

PROJECT INTERVIEW SUBJECTS

Arlam Carr:

When he was in the 8th grade, Arlam Carr was the nominal plaintiff in the landmark case of Carr v. Montgomery County Board of Education. Moving beyond the threshold issues that defined Cooper v. Aaron, the Carr case directly confronted the “all deliberate speed” language of the Supreme Court’s second decision in Brown v. Board of Education. The Carr case would become a seminal case in federal jurisprudence, and remains a study in the role of federal judges who experienced the reality of enforcing Brown’s holding that southern school districts had an *affirmative duty* to establish and implement plans for the desegregation of public schools. In June of 2011, we had the opportunity to sit with Arlam Carr, then a member of the news department staff at WSFA Television in Montgomery. We visited about his parents’ decision to file the case, Judge Johnson’s orders, and the meaning of the case for himself, his peers, and the effort to end state-enforced or *de facto* racial segregation in Alabama’s public schools.

Janice Kelsey:

At age sixteen, Janice Kelsey was introduced to her first “mass meeting” in the Birmingham Movement in 1963, and she remembers personally being in the audience and hearing Martin Luther King, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and Rev. James Bevel. In this interview, she tells the story of the participation of secondary school students in the peaceful mass protests against school segregation. The “children’s crusade” became a defining aspect of the success of the direct action campaign in Birmingham. Janice Kelsey went on to a 33-year career in education, as a middle school and high school science teacher in the Birmingham School System, and as Principal of two elementary schools, and her interview is a first person account of the impact of segregation in public schools, and the legacy of that experience.

Solomon Seay, Jr.:

Solomon “Sol” Seay, Jr. is an Alabama native who graduated from Howard Law School and dedicated his life to the practice of civil rights law, beginning in 1957 in Montgomery. His father, Solomon Seay, Sr. was a legendary minister and mentor to Dr. King, and his guidance influenced Sol Seay’s passion to use the law to seek true justice in a Jim Crow south. His cases include Lee v. Macon County Board of Education and Carr v. Montgomery County Board of Education (1968) and dozens of other cases that illustrate the seminal legal history shaped by the few

local black attorneys who were at center stage in the efforts to overturn the legacy of racial discrimination. Solomon Seay, Jr. stands beside Thurgood Marshall, Constance Baker Motley, Jack Greenberg, Spottswood Robinson, Arthur Kinoy, Arthur Shores, Z. Alexander Looby, Clifford Durr and Fred Gray as one of America's quintessential civil rights lawyers. His book, "Jim Crow and Me" (written with Delores Boyd) is, as the great John Hope Franklin says, a book written about a lawyer who had "a special prism" through which to view the momentous events of the Civil Rights Movement – and who fought Jim Crow wherever he found it.

Martin Firestone:

Martin Firestone was a central figure in Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ v. The Federal Communications Commission, a case that is the subject of Kay Mills' book, *"Changing Channels: The Civil Rights Case That Transformed Television."* Martin Firestone's legal career included service as a member of the FCC's legal staff – and that experience gave him a unique perspective as he later assumed the legal representation of Civic Communications Corporation, a group which not only opposed the renewal of the FCC license held by WLBT television in Jackson, Mississippi, but challenged WLBT for the license. The case would become the most important test of the "Fairness Doctrine" and the right of citizens to participate in the process that required television stations licensed by the FCC to honestly represent the public interest – during the campaign for civil rights in the 1960's.

Ernest "Rip" Patton:

Rip Patton was a student at Tennessee State University when he joined The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1960, participating in the Lawson Nonviolence Workshops, the Nashville sit-ins and other protests of segregation in Nashville. He joined the Freedom Rides in 1961 and was in the first group to make it to Jackson, Mississippi, where he was arrested for entering a "white only" Greyhound Bus Station waiting room. His group also included John Lewis, Hank Thomas, and James Farmer. The group was ultimately sent to Parchman Penitentiary. He knew Dr. King, Fred Shuttlesworth and C.T. Vivian and recalls the full range of stories that defined the Civil Rights Movement. In this interview, Mr. Patton tells, in his own words, the typical story of Movement veterans, including childhood memories of racial segregation, the decision to join the Civil Rights Movement, and the personal encounter with southern resistance and southern state laws that resisted Brown's mandate under the "guise" of a pre-civil war interpretation of state's rights.

