NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

Civil Rights History Project


Lawrence Guyot oral history interview

conducted by Julian Bond

in Washington, D. C., Dec. 30, 2010
INTERVIEWER: Mr. Guyot, thanks for doing this interview.

MR. GUYOT: It’s a pleasure.

INTERVIEWER: Now you were born and grew up in Pass Christian, Mississippi, and you said that racial prejudice by and large did not affect you during your youth? How could that be so in Mississippi at that age in time?

MR. GUYOT: I came from the most non-Mississippi-like section of Mississippi. It was a heavy Catholic influence. Ingalls Shipyard was producing most of the major armaments for all hostilities in Pascagoula, hiring people from 63 counties. You had the labor union influence; you had the Catholic Church influence, which was tremendous; and you had a population of 100,000 white people, 19,000 black people.
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<td>The Catholic Church in 1957 or '58 made a decision that they were going to desegregate the schools. They did it this way. The announcement was we have two programs. We have excommunication and we have integration. Make your choice by Friday. Now there was violence going on in Louisiana. Nothing happened on the Gulf Coast. I learned firsthand that institutions can really have an impact on social policy.</td>
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<td>I bought three slot machines, Julian, because there was a lot of gambling on the Gulf Coast. I just passed the academic test for entrance into Tougaloo College. I was going to be sent to jail by Gaston Hughes [phonetic]. My father hires Bidwell Adams to represent me. Bidwell Adams is the lieutenant governor under Bilbo. He is the chairman of the Democratic Party in the State of Mississippi, and he's a lawyer who represents black people who've been</td>
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We go to his office and my father says here's the problem. Bilbo said, "Don't worry about it." He calls up Gaston Hughes. He said, "No, this boy is not black. He's a Creole." I didn't correct him, Julian. He then said, "This boy is going off to school. I don't want to hear anymore about these slot machines." Gaston said I'm going to send him to Parchman. Bilbo says okay. I looked at my father; we must be in the wrong place. He continued. He says, "Okay, but if I hear anymore about these slot machines, I'm going to call for a federal investigation of all gambling on the Gulf Coast, and I'm going to make sure that everyone knows that you caused it."

At the time of this meeting I was 17 years old. I'm now 71 years of age. I've never heard about those slot machines and I've never heard about anyone who's heard about those slot
machines, which drove home to me that all the life that we live is political.

INTERVIEWER: Back up a little bit.

You're sitting in the office of Theodore Bilbo...

MR. GUYOT: No, of Bidwell Adams.

INTERVIEWER: Bidwell Adams.

MR. GUYOT: Who is lieutenant governor when Bilbo was governor. I was born in Harrison County. Bilbo was born in Hancock County. Bidwell Adams after leaving the lieutenant governorship, then becomes a practicing lawyer and a loyal Kennedy Democrat. This is the guy who handled the patriots for the Democratic Party.

I come out of a family—my grandfather's brother was chairman of the Republican Party in Hancock County for 65 years. He died at 105 years of age. His name is Louis Piernas. He and I talked about Randolph, who my high school was
named after. He said, "I saw the

civil war fought on the beaches of

Bay St. Louis, not far from Waverley

[phonetic] where we used to go down
to meet." He talked about, "My wife
and I did a genealogy study. We run
across a WPA interview of him." He
says, "Well, Bilbo is really terrible
and I just hope that blacks will be
able to fight there way into the
Democratic Party." I got chills up
my spine. I said, "That's what I've
been doing."

My family was very, very political.

My grandfather was a man who taught
me the value of listening. Long
before communalism was what it is
today, he had a lot of Baptist
ministers as friends. They would
meet outside every Sunday and they
would decide what they would go in
and convince him of. I knew who was
going to win this argument. They
would come out convinced that they
had convinced my grandfather. They
were satisfied that he understood them and he agreed with them. I knew that when I talked to him about it afterwards, that it had gone just the other way.

He had one habit, Julian. If you went to him and said, "Mr. Joos [phonetic], I'm going fishing," he would repeat the word "fishing". I said, "Grandpa, you're too smart to do that. I've seen the people you talk to." He said, "Boy, it gives me a little bit more time to think about what I'm going to say. From that day on, Julian, I never questioned my grandfather.

He and I read the newspaper together every day. We also listened to two people on the radio. Whenever FDR spoke, he gathered the family to listen to our president. Another guy was Ronald Reagan.

INTERVIEWER: Really? Why Reagan?

MR. GUYOT: Why Reagan? Because we liked his style. We didn't like his
etiology, but we were impressed with how he did it. I mean he could paint the pictures. I'm 7 years old. He takes me in front of the Catholic Church in Mississippi in St. Philomena's. I read Paul's letters to the Galatians and Ephesians. I'm just proud. I'm with my grandfather; I can read before my congregation; I can do anything. I learned from my family the value of service and the interrelationship between religion and politics.

My father was a man who would've made Lyndon Johnson look like a pica if he could've just gotten the kind of political opportunities that I had. My father got in a contest one time about a mathematics problem. Everyone in the town told him that he was wrong, that he had figured out wrong. They sent back to the book manufacturer and the book manufacturer said, "We made a
He's a man who when he got into a jewelry, a woman wanted to get $6,000 from an insurance company. Everybody in the jewelry store said, "That..."

My father said, "Send out and get a lot of coffee because until she gets her $6,000, we're not going to decide anything."

I saw my father, Julian, beat one of the richest men in Pass Christian almost to a pulp in front of the post office with his fist and then take me by the hand and walk me home. I come from a city that as the Catholic Church had desegregated, I could use any restaurant I wanted. I could go into any drug store I wanted. I could ride on the bus anywhere. I was a longshoreman at 13. I used the white restroom on the Gulf Coast. Only Dr. Felix Dunn [phonetic], who was a black, wealthy political person and I did that. Now I did it not because it had anything to do with
nonviolence. I did it because my father would've killed any 20 people that had anything to say to me.

INTERVIEWER: Didn't you know that there was a great difference between where you lived in Mississippi and the rest of Mississippi? How did you balance in your mind the fact that you were able to do these things here, but just a few miles away you would take your life in your hands to do them?

MR. GUYOT: What really brought this home to me was I went to Tougaloo College. Tougaloo College was threatened with extinction by the State Legislature. It had an interracial faculty. It was perfectly designed for me. I needed to be some place that was academically free, that would be committed to social change, and that would be committed to empowerment and the development of leadership. Tougaloo was all of that. When I get
there I meet Ed King. I meet David Broder [phonetic]. I meet Ernest Borinski [phonetic]. Ernest Borinski is a Jew driven out of Germany. He comes to Tougaloo. He becomes an institution man. He develops a theory that some institutions are functional only by their absence of function. That's the Democratic Party in Mississippi. It only needs to be organized every four years. They go to a convention; they come back; and then it disbands. If they don't disband, then they have to answer people's problems. You can run the state apparatus without doing that.

I meet A.A. Branch. A.A. Branch is a member of the leadership of the YMCA. A.A. Branch says to us the policy of Tougaloo is you can become involved in any demonstration you want around voting. We're going to assist you in doing that, but take your books with you. We're going to test you just
like everyone else. Only Tougaloo College and Miles College did that.

No other college in the South or in America did that to my knowledge.

I'm in the perfect place for me. I meet people who are committed to nonviolence. I meet John Salter, who teaches me everything I need to know about socialism. A.A. Branch is a leader of the YWCA, but as A.A. Branch walks into the COFO office with the papers to join with the United Church of Christ and the National Council of Churches in taking over the WLBT television station.

