

A Progress Report of a Five-Year Personal Project to  
Revisit the Civil Rights Movement:  
A Brief Essay Commemorating the Fiftieth Anniversary  
of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the Fortieth Anniversary  
of the Civil Rights Act

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This year (2004) is the fiftieth anniversary of the historic *Brown v. Board of Education*, in which the U.S. Federal Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the “racial segregation” in the public schools in the U.S. is unconstitutional. As the director of the Center for American Studies of Nanzan University, the author proposed that the center should hold some commemorative events for this historic decision. On 17<sup>th</sup> of May of 2004, the very day the Supreme Court ruled on *Brown* fifty years ago, we invited Dr. Gary G. Oba, the Principal Officer of the U.S. Consulate in Nagoya, to deliver the kickoff lecture for the audience mainly consisting of Nanzan’s freshmen. This is the second in the series of the *Brown* commemorative lectures.<sup>1</sup>

As in Japan, a civil case in the U.S., especially Civil Rights cases, never finishes with a single court order. The court has to continue to commit itself to a case until it has believed that the remedies it has ordered have fulfilled the purpose of retrieving the plaintiffs’ lost rights and interests. The *Brown* case never finished with one single decision delivered in the Supreme Court on May 17, 1954. According to *The New York Times*, it took the Board of Education in Topeka, Kansas, one of the original four defendants, as long as four decades to be finally released from the strict control by the federal district court. The same article also reports that the recent problem is not so much the ratio of “race” in each of the schools, in which the majority of the students are already non-whites as in the case with any of other inner-city school districts, as the quality of education per se. The headline of the article points out “After Brown, the Issue

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is based on the paper read by the author originally in Japanese at the annual conference of the GARIOA-Fulbright Alumni Association in the Chubu area, Japan, on June 11, 2004, at Nanzan University. The on-the-spot researches by the author were made possible by the Nanzan University Pache Research Subsidy I-A in 1999-2002 and Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research Basic C-2 by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology in 1998-2002.

Is Often Money,” which implies that “integration” has become almost impossible and that a call for more financial resource to improve the quality of ghetto schools has trumped the plan for a more equalized racial ratio in each school of the urban school districts.<sup>2</sup>

Let us start today’s main theme, with a slide show of the author’s research tour to the Civil Rights places in the U.S. Photo 1 was taken when the author paid a visit to the Center for Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project, Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, in the summer of 2002. So far they have published four volumes of the series which will run to some ten to twenty volumes in total. Through the courtesy of Professor Clayborne Carson, the project leader and also a former SNCC (the Students Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) activist, by exception, the author was allowed to take a look at some of the original historical materials still in the process of editing. It was really a very rare and precious opportunity because recently researchers in the field of the Civil Rights history have had difficulty accessing the King papers stored at the King Center in Atlanta, Georgia. The author also talked with Prof. Carson, who is the author of a highly evaluated book on the Civil Rights, entitled *In Struggle*, one of the author’s bibles.<sup>3</sup> The editing project is in progress in a relatively small facility named “Cypress Hall.” Photo 1 was taken with many of the staff at the center, most of whom are history majoring student-interns from all over the country. According to Prof. Carson, some student-interns discovered the sensational “incident of plagiarism,” that is, that Dr. Martin Luther King plagiarized in writing his Ph.D. dissertation for Boston University.

Let us move on to Little Rock, Arkansas. The author paid a visit there in August, 2002. In September 1957, a mob mainly consisting of the parents of



King Papers Project



Cypress Hall at Stanford Univ.

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<sup>2</sup> Greg Winter, “50 Years After Brown, the Issue Is Often Money,” *The New York Times*, May 17, 2004, A1-A19.

<sup>3</sup> Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981).



Jerry Dhonau



Minnijean Brown Trickey



WEC's Members' List



Central High Museum

white students resisted the entrance of only nine African American students to Central High School that had more than 2,000 white students. President Dwight Eisenhower dispatched the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne, the same troops joining the early stage of the Iraq War in the spring of 2003, to restore public order and implement the federal court decision. Of course, the paratroopers did not parachute down, but were sent by an overland route at night. However so, the picture showing the federal soldiers with bayonets on their guns repressing the white mob was really shocking not only to the people in the U.S. but also the citizens all over the world in the dawn of the new age of TV. As a rather unknown fact, in September the next year, Governor Orval Faubus was successful in persuading the legislature to establish a state act to close “integrated schools” with the consent by referendum of the citizens in the school districts. The majority of the eligible voters of Little Rock supported the closing of the all the four high schools in the city. This measure caused a group of the concerned white women, mainly young mothers, to form the Women’s Emergency Committee to Reopen Our Schools (WEC). The author was fortunate enough to get in touch with Mrs. Patricia L. Youngdahl, currently Associate Professor of the Medical School, the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, at the tearoom of Hilton Little Rock. According to Mrs. Yougdhal, one of the former executive members of the WEC, the WEC membership,

the number of which was over 1,000, had been kept secret until the fortieth anniversary of the Little Rock Crisis when all the members' names were published on the window glasses at the Arkansas Decorative Museum.<sup>4</sup> The WEC finally succeeded in reopening the public schools in 1959 with the help of an federal court order.

