford, if he will, enlarge on the effect on Huntsville.

A: Dr. Minette, it's all right here in this folder. They wouldn't let me tell you about it but now they can't hold me down in the question and answer session. We had about four or five hundred demonstrators that would demonstrate regularly in January, and then nothing was happening. We weren't getting any concessions at all and so after about six to eight weeks the participation dropped off. And then in one of those sessions,

Dr. Cashin, Mrs. Cashin, Randolph, Blackwell and I and all of us, somebody said that "We ought to get a dynamic speaker to come to Huntsville and speak and see if we can bring our people together, solidify the community and bring some of these people back that we have lost and maybe get some white people to come and join us in our demonstrations." So we kept thinking who in the world can we get and then Dr. King's name came up and somebody said we'll invite Dr. King. We had a committee that was going to invite Dr. King and I think that Dr. Cashin was probably the chairman or one of the people on that committee. We had to figure out where we were going to get the money to pay him and his lieutenants and so forth. He came March 19<sup>th</sup> and spoke at First Missionary Baptist Church, downtown, and then he spoke at Oakwood College gym that night at 8 o'clock. He had to speak at Oakwood because there was nowhere else in

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town that they would allow us to have Dr. King. You see what I mean? There was very good security at Oakwood and I appreciate that, the way it was fixed up at that time, and that's when Dr. King came. After he left, the community did show signs of being solidified and also some white people joined our movement and the mayor found two white people to serve on the biracial committee when Dr. King left. Does that help to clarify it a little bit?

**Carolyn Parker:** Okay. We do need to adjourn this session. I realize there are other questions, but we promised that we wouldn't hold you too long. Let me also remind you the next session, next week, will be at the University of Alabama in Huntsville, Roberts Auditorium, and I would certainly be remiss if I did not acknowledge our Director of the Alabama Humanities Foundation, Mr. Bob Stewart. Just wave Bob. Bob came all the way from Birmingham to support this project and, as you well know, we received a grant from the Humanities Foundation for this program, among other contributions. Let me again thank you and I've been so delighted to moderate this panel. All of these guys are very, very special to me and it has just been special to me to do this. Please join us for refreshments in the back sponsored by the State Black Archives Research Center. Don't forget your evaluation forms. They'll be in the back holding them up. Hold on, Dr. Ellis wants to make one more point.

**Jack Ellis:** I just have one more point. He spoke about Dr. King's speech. We have excerpts of Dr. King's speech. Thank you Carolyn.