INTERVIEWER: Before we jump this far ahead, tell me the names of some of the students you went to school with whom we know as movement people.

MR. GUYOT: I went to school with Dorie Ladner.

INTERVIEWER: Joyce.

MR. GUYOT: Joyce Ladner. Quite a few people. Franklin. Johnny
Frazier, who was one of the leaders. He wasn't a student there, but I worked in conjunction with him. Quite a few people. Anderson, who later becomes a member of the State Supreme Court.

INTERVIEWER: I know this is counterfactual, but what if you had gone to Jackson State instead of Tougaloo? How would Lawrence Guyot have turned out do you think?

MR. GUYOT: I don't think I would've lasted at Jackson State. I believe I come from a town that created a certain political expectation of what was expected of me by my family and by my church. I wouldn't have fit into the strict, rigid conformity and hierarchal leadership of Jackson State. Dorie Ladner and Joyce Ladner went there first. They had to leave there and come to Tougaloo. Tougaloo was an Oasis in the State of Mississippi. It was committed to academic freedom, committed to
growth, and to leadership. Its very existence was threatened by the state legislature, but they continued to move ahead.

INTERVIEWER: Again, let me back up a little bit. I was just thinking about Pass Christian and the community you grew up in, the Catholic Church's influence, and the influence of labor unions. Most of Mississippi doesn't have this. Most of the South doesn't have this.

MR. GUYOT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: It's only when you get into Louisiana that there's any real Catholic presence. Outside of your section of Mississippi, probably not much any place else. The same would be true of Alabama, Georgia, and so on. Do you ever consider how lucky you were to run into the Catholic Church and to live in a community where labor unions flourished?

MR. GUYOT: Let me add one other thing to it and I'll respond to your
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<td>question. You also had Keesler Air Force Base, which was a major dynamo.</td>
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<td>Yes. I consider myself very fortunate. I was born in the right town. I get to go to the right church. I get to go to the right college. Then I run into SNCC. I come from a family that understands.</td>
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<td>In 1964 my favorite uncle says me the mayor wants to meet with you about the Summer Project. I grew walk up the steps to his house.</td>
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<td>He said but I don't want you to call him from my house. My uncle's scared about being tied to this. But I go down and talk to the mayor. I said here's what we're going to do. He said here's what we're going to do. That's it. I give no quarter. They give no quarter. This is '64.</td>
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<td>01:13:39</td>
<td>INTERVIEWER: A moment ago you said</td>
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you ran into SNCC. Tell me about
running into SNCC. How did that
happen? Who embodied SNCC for you?

MR. GUYOT: Dorie Ladner, Joyce
Ladner, and Bob Moses. I meet Bob
Moses, John Doar, and Marion Barry
all at the same time. They come out
of McComb. We're all working at 714
Rose Street. There we have Moses,
the Ladners, Bevel [phonetic], Diane,
quite a few other folks, Lavon Brown,
Sheila Michaels. This is the Freedom
House, right?
From there, we move into the Delta.
We go to Amzie Moore's house. Amzie
Moore parcels it out to Joe McDonald
and assistants. We run across a lady
named Fannie Lou Hamer. Bevel, me,
McLaurin and Forman go to a mass
meeting. We open the call for anyone
who wants to go down and register.
Fannie Lou Hamer raises her hand. We
run across a woman who is a religious
fundamentalist who knows the bible, a
woman who has a perfect sense of
She can weave together three different issues and collapse them in 25 words and bring it all together. She's a woman who walks into churches and who takes over. If the minister is a good minister, she treats him as a good minister. If he's wavering, she preaches to him before his congregation and nobody says a word to her. Here we get the perfect melding of religious fundamentalism and pragmatic politics. Not only does she go to register to vote, but as you know, she becomes a national celebrity. She becomes a woman who Andy Young takes to meet with Senator Church when he wants to talk about Vietnam. She's one of the founders of the National Women's Political Caucus. She's the woman who speaks at the '64 Democratic Convention. Lyndon Johnson calls a press conference to interrupt her.
At that time, there was only ABC, NBC, and CBS, and they all play her speech in its entirety that evening. Then there are 1,200 telegrams saying to seek the Freedom Democratic Party. Then Lyndon has to apply pressure because Lyndon says--and he says it in his tapes--the good thing about Lyndon is we got tapes on him. Lyndon says, "Look, we can't have a floor fight to seat an all-white delegation and then go and ask black people to vote for us in November, so the floor fight must be stopped."

Then as President of the United States, he pulled out all of the stops. Delegates from California, one of them was told, "Your husband can be a federal judge. All you have to do is stop voting for the Freedom Democratic Party." Candidates in New York were told, "You all have a lot of OEO money, the Office of Economic INTERVIEWER: [Interposing] Yeah.
MR. GUYOT: You can keep it as long
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<td>the floor fight. Not being able to</td>
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<td>get the floor fight, we were then</td>
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<td>offered a compromise of two people.</td>
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<td>I'm proud of the fact that I'm the</td>
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<td>chairman of the Mississippi Freedom</td>
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<td>Democratic Party. I'm in jail in</td>
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<td>Hattiesburg, Mississippi. I couldn't</td>
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<td>have given a speech as good as Fannie</td>
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<td>Lou Hamer did. I couldn't have led</td>
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<td>the Freedom Democratic Party into</td>
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<td>courageous, pragmatic, political</td>
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<td>decision in American politics. They</td>
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| 447   |          | said to this compromise, "No."
| 448   | 01:17:56 | It's interesting. Some historians-- |
| 449   |          | as you know, Bayard Rustin comes out |
| 450   |          | late after that with an article |
called "The difference between politics and protest" in Commentary Magazine. What I am so proud of is no delegation went to the '64 Democratic Convention who understood the relationship between dying and the right to vote. Every one of these people had lost money, had served time in jail, had had their names posted in the newspaper when they registered to vote. They were willing to take on the strongest political organization in the State of Mississippi, the Democratic Party, and they were willing to go into Lyndon Johnson's convention and fight in it as though it was their convention.

INTERVIEWER: Let me back you up one more time. You're going to Tougaloo and you're majoring in biology and minoring in philosophy. Why'd you choose these fields? What was your career plan then?

MR. GUYOT: My career plan then was
to become a doctor. Then I ran into chemistry and I changed my career plan. I just couldn't. When I tested while in Tougaloo, I scored off the charts on everything except mathematics and chemistry. Well, there was no way I was going to be a doctor having those, so I made a shift.

INTERVIEWER: What would you have been?

MR. GUYOT: If I had had my druthers, I'd have been a lawyer.

INTERVIEWER: Why didn't you go that way?

MR. GUYOT: Why didn't I go that way? Because I understood the universality both of politics and how much the judiciary had framed that. I understood the Brown case. I understood the Baker vs. Carr now opened up the political arena to the courts, which meant that there would be more power. History proves me right on that. We have reached a
point in this country where we have an excellent power and scope of the judiciary, and now we got to fight to keep it.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned a moment ago about running into Bob Moses and the Ladner sisters and so on, and finding this community of people who make up the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. What did you think of them? What was your impression of them and how in your mind did they differ from the run-of-the-mill college students and others you were associated with?

MR. GUYOT: I thought that these were people who had a religious commitment to interracialism; that they were fundamentally about change; that they were different from the other organizers that I'd been exposed to in that they were not about creating membership. They were about creating empowerment. That is what fascinated me. Here were people who were very
well educated who could think on their feet, who were interdependent, and who had fierce respect for one another.