David Meyers and Winonah Beamer Meyers:

David and Winonah Beamer Meyers tell the unique story of two white college students who came to the Movement because of a nontraditional higher education experience, deeply shared views of the personal responsibility to support the struggle for racial equality, and the belief that every citizen should demand that government live up to the principles of equality embodied in the Constitution. In this interview, they recall the experiences and lessons of the Civil Rights Movement through a unique lens, which challenges traditional assumptions and perspectives about race, and explain why we should see social justice as based in classic philosophy. Their story is unique in its message of the connection between a liberal arts higher education, a unique racial experience, and the perceived *necessity* to personally challenge injustice when federal constitutional rights are ignored or violated by a state judicial culture that is complicit in mob violence based on racial hatred.

John Seigenthaler:

A former president of the American Society of Newspaper Editors, John Seigenthaler served for 43 years as an award-winning journalist for *The Tennessean*, Nashville's morning newspaper. John Seigenthaler left journalism briefly in the early 1960's to serve for 2 years in the United States Justice Department as assistant to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy. He served as chief negotiator on behalf of Attorney General Kennedy with Governor John Patterson of Alabama during the Freedom Rides. While attempting to aid Freedom Riders who were being attacked by white mobs at the Montgomery Greyhound bus station, he was himself attacked by the mob and hospitalized with serious injuries.

Mr. Seigenthaler served on the 18-member National Commission on Federal Election Reform organized in 2001 by former Presidents Carter and Ford. He was a member of the Constitution Project on Liberty and Security, created after the September 11 tragedies in New York and Washington. In 2002, the trustees of Vanderbilt University created the John Seigenthaler Center, which houses the offices of the Freedom Forum, the First Amendment Center and the Diversity Institute. The interview with Mr. Seigenthaler explores his early involvement with the Movement as a journalist, and his experience with southern politics and popular southern resistance to racial equality, from the perspective of the Kennedy White House and Justice Department.

C.T. Vivian:

Reverend C. T. Vivian is one of the principal figures of the Civil Rights Movement, known not simply for his leadership, but for his pioneering sit-in efforts, and his courage during the 1961 freedom rides and 1965 voting rights efforts in Selma, Alabama. Before his work with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and his seminal role in SCLC, Reverend Vivian had participated with James Farmer in CORE's direct action campaigns against segregation in Chicago and Peoria, Illinois, almost a decade before the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. Featured in the PBS account of the Movement in *Eyes on the Prize*, C.T. Vivian's tireless presence on the front lines of the direct action campaigns against segregation spanned three decades.

In this brief but powerful interview, he explains the connection between law and direct action efforts to overcome racial inequality, the experiences with cultural racism in the northern civil rights campaign, and with Jim Crow laws in the more popularly studied southern civil rights movement. His commentary is especially important to the current discourse about Constitutional theory, and provides a unique opportunity to emphasize the moral premise of the Fourteenth Amendment and thus the continuing importance of the role of law in advancing the principle of equality identified with Brown v. Board, and what we mean by social justice.

Armand Derfner:

Armand Derfner was born in 1938 in Paris, France. He earned his undergraduate degree from Princeton University in 1960, and was a recipient of a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. He then earned his LL.B. degree from Yale Law School, where he was an editor of the Yale Law Journal, and a member of Order of the Coif. Mr. Derfner served the Lawyers Constitutional Defense Committee, in its work in Jackson, Mississippi in 1968-1970, and the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, in Washington, DC from 1971 – 1974. He has also served the Joint Center for Political Studies in Washington, and as a visiting Professor of Law at American University. Mr. Derfner's writings include: "Racial Discrimination and the Right to Vote," published in 1974 in the *Vanderbilt Law Review*; and "Development of the Franchise: 1957-1980, VOTING RIGHTS IN AMERICA" published in 1992.

Mr. Derfner repeatedly testified before committees of the United States Senate and House of Representative between 1967 and 2009, and was directly involved in the 1982 Amendments to the Voting Rights Act. In the courtroom, Mr. Derfner was in the front lines of the legal history of voting rights, as a part of the legendary legal teams that included Jack

Greenberg, Joseph Rauh, Jr., Nicholas Katzenbach, John Doar and others who were the seminal legal advocates for voting rights – dealing with the integrity of the voting process and redistricting. He argued, or was a member of the legal teams that briefed and/or argued most of the seminal cases interpreting and applying the critical sections of the Voting Rights Act, including Allen v. State Board of Elections; Perkins v. Matthews; City of Petersburg, Virginia v. United States; City of Richmond v. United States; Blanding v. DuBose; McCain v. Lybrand; and NAACP v. Hampton County Elections Commission, before the federal three judge courts and the United States Supreme Court.

He is a leading advocate for the direct connection between The First Amendment and the right to vote, and explains the relationship between U.S. v. Louisiana and Williams v. Wallace, in securing The Voting Rights Act – as well as the period of the weakening of the right to vote in both U.S. Supreme Court jurisprudence and state level redistricting and annexation.