Once I saw how they operated, then I was totally captivated. Their position was that they were going to work with established leaders who were there: E.W. Steptoe; later Hartman Turnbow. They go into McComb. I don't go into McComb.

SNCC is almost killed, almost shot out of McComb. What it discovers is that the black community will protect and support them. It will hide them. It will feed them. It will clothe them. It will lie for them. It will do anything to protect them. This carries us into the Delta.

Then we go into Greenwood and we find that in Greenwood, Mississippi there was tremendous fear. Moses proposed let's have some... I said no; they don't know us yet. We got better known moving around. Then when we
had demonstrations, we had 100 people

come into the jail to bring us food

and support. That's not supposed to

happen. What is the one thing black

people learn? Don't go to jail.

Don’t be associated with those who go
to jail. If you're their friends,

wait until they get out of jail to be

friends. We push Greenwood to the

point where we have 500 people come
down to register to vote. Hardy

Lott, a segregationist lawyer who

defends Byron De La Beckwith says to

me in the Leflore County Courthouse

one day. "Guyot, you should be very

proud of how many people you all got

coming down in Leflore County."

I said, "Well, Mr. Lott, I

understand. We got them coming down

and you're all turning them away from

registration. What we need to do is

create a situation where they can

come down and get registered. He

said, "Well, that's going to be a

good fight." It proved to be a good
fight because what we were able to do

in Greenwood was force the Department

of Justice. Once the voter

registration workers got arrested

there, John Doar says, "Okay, we're

going into court," but instead of

filing a type A suit, he files a type

B suit, which just gets us out.

What we found was that the Department

of Justice to this day defends their

position by saying we didn't want to

occupy Leflore County.

Remember, while this was going on

there was also the case of Ole Miss

and there was the case of Theron

Lynd.

I think one of the major achievements

of SNCC was to bring about a working

relationship with the Department of

Justice. We trained them. We took

John Doar to Walthall County. We

introduced John Doar to a man named

John Hardy. John Hardy was a SNCC

activist who brought some people in

to register to vote. Mr. Woods, the
registrar, hit him with a gun and a stick, and the Department of Justice said, "Wait a minute. We're going to stop this prosecution. The reason we're stopping it is when you hit him, you hit every black man or woman who might want to come to register to vote."

They developed a theory called an appeal, an injunction pending appeal. That's what they do. They said, "You can't prosecute this man," and they take you to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Couldn't we say that one of the reasons that happened is because of somebody like John Doar. Not because of the department itself, but because somebody like John Doar stood out among his fellows and pushed hard for these kinds of remedies.

MR. GUYOT: John Doar was not the ordinary Department of Justice. John Doar believed in going into the
field, finding out where the danger was, and he trained his staff to do that. There's no question. John Doar participates not only in that, but John Doar also, when the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party files the first private lawsuit under the Voting Rights Act of 1965. John Doar and the Department of Justice filed an amicus. We go to the Supreme Court. We win it 8 to 1. What does that case say? That case says right now the law says that the attorney general is the only one who can institute suits, but we're going to take the position that from this day forward anyone who's aggrieved by Section 5 has the right to bring a lawsuit under Section 5. You see the range that they're giving it? They broadened Section 5. They give us the best possible interpretation we can. Now this case is my idea. I read a book called Gideon's Trumpet by Anthony Lewis. It describes
Lyndon Johnson as someone who stole his election.

I'd been trained well enough to know that if you had the choice between trained by being given guidance by a thief or by a bishop, choose the thief. The bishop will tell you no; this is not right. The thief will tell you this is how I did it and this is how I've stopped other people from doing it. I knew that Lyndon Johnson didn't want anyone to ever be able to do what he had done. I go and I find Section 5. It's the most beautiful language ever written. It says that any change by a covered political subdivision that has the possibility of diluting the Voting Rights Act must either be pre-cleared by the Department of Justice or litigated before a three-judge panel only in the District of Columbia.

Most beautiful words I've ever heard. What we do, once we win that case before the Supreme Court, all lawyers
in the South switch from the Fifth Amendment to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.

INTERVIEWER: The work you're doing with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and these colleagues that you've mentioned earlier doesn't come without a cost, and you're beaten a couple of times. I don't know if it's painful for you now to talk about that.

MR. GUYOT: No, it's not painful. It's factual.

INTERVIEWER: Tell us about these two cases of where you were beaten.

MR. GUYOT: One of them was in Winona. Fannie Lou Hamer, Annie Devine, Annette Ponder, James West, and June Johnson are returning from a South Carolina meeting. They stop in Winona. They are arrested. I call and ask, "Do you have these people?"

He said, "Well, come on over and find out."

I go over and I know they're there.
They beat me almost to death and they want me to sign a statement saying I drove over there and fell out of a car and hurt myself. I said I'm not going to sign that. I'd never driven a car in my life and I wasn't going to sign it.

MALE VOICE: Just pause for a moment just so you can get some water. Give me one second.

MR. GUYOT: I leave Greenwood and I go into Winona. I'm beaten. They threaten to burn my testicles with wooden sticks. I know that I have to stay conscious; otherwise, they're going to kill me. I'm beaten by 12 people and I'm asked to sign a statement which I refuse to sign.

Then they charge me with murder.

INTERVIEWER: Who had you killed?

MR. GUYOT: I hadn't killed anyone.

INTERVIEWER: Who did they say you killed?

MR. GUYOT: I had a note from someone who had given in the street someone
had been killed, and they took that and said, "Well, you killed him."

What I found was that I knew that I wasn't going to get out of Winona alive. I didn't think any of us that were there. They left my cell door open. They left a knife outside.

They sent someone who showed me a fake badge saying, "I'm an FBI agent; now tell me what really happened."

Medgar Evers was killed while we were in Winona. I turned off the radio.

I knew something tragic had happened.

I just didn't know who. Then, Andy Young Bevel and Frank Smith come to get me out of jail. Then we eventually go to the Medgar Evers funeral, and then I leave there and go to Hattiesburg. It was clear to me that we were beaten too badly. We were beaten almost beyond recognition. They were not going to allow us to go about and have pictures taken.

As unfortunate as it is, I believe
that there are two things that saved
our lives. One, Roberta Goller and
other people from across the country
started calling in to ask to speak to
us, that let them know that other
people know.

Number two, the assassination of
Medgar Evers. I'd been beaten quite
a few other times, but what one time
that I remember vividly that I wasn't
beaten, but I think it's something I
want to talk about now, we were
driving in a car from Hattiesburg,
Jackson, and it was a car that
couldn't go over 50 miles an hour.
It had bad tires. Some people with
shotguns were behind us. I said stop
the car. I got out, I walked back,
and I looked in the... I said, "Look,
the FBI's been following us. If you
want to go to jail for 10 years, just
do anything to anybody in that car."
Those good old boys turned around and
then we got back in the car. He
asked you and I lied, but I'd rather
lie and take control of my life than
to leave it to someone else who I
didn't think had my good being
intentions.

INTERVIEWER: Eleanor Holmes Norton,
who's the District's representative
to the congress has known you since
the early 1960s. In fact, did she
come with you to get the people out
of jail in Winona?

MR. GUYOT: She was involved in it.

INTERVIEWER: She was a young lawyer
then.

MR. GUYOT: She was a lawyer. Yes.

INTERVIEWER: She said you walked
right into terror. What did she mean
by that?

MR. GUYOT: She said that at a dinner
that was given in my name here in
Washington. The way she laid it out
was she said, "Look, all black
southern men were told to stay out of
jail." If your friends are in jail,
send them money, pray for them, but
don't go visit them." Here was man
who knew that there were civil rights workers arrested and he went right into jail knowing what the terror was. He looked at terror and walked right into it. I felt very complimented about that.

INTERVIEWER: Can you tell us quickly what differences before between the NAACP, long-established organization active across the State of Mississippi, and SLCL, relatively new organization. How do these organizations differ in the ways they operated in Mississippi with SNCC--NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC?

INTERVIEWER: The NAACP took the position--and I'm quoting Roy Wilkins who said part of this on the great documentary "Eyes on the Prize"--Mississippi is a bestial state. It should be cut off and allowed to be drifted to sea. He didn't say this on camera, but he said it later. Anyone who attempts to organize is crazy. Were going to raise money out
of the atrocities of Mississippi and move forward. We're going to
litigate there when possible and that's it.
SCLC is a tougher problem to answer.
Everything that was done that shows how creative, how pluralistic, how
indigenous and how really sophisticated the politics in Mississippi was, was backed by Martin
Luther King. We got to separate Martin Luther King from SCLC. Martin Luther King supported us in the Freedom Election, which we got 80,000 voters. He supported us in the Summer Project, which we were able to really create the Freedom Democratic Party, create the Freedom Schools, and create the Wednesday Group by Dorothy Height. The Wednesday Group was bringing in black and white women from across the country. They meet with people who were in the movement and then go back and talk to their ministers, their bishops, and their
senators and their congressman. We also create the Freedom Schools, which are to this day carried out by the Children's Defense Fund.

INTERVIEWER: Why is there this dichotomy between Martin Luther King, the head of SCLC, and SCLC? Why is he behaving in one way and the organization is behaving in another way?

MR. GUYOT: Well, I'll tell you why. I think what he appreciated was the freedom and the creativity of what was going on in Mississippi. Here we were sending a message to the country that if you allow us to vote in Mississippi unimpeded, we will do it. 80,000 people backed that up. We said about '64 Summer Project we can't bring Mississippi to America, but we can bring America to Mississippi. We found out we could not protect ourselves. We're going to be picked off one by one. We were organizing against the entire state
apparatus of Mississippi and the country. The country was totally indifferent to voting. We had to nationalize this problem. We then challenged the Democratic Party in Atlantic City. We were supported in all of these endeavors by Martin Luther King. He supports us in the congressional challenge. Then I asked him to do something harder than anything else he'd ever done. I said, "Look, Martin. We know that the Voting Rights Act is going to pass. We need you to sign a memorandum along with me, John Lewis, and other people, saying that we realized the Voting Rights Act is going to pass, but the congressional delegation of Mississippi still should be unseated. He does it. When he does that, they said first of all you all forged his name. He sticks with us. Then what happens, Julian, is--and this is David Garrow in his book. As you know, David
Garrow is the chronicle of Martin Luther, makes the point that the Freedom Democratic Party in this memorandum had a larger impact on the Voting Rights Act than did Selma. David Garrow says it. This all happened because of a guy named Michael Thelwell. Michael Thelwell gets a chance to attend the leadership conference meetings. When you read the first proposal for the Voting Rights Act, it's as weak as can be. You would need 20 complaints and the president may authorize. We needed a greater trigger mechanism. Section 5 was that trigger mechanism, but Section 5 wouldn't have been created unless we brought the congressional challenge. We got 149 congressmen to say yes, the congressional delegation from Mississippi, GBC. At the same time, the United States Supreme Court was hearing a case called the United States versus
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<td>the laws in Mississippi</td>
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<td>everything in Mississippi. They</td>
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<td>didn't. Because of course Lyndon</td>
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<td>America; there's the South; and then</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: I've said and I have</td>
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<td>people object to me saying that you</td>
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the last generation of African Americans who have engaged in sustained mobilization in the 20th century. You and I are members of the last generation that have done that. Nothing has happened since we were of college age. We haven't seen any repetition of this. Why is that so? Why are we unique?

MR. GUYOT: I'll tell you why. We're not really unique. I appreciate the laudatory way in which you handled that.

INTERVIEWER: Thanks. I like to praise us.

MR. GUYOT: I want to say very clearly we are entitled to praise. We are a group of people who changed the world.

INTERVIEWER: Of course.

MR. GUYOT: It is very important that we understand it, but when we look at operation understanding, when we look at cultural leadership, when we look at the Children's Defense Fund, I
think the best training of what we did is now being done by those three
groups and the young people's project headed by Moses' children. They are
doing the kind of organizing we did. What we must do is use the mantra of
pull the power right here. We got the literature. We got the mantra. We got the history. What we have an
opportunity to do and it is very necessary for us to do it meld our experience.
What distinguishes us from a lot of other people; we saw total oppression
and we brought about change. Every impediment to us we turned it around.
You can't register to vote? We're going to register to vote. You won't allow us to vote? We're going to vote anyway.
You can't organize politically. We were not going to allow you to. We were going to put your name in the newspaper. When we get, Julian,
thousands of people who have
everything to risk and they are
willing to risk their lives and their
children's lives and everything they
have, and you can't do it secretly,
that's success. That's called real
political mobilization.
I think from January 23rd to 26th,
the people who created this, the
veterans of the civil rights movement
in Mississippi were meeting.
Yesterday I read in the Washington
Post about civil rights activist
going online. The Color Purple, the
NAACP. My concern is how do we get
those people to come down? As far as
I'm concerned, the greatest
organizers in America come out of
Mississippi and SNCC. Who do you
compare us to?
INTERVIEWER: No one. There is no
comparison.
MR. GUYOT: None.
INTERVIEWER: There's no mobilization
of the sort we engaged in in the
1960s today. I'm always asking why
is this so? Why is it such a failure of our community to mobilize in the way we did when we were young people and a little more vigorous than we are now?

MR. GUYOT: Let me give you what is the most logical and most practical answer. We're now given the perfect solution, the perfect opportunity that brings us back to that period.

If we allow the Republicans to have control of the house and the senate, except for the next two years--they don't control the senate--then we must forever write off that whole beautiful mantra that we created before then. It's very clear. I'm astounded that the political commentators look at a sense of equivalence between the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. There is none. The Republican Party is by definition obstructionist and wants to narrow the scope and function of government. The
Democratic Party wants to do just the converse.

We now have a golden opportunity to fight for what we have because it's all on the table, everything you can imagine, given the Republican's need to destroy America as we know it. We can prevent them. A million of us who voted in 2008 didn't vote in the midterm elections. What we've got to do now is use all of our resources.

For the next two years, I'm going to do nothing but push books, the mantra of SNCC, the example of SNCC as an organizing vehicle, and I'm going to call on everyone who participated in the Freedom Elections, in the Freedom Riots, in the Summer Project. You name them. It's time for action now.

The reason I can do that with confidence is there's a difference between people who have made change and there's a difference to people who have written about change. We are those who made change. We now
simply have to bring in young people

INTERVIEWER: We seem to have trouble

with attracting insufficient number

of young people today. I know you

mentioned the Moses children were

doing wonderful work and the other

groups were doing wonderful work, but

there's no equivalent today of the

actions we engaged in in the 1960s.

No equivalent anywhere in the country

that I can see.

MR. GUYOT: Let me say to you my dear

friend, if there was ever a time to

get into motion to bring that about,

it is now. We've got two years.

INTERVIEWER: Absolutely. If we

don't act now, it's all lost.

MR. GUYOT: Not only will it be lost,

but it will be irretrievable. It's

not a question of waiting 10 years

and there'll be another flip.

INTERVIEWER: No. It won't happen.

Well, let's not deal with these dim

thoughts. I want you to give the
people who will see this some picture of how you occupied yourself say in the summer of 1964. What would a typical week be for you if there's such a thing as a typical week in Mississippi in 1964? How would you occupy yourself? What would you do all day?

MR. GUYOT: I would stay in contact with people who were organizing. I would--

INTERVIEWER: [Interposing] Where would you be located in the summer of '64?

MR. GUYOT: I would be in Hattiesburg, Mississippi or in Jackson or in Greenwood.

INTERVIEWER: The SNCC headquarters was in Greenwood for the summer.

MR. GUYOT: That's right. I was one of the first to go into Greenwood.

My job was to stay abreast of the political... Where did communities need help? What kind of support did they need? How could we assist them
in empowering people? Our position was SNCC people were capable. One or two SNCC people would go into a town, get it organized in two weeks, and find a place to stay, all on a salary of $10 a week when it was available. We wanted to facilitate that as much as possible. We had to stay in touch with the political news. What was happening on the other side? How did we respond to it? What kind of pressure release is there? Then we'd call you and Mary King and others when we needed help. It meant setting up meetings, carrying out meetings, and improving the skills of the leadership that was there. Harry Bowie and I traveled the state of Mississippi. Bowie was a black Episcopalian, one of the most brilliant men I've ever met. He worked for the Delta Ministry. The Delta Ministry was organized because I invited all religious groups to come to Hattiesburg in '63. When
SNCC leaves Mississippi in '66, they're replaced by the Delta Ministry. The new ally for the Freedom Democratic Party is the Delta Ministry. They support the Children's Defense Fund. The Children's Defense Fund headed by Edelman hires 3,000 people in Mississippi. That instantly becomes a negative attraction to Senator Stennis, and he must be killed, so there's an attempt to destroy it. It is the ability of SNCC to continue to bring in forces to be used in its political methodology. We bring in the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights under the law. I'm proud of the fact that they were to the left and we got castigated for that. I remember when Dave Dennis, Bob Moses, and I met with Counselor Canoy [phonetic] and others. I said, "Do you all agree that we will make the decisions and you all do the
litigating?" They said yes, and they never deviated from that.

I'm very proud that SNCC took the position that we were not going to let anyone tell us what to do. I remember after Kennedy was killed there was a request by Lyndon Johnson that there be a moratorium on demonstrations. Theodore White had written a book saying that SNCC was really communist, really dangerous people.

We analyzed that we had a conference at Howard University. Bayard Rustin spoke there. Baldwin spoke there. The great socialist Norman Thomas spoke there. Norman Thomas said, "Look, we can't win by singing, but we can't win unless we sing." He said, "You must understand. Every program that we came up with, the Democrats litigated, turned into laws." The question was: would we be part of the nullification? We said no. We're going to have a Summer
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<td>Summer Project was not universally accepted. Fannie Lou Hamer and I</td>
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<td>were two of the few people that</td>
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<td>supported it originally. Once Bob</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: Louis Allen.</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: Louis Allen. He then</td>
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<td>Project, and it happens. I think the</td>
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<td>Project said we can no longer fund</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: When you were doing</td>
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this activity with SNCC, how much
were you paid?

MR. GUYOT: $10 a week.

INTERVIEWER: This is before you were
married?

MR. GUYOT: That's right.

INTERVIEWER: Did you get married
while you worked for SNCC?

MR. GUYOT: Yes.

INTERVIEWER: Did your salary go up?

MR. GUYOT: No.

INTERVIEWER: Mine did.

MR. GUYOT: I'm glad you did.

INTERVIEWER: But I had children.

You mentioned earlier on, and I'm
amazed that you recall, the 714 Rose
Street, which is the address of the
Freedom House in Jackson. What would
life be like with Freedom House?

MR. GUYOT: Life would be like this.

Bevel was there. Diane was there.

Thomas Gaither was there. Paul
Brooks was there. Dorie Ladner was
there. Joyce Ladner was there.

Moses was there. I was there. Lavon
Brown was there. What it served as is a reconciliation post for everyone arrested in the Freedom Riots. Because when you got arrested in the Freedom Riots, you were tried in Jackson. When you came to Jackson, you came to 714 Rose Street. Then we acquainted you with what was going on in the state and how you could be helpful when you went back to wherever you were. It was this cross-fertilization of activism that was uninhibited, that was indigenous, that was empowering, and that was answerable to no one. We were able to creatively involve all the major... The National Council of Churches gets committed once they come to Hattiesburg. They create the Delta Ministry, which lasts for 25 years. They also join us when we challenge the congressional delegation. Breeden, Fitzsimmons, these are people from the National Council of Churches. They come to us and they
talk to Michael Thelwell. I said, "What can we do about the congressional challenge?" They said, "What you can do is open doors. Where we don’t have a civil rights movement, we have churches." James Farmer of CORE and I got to talk to Forwood [phonetic], who later becomes President Forwood because his bishop called him and said you got to talk to him. What we found is that the labor unions remember. At the Howard University meeting, the FLCL [phonetic] said to us, "We're going to give you a contribution of $25,000, and we're going to send for Board of Directors to tell you what to do." You can imagine how long that lasted. Then if you look at when the Summer Project was agreed to, some people said to us, "William Sloane Coffin has to head this." It never happened, Julian. Then you remember
the great meeting in New York after
the Democratic convention. You got
Gloster Current; you got Roy Wilkins;
you got Courtland Cox; you got James
Farmer. They said, "Look,
Mississippi is now becoming a
national and international paradigm.
We can't allow the people that are
running it down there to run it, the
underbrushing"
INTERVIEWER: Ignorant people like
Fannie Lou Hamer.

MR. GUYOT: Like Fannie Lou Hamer,
and the underbrush like--
INTERVIEWER: [Interposing]
Incredible.

MR. GUYOT: Courtland said, "Don't
you think you should talk to the
people in Mississippi about this?"
They said no. What we found was that
we were creating something in
Mississippi. When you beat the best,
and when you can organize around the
worst, then you create a political
example of what can be.
Curtis Gaines, who is one of the top demographers of the vote ever year wrote a letter in 1965. He said, "I've toured the South and if this SNCC MFDP kind of operation is allowed to happen in the South, it will not be loyal to the National Democratic Party. This letter is written in its entire in Local People by John Dittmer. I got it, I gave it to Dittmer, and he put it in the book. He said what we must do is quickly pass the Voting Rights Act so we can then bring blacks into the Democratic Party. I just wanted to say that to say, "Look at how many other forces we were resonating with, and they put their own interpretation on it."

The NEA and AFT both send representatives to the Summer Project to capture the Freedom curriculum. We meet in Hartford, Connecticut years later. There's someone there who stands up and says we had a
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<td>discussion about the curriculum for</td>
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<td>the Freedom Schools last week.</td>
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<td>There's this tremendous infusion of</td>
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<td>bringing the political process to the</td>
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<td>average citizen.</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: After '64, did you</td>
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<td>leave Mississippi? When did you move</td>
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<td>to D.C.?</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: I moved to D.C. in 1968.</td>
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<td>I was a delegate to the Democratic</td>
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<td>convention in '68. Harry Bowie and I</td>
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<td>organized. What happened was this.</td>
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<td>become part of the regular Democratic</td>
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<td>friend, was chairing the state</td>
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<td>convention. He said, &quot;Look, if you</td>
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<td>don't desegregate this delegation,</td>
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<td>you're wasting your bus fare to</td>
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<td>Chicago.&quot; We waited for that to</td>
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<td>happen. Aaron Henry and the</td>
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<td>loyalists, who were set up as an</td>
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<td>alternative to destroy MFDP, they</td>
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<td>were unsuccessful.</td>
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<td>Then I said to them, &quot;Let's join</td>
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"The loyalists hooked up with the MFDP. We got 50% of the delegation; they got 50%; and we were seated in '68. Harry Bowie and I met with Charles Evers and Harding Carter. They looked at the names. They said, "How did you all do it?"

I said, "Well, look; you all had the money. You all had the prestige. We knew all of these people years before they knew you." We went up and selected, nominated, and we got Ms. Rutger [phonetic]. We got our people.

INTERVIEWER: When you came up here, you began to focus on D.C. issues. Tell us a little bit about that.

MR. GUYOT: I had a good time up here. I began to fight for the same-sex marriage. I began to fight for having the first presidential primary in Washington so we could point out to the country the fact that we don’t have congressional or senatorial representation. We get the first
primary, but quite a few of the
Democrats don't participate in it.

Then I publicly lambast them for
that.

I fight to do away with term limits.

I believe that we fought too much.

Too many of us have died to allow the
calendar to determine the political
situation. We do away with term
limits here. I find this a very
creative city council. It is one
that I can operate conveniently with.

I become an ANC commissioner. I
begin delving in economic
development. I'm involved in
everything that was developed in
Columbia Heights. Every one of those
37 proposals was brought to us. We
were told to pick a developer to
analyze and to grade them. We did
that.

I built some of the political
infrastructure of the city, and I am
very much of an activist. I
supported Fenty for mayor. I
supported the write-in. I remember in 1968 and you remember I'm sure when we made a decision to move from the civil rights movement to carry the church with us into the political arena. We said we're not going to hate people, and we're going to choose the ballot instead. The bible and the ballot infusion.

Then I see a campaign that to me was the real implementation of more hate than I've ever seen in my life. Fenty was not only defeated; he was turned into a hate caricature.

Because of that, I joined him in the write-in. Of all the things I've done politically, I'm just as proud of that. One of the things I understand there very clearly, if black people ever make the mistake of separating our politics from our religion, we're damn not finished.

INTERVIEWER: The same time you mentioned same-sex marriage, same-sex marriage is just an anathema in many
black homes and in the black church community. One of the biggest opponents is Walter Fauntroy, who's Dr. King's lieutenant here. How do you manage in your practice of Christianity to balance the support for something that many black Christians just think is terrible?

MR. GUYOT: Well, I think one of the best movements in that position is my wife. My wife and I met when I went to California. She was raising money for SNCC. She comes to Mississippi. We leave there. We get married in Washington in '67. She supports me in everything I've done. She gets the job to help pay my way through Rutgers law school. She goes to jail with me in Mississippi. We live together in Mississippi. My wife is white. Whenever I've gone to the hospital, she's come with me. Quite a few times she saved my life.

I said to myself, "Can I really accept all of this and deny it to two
other people of the same sex who are in love with one another?" I couldn't. I may shock and amaze you when I say this, but all of my politics has been based on my religious beliefs. I tell people. I say when you're told religiously to feed the hungry clothe the naked, those who are bound, it doesn't tell you to find out what the charges are. Whenever you attempt to do any of those three, you enter into the political arena. That's all right because there's no other way to do it. I teach political empowerment. The first question I ask of my class is let's talk about something that's not political. Once we've gotten through that, then we go on to the question. What are you doing to enhance your political mobility and motility in options?

I was thinking as you were talking there about the years we've known
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<td>each other. I frankly have not</td>
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<td>thought about you as a religious</td>
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<td></td>
<td>person.</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: I understand.</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: Probably I don't know</td>
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<td>that side of you at all well.</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: That's understandable.</td>
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<td>I'm not offended by that at all. I'm</td>
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<td>1509</td>
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<td>very happy with my relationship. I</td>
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<td>remember when you would share your</td>
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<td>poems early in SNCC. We both love</td>
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<td>1512</td>
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<td>books and we both are very proud of</td>
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<td>1513</td>
<td>02:01:26</td>
<td>what we've done.</td>
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<td>I learned that we must be able to</td>
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<td>ethically transcend ourselves and put</td>
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<td>ourselves in other fellows' shoes,</td>
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<td>1517</td>
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<td>and then make a judgment. I have no</td>
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<td>problems. I testified before the</td>
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<td>city council and I said, &quot;I'm</td>
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<td>astounded by people wanting to vote</td>
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<td>on denying other people human</td>
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<td>rights.&quot; I said, &quot;We didn't</td>
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<td>sacrifice lives for that.&quot; The vote</td>
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<td>1524</td>
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<td>should be used to build, to</td>
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<td>1525</td>
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<td>strengthen. It should be used</td>
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affirmatively. Quite a few people agreed with me on that.

I think the beauty of politics, even though it has a bad name right now, will be revived. In order to save this country, we're going to have to revive it. I look at it as a good joining. As long as you have a country in which 6 out of 10 people don't know the difference between the various layers of government, how can you really create public opinion about affirmative and moving?

Jefferson said it very clear. He said in order to have a Republican style of government, you've got to have an informed election. My dear friend, we have a most tragically and misinformed electorate right now.

MALE VOICE: Hold on from here because we're at the one-hour mark.

I have to put in a new tape. Do you want to get up?

INTERVIEWER: No. I want to stretch.

[END AFC2010039_CRHP0005_MV1.WMV]
INTerviewer: Ready to go?

Male voice: Rolling.

INTERVIEWER: Larry, I want to go through a long list of names and ask you if you could very quickly tell the people who will see this who these people were.

Mr. Guyot: Very good.'

INTERVIEWER: Because we went over them very quickly earlier. John Salter.

Mr. Guyot: John Salter was a teacher at Tougaloo College who was very political. He was involved in demonstrations in Jackson that were NAACP led. He worked very closely with Edgar Evers and he worked very closely with Ed King.

INTERVIEWER: Medgar Evers.

Mr. Guyot: Medgar Evers was the executive director of the NAACP. He was a person who went disguised to get information about the Emmett Till case. He was the political leader of...
the NAACP in Mississippi. He was very involved in a lot of the political activity and civil rights involvement in the state.

INTERVIEWER: Tom Gaither.

MR. GUYOT: Tom Gaither was a CORE member early in Mississippi, and continues to be involved in the civil rights movement to this day.

INTERVIEWER: You mentioned when you were talking about the Freedom House earlier that it was a place of reconciliation. What did you mean by that?

MR. GUYOT: What I meant was that it was a place for people who regardless of where you stood in the movement, you were welcome there. Breeden comes into the meeting. As you know, Breeden was a leftist.

INTERVIEWER: Carl Breeden.

MR. GUYOT: Carl Breeden. He buys food. At that particular time, we didn't have any money. It was his kind of place. That's why I termed
INTERVIEWER: John Doar. We mentioned him a bit. Tell us a little bit more about John Doar.

MR. GUYOT: John Doar is a hero of the civil rights movement. He is best characterized as a man who was a relentless worker who didn't stick to the script, who was responsible for moving the Department of Justice into civil rights vigorously.

INTERVIEWER: He's an assistant attorney general.

MR. GUYOT: He was the assistant attorney general to Robert Kennedy, who was the U.S. Attorney General. John Doar was a Republican, very perceptive, very creative. I watched John Doar represent the government in the case of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman. He quoted [background noise]. He said people will little note here what we say, but they will long note what we do. Of course, those people were convicted.'
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<td>John Doar, and I'm going to quote</td>
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<td>him, in 1967 was at a conference at</td>
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<td>Ole Miss and he was talking about the</td>
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<td>press and the civil rights movement.</td>
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<td>He said the Voting Rights Act was</td>
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<td>passed in two cities, McComb, and the</td>
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<td>1632</td>
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<td>streets of Greenwood. What we were</td>
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<td>able to do was convince John Doar and</td>
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<td>others that illiterates had the right</td>
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<td>to vote. We convinced them. We got</td>
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<td>that written into the Voting Rights</td>
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<td>Act.</td>
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<td>Katzenbach, who was then testifying</td>
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<td>before judiciary committee said, &quot;I'm</td>
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<td>convinced of the constitutionality of</td>
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<td>all of this except the right of</td>
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<td>illiterates to vote. We got the</td>
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<td>congress to go along with us. No</td>
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<td>other group fought for the right of</td>
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<td>illiterates to vote except SNCC.</td>
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<td>1646</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: Gerald Ford.</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: Gerald Ford was a</td>
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<td>1648</td>
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<td>congressman from Michigan, and then</td>
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<td>later President of the United States.</td>
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<td>1650</td>
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<td>When I talked to him, he was a member</td>
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INTERVIEWER: The Wednesday Group. You mentioned a little bit about them. Tell us a little bit about what the Wednesday Group was.

MR. GUYOT: Of course. The Wednesday Group was organized by Dorothy Height. The Wednesday Group were people brought in from across the country, from various states at various times to come in and listen to the activists in Mississippi, find out what's going on, find out what they can do. Then they would leave and go back to their hometowns and talk to their senators, their congressman, their bankers, their civic clubs to put pressure on the
Department of Justice to protect the Voting Rights activists.

INTERVIEWER: You also mentioned a couple of times the Ladner sisters.

Flesh them out a little bit more.

MR. GUYOT: Joyce and Dorie Ladner come out of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

They are related to Vernon Dahmer, who is a real civil rights hero.

They're related to Medgar Evers.

They're related to Victoria Gray, who is the National Committee woman of the Freedom Democratic Party, who was also very active in SCLC. Victoria Gray goes to SCLC and gives a great speech in Abernathy. Okay, Victor, what do you want? He said I want $7,000 for the Freedom Democratic Party and the right check.

Victoria Gray was another religious fanatic. We had one in Fannie Lou Hamer and had another in Victoria Gray, who becomes a political activist, who brings in her family.

There were more people in the Freedom
Schools in Hattiesburg than anywhere else in the state. The case of Theron Lynd is tried by the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in Hattiesburg.

INTERVIEWER: He's the registrar in Forest County.

MR. GUYOT: He's the registrar in Forest County. He takes the position that he's not—Julian, he turned down postgraduate degree people because they said, "You just didn't complete the test right."

There's a great book written about him. It's called "Count them One by One." It's written by one of the attorneys who operated in that state. Why is it a great book? Because it talks about the trying of Theron Lynd for contempt. It talks about the courage of the witnesses who participate in that. It establishes a basis, as does the office and I totally agree, for really passing the Voting Rights Act. It was very clear
they were recalcitrants of this registrar, which was also analogous to 82 other registrars like him because there's one in each county. Once the court ruled against him, he simply refused to register people.

This is the federal court. John Doar when they're trying Theron Lynd introduces me to Judge Brown, Tuttle, and Bell. There's a great book about this called "Unsung Heroes" by Jack Bass. The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals follows and joins the Department of Justice in making sure that whatever they can do to back up the movement in Mississippi, they do it. We knew if we lost in Meridian or Jackson, all we had to do was wait until we get to New Orleans because in New Orleans we win.

INTERVIEWER: Griffin Bell voted--

MALE VOICE: One moment. We have somebody at the door. They went away?
MR. GUYOT: The Fifth Circuit was made up of the most creative group of people who were committed to making the law useful for social and political change. Ironically, these were all Eisenhower appointees. Each one of them files challenge delegations in their states, Louisiana, Georgia, and Texas. They won those positions, which helped Eisenhower get the presidency.

Eisenhower said to them, "What do you all want?" They wanted to get on the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. They established a legend of expanding the constitutional rights of everyone that came before them. Their position on the City of Jackson was that Jackson had an apartheid policy that was incomparable of anywhere else in the United States. That was the official position of the 5th

INTERVIEWER: --and now hopefully was back in those days.
They validated the removal of cases filed by Arthur Canoy, and they were later overturned by the Supreme Court and narrowed. They validated all Section 5 cases. John Doar simply had to get to New Orleans, bring the case, and it was won. They overturned decision after decision by Judge Cox, who was an atrocious racist, who talked about black people registering to vote as a bunch of chimpanzees. Once we got to the Fifth Circuit, he was overturned.

INTERVIEWER: One of them you mentioned, however, Griffin Bell, voted against me and kept me out of the Georgia legislature for almost six months.

MR. GUYOT: Griffin Bell did some things worse than that. Griffin Bell said to Andy Young, "Don't testify against Bork [phonetic]." Of course, as you know, Andy Young to his credit testified against Bork.
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<td>I want to make it clear that of the judges on the Fifth Circuit, Bell was the least praiseworthy. But the Fifth Circuit was of the highest caliber of productivity for empowerment and for the revitalization of the 15th amendment.</td>
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<td>1802</td>
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<td>It is amazing. These people treated what we were doing as their work.</td>
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<td>The only reason the Fifth Circuit didn't send Theron Lynd to jail was because they were again concerned about the political impact. He was 7'4&quot; and he weighed 400 pounds. They didn't want him to die in jail. But they tried him for contempt and they got what they wanted out of him.</td>
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<td>1804</td>
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<td>Again, once it became clear that you were faced with Theron Lynd-type recalcitrance throughout the State of Mississippi, then you had to come up with a new mechanism. Allah; comes the Voting Rights Act, and it was written by the Department of Justice.</td>
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<td>1805</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: Let me mention another</td>
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<td>1826</td>
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<td>name you mentioned that needs some explanation of who he is. Michael</td>
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<td>Thelwell.</td>
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<td>1828</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: Michael Thelwell is a brilliant man who comes out of NAG at</td>
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<td>1829</td>
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<td>the student--</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: NAG was a Nonviolent Action Group.</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: Out of Howard University.</td>
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<td>He becomes involved with SNCC. I ask him. We raised some money and I</td>
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<td>said, &quot;Michael, here's the check. Go to Washington and set up an office</td>
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<td>for the NFDP. Well, what he does, he comes to Washington. He works with a</td>
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<td>couple of people. He is able to follow the legislation in the</td>
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<td>congress. He's able to deal with the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights</td>
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<td>and he's able to keep us informed on what he's doing. He writes a letter</td>
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<td>to Lyndon Johnson saying, &quot;We're astounded. All of the work that the</td>
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<td>1839</td>
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<td>Freedom Democratic Party did to get you elected in Mississippi and none</td>
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<td>of our people have been invited to the inaugural.&quot;</td>
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<td>Fannie Lou Hamer calls and she says,</td>
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<td>&quot;Mike, you know the man who's the postman?&quot; He said no. She said,</td>
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<td>&quot;Well, he brings me this big envelope from the White House.&quot;</td>
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<td>Then Mr. Turnbow calls. He said,</td>
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<td>&quot;Michael, I want to let you know I got an invitation to the White House and I want you to do something for me, Michael.&quot; Michael said, &quot;What do you want me to do, Mr. Turnbow?&quot; He said, &quot;I want you to find out what ball the Governor of Mississippi is going to because I want to dance with his wife.&quot;</td>
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<td>Hartman Turnbow, as you know, is a man who was accused of destroying his house, setting his house on fire. His wife and his daughter are in this house. He comes out shooting, and he kills a white man. The State of Mississippi said we can't have a situation. We're charging someone</td>
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who's defending his wife and his daughter from a burning house as he is. What they decided, Julian, was that this man died of a heart attack. I know that you may find this hard to believe. John Doar and others asked me if I'd be willing to go to the sheriff or Leflore County, get him to sign arrested -- bond to take to the sheriff of Holmes County and have Mr. Turnbow released to me.

In Holmes County, 80% of the black people own their land. What was so strange about this was the Department of Justice understood that the only way to handle this was to go along with the State of Mississippi in the position that there was no murder. It was a just a house burning. Of course, because the Department of Justice rigorously defends Mr. Turnbow, all charges are dropped on that. I did this myself.

I'll tell you what. There is no other recorded event where two
sheriffs in the South combine to release by bond that they signed civil rights workers anywhere in the South. It never happened again.

INTERVIEWER: One final name you mentioned a couple of times. Robert Moses.

MR. GUYOT: Robert Moses is a young man who came to Mississippi, a mathematician and a philosopher who was able to get the most out of people regardless of what they thought of themselves. Robert Moses was a person who was totally committed to social change, who was able to work with anyone. He was able to be both an intellectual and a total humanist. He was a man who believed that there was political potential in everyone and who behaved that way, and who got a lot of people associated with him to behave that way. He was a totally courageous person, totally committed, and a thinker that has few people on his
level. He was able to take problems and turn them into solutions. He was able to meld the difference between the rigidity of some of the SNCC folks with the free expression of total liberty to others.

He firmly believed that he was ahead of the game on one other tenant. He firmly believed that those who do the work should make the decisions. He firmly believed that whenever anyone was arrested in SNCC, you either go to get them out of jail or you go to jail with them.

He was a man who was beaten in McComb, and he files charges against the person who beat him. The sheriff heard and he held a trial. We know how the trial went Julian. Then they guide him out of town. It's just unheard of. You mean expect to be treated legally by a legal system that is designed not to treat people like you? He goes before a judge in McComb and the judge brags about how
good we treat our donkeys. Moses writes, "Racists are never more exposed than when they brag."

He was a man who was able to lay out the framework of what's was going to happen in Mississippi. We couldn't do anything in Mississippi without the approval of the people of Mississippi, and we got it. We got it because we made it clear to them that we were never going to say to them, "Look, you need to go register to vote. Here's where the courthouse is. Go on down there." We said to them, "We're going and want you to come with us."

We never said to them, "We're going to protect you." We never said, "Your name's going to be in the newspaper." We never said to them, "You'll become an enemy of the state once you register to vote." The complexity and the beauty of how Mississippi was organized was we got thousands of people to make that
I think it pivoted on two things. One, our style of operation. Two, the church. Three, the need for people to create a better way of life for their children. We didn't have to tell people in Mississippi everything is political because they understood that the Board of Supervisors determined whether or not there was a hospital, whether or not there were jobs, who was going to get paid. You could look at who was registered to vote on the street by the houses that were paid. You wanted tax exemptions. There was nothing that was nonpolitical in Mississippi, so we arrived at the early conclusion that the political avenue was a solution to a lot of our problems. In the '60s, there was no Republican Party in the South. Nowhere to be found. It wasn't until 1964 that the Democratic Party in Mississippi
creates the unpledged electoral system, which allows us to become the presidential electives for Lyndon Johnson. But it also allows the infusion of the Republican Party.

In 1964, the Republican Party in San Francisco kicks out black delegates. Kicks them out. The Democratic Party is supporting the passage of the '64 public accommodations act and of course later on the '65 voting rights act. In 1960 you have the Democratic Party being approached to intervene in Martin Luther King's arrest.

Louis Martin and others get the president to call Dr. King's wife, Coretta Scott King.

The first black baseball player, Jackie Robinson, goes to Nixon and says, "Look, you can do this. You should do this." He leaves crying because Nixon refuses to do it. We both know that that telephone call and the blue leaflet that was passed out to every black church in America
within six days is what made

President Kennedy. President Kennedy.

Without the black vote--

INTERVIEWER: [Interposing] I wish I
could lay my hands on a copy of that
leaflet. They call it the blue bomb.

MR. GUYOT: I'm sure we can get it
for you. The guy who can get it for
you is a guy named Harp Davis
[phonetic] at the University of
Southern Florida. I have a copy of
the trial transcript at Winona. I
have a copy of every deposition taken
by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic
Party, and I got it all from him.

INTERVIEWER: When all is said and
done, what would you like the world
to know about you and the work you
did in the freedom movement.

MR. GUYOT: What I'd like the world
to know is that I was man who carried
out his religious beliefs by his
political activity. I never stepped
away from a fight. I never asked any
quarter. I never gave any.
recognize the value of reading and of books. I want to be remembered as someone who is committed to perpetuation of the mantra of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.
The only thing that the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee can be compared with is the Anti-Saloon League. The Anti-Saloon League was very effective, though short lived. The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee changed the very concept of democracy, changed the concept of citizenship, and opened to everyone the vehicle of empowerment. Empowerment is something that's contagious. Once an individual makes something happen that they made happen, they're a different person. They don't wait for the next day. They say, "What do I need to do today?" Those are the kinds of people we need to have a good America.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line#</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2076</td>
<td>01:21:47</td>
<td>INTERVIEWER: Is there something we should've asked you that I didn't ask?</td>
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<td>2079</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: I can't think of anything, except that we have an obligation to transfer our skills and our knowledge to other people.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2084</td>
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<td>INTERVIEWER: Are we doing it as much as we should.</td>
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<td>2086</td>
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<td>MR. GUYOT: No, but let us hope that we will understand the gravity of our situation, and in the next two years we will spread by geometric progression those who are actively organizing. We don’t need people to support us and agree with us and not register their families to vote, not register their churches to vote, not register their clubs to vote, and not really make organizing a social necessity.</td>
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| 2098  | 01:22:43  | We should declare those who are not organized and following empowerment and from the political change in the
next two years as social pariahs.

They no longer function on our behalf. Isn't it amazing how we as a race have moved from the concept of "us" to "me"? We're the last group that can afford that. Now we're faced with an opposition that is so menacing to everything we value, that now we must fight or everything we've fought for will be beyond retrieving.

INTERVIEWER: On that happy note, let's thank you for doing this. We greatly appreciate it.

MR. GUYOT: I really appreciate it.

Thank you very much.

INTERVIEWER: It's our pleasure.

MALE VOICE: Thank you both.