With the help of Ms. Kinko Ito, a professor of sociology at the University of Arkansas, Little Rock, and a graduate of Nanzan University, the author was also able to contact with Mr. Jerry Dhonau, a former reporter for *The Arkansas Gazette*, who was in the Governor's Mansion at the very moment when Governor Faubus mobilized the Arkansas Security Guardsmen on the night of September 2, 1957 to prevent the nine African American students from entering the school house of Central High the following morning. His answer to the author's final question about who had been the most responsible person for the turmoil was Governor Faubus. To our great regret, the person he added was Senator James William Fulbright. The Senator spent all the critical period of September, 1957, in London. According to Mr. Dhonau, the worst situation could have been avoided if the Senator had confronted domestic problems as bravely as he had the international affairs.<sup>5</sup>

As for the "Little Rock Nine," the author was lucky enough to interview with both of the two currently living in Little Rock. The first one was Minnijean Brown, who was expelled from Central High after pouring chili soup over the two white boys who were harassing her. The author had been very interested in her story of the aftermath. Fortunately, the author happened to meet her young and charming daughter, Spirit Trickey, who was working as a national park ranger at the Central High School Museum and was kind enough to introduce me to her mother. After the incident, Minnijean went to New York City and graduated from



Elizabeth Eckford



Ron Hughes

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<sup>4</sup> Interview of Patricia L. Youngdahl by the author, Little Rock, August 22, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Interview of Jerry Donau by the author, at the Archives of Ottenheimer Library, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Little Rock, Arkansas, August 21, 2002.

a private high school through the assistance of Dr. Kenneth Clark. Then she went on to a university in Ohio and got married. But she and her husband, both were active members of the SNCC, sought refuge in Canada when a draft call came to Mr. Trickey. She finally came back to Little Rock when President Bill Clinton appointed her as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Workforce Diversity in the Department of Interior in 1999.<sup>6</sup>

The other interviewee of the “Little Rock Nine” was Elizabeth Eckford, the very black young girl surrounded by the angry white mob on September 4, 1957. She burst into tears when her story reached the very scene of that abominable moment, indicating the fact that the trauma still couldn’t be healed. After the closing of Central High, she made every effort to get a B.A. at Central State University in Wilberforce, Ohio, in 1972. Currently Mrs. Eckford is working as a rotational officer in the County Court house.<sup>7</sup>

One question remained unresolved in the author’s mind, that is, why the white citizens became so protective against as few as nine African American students’ entering Central High. One of the main causes the author found is the fact that only Central High was designated as the “battle ground,” while the newly built Hall High in the white middle-class district of the western part of the city was exempted. On top of that, the westward residential movement of the African American citizens became so remarkable that every white resident around Central High area got excessively sensitive by the time of the crisis, according to Mr. Ron Hughes, a former Central High student and white resident near the school. His father was finally determined in the wake of “blockbusting” to sell their home and move to the western part of the city with a great amount of financial burden.<sup>8</sup>

The author noticed in the process of interviewing the fact that there was another historically forgotten “victim” of the Central High Crisis, that is, Paul Lawrence Dunbar High School, one of the most prestigious African American senior high schools in the U.S., which was downgraded to a junior high school. In other words, the African Americans’ symbolic institution in Little Rock was de facto forced to close in 1955, just before the “integration” began. If you pay a visit to the alumni room, which is still preserved in currently Dunbar Magnet Middle School featuring multi-cultural education, you will be able to feel the atmosphere of the once prestigious African American institution beyond the time difference of half a century.<sup>9</sup>

As a matter of fact, beyond the impact of federal army and the conscientious

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<sup>6</sup> Interview of Minnijean Brown by the author, at her home in Little Rock, August 24, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> Interview of Elizabeth Eckford by the author, at her office, 401 W. Markham, Room 420, Pulaski County Court, Little Rock, Arkansas, 72201, 23 August 2002.

<sup>8</sup> Interview of Ron Hughes by the author, at his home in Little Rock, August 23, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> For more information of Dunbar High, see Faustine Childress Jones, *A Traditional Model of Educational Excellence: Dunbar High School of Little Rock, Arkansas* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981).

white citizens as well as the efforts by the African American students and parents, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 dramatically changed the racial character of the public schools in Little Rock. Until the school year of 1963-64, the number of the black students who went to formerly white-only schools was around ten. In the year of 1964-65 the number increased drastically to 213, and 1,511 in 1966-67.<sup>10</sup>

Let us move our focus to the Civil Rights Movement as a series of local struggles. The author paid a short visit to Albany, Georgia, where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led his first massive direct action, ending in a so-called “failure” after very severe confrontation with the mass arrests of more than 1,100 African American citizens in 1961 and 1962. The author’s assumption was that after the retreat of Dr. King and his SCLC (the Southern Christian Leadership Conference), the struggle has never ended at least in the minds of the local people. The author drove a Mazda from Atlanta for three hours through ex-President Carter’s farm to a small semi-urban town surrounded by peanut fields. The author’s assumption proved to be true. Rev. Charles Sherrod, a former SNCC activist, still living in Albany, had been elected as a city counselor and working in this position for 20 years since 1976. You could feel the same atmosphere as in the 1960s if you go and join a concert of the “SNCC Freedom Singers” to be held in the Old Mount Zion Baptist Church, currently the Albany Civil Rights Museum, on the second Saturdays of every month. Of course the final performance of the concert is singing together “We Shall Overcome” with the audience and the singers hand in hand.

One of the interviewees, Mrs. Willie Mae Thomas, then 70 years old and living just next-door to the Old Mount Zion Baptist Church, was arrested five times.



Willie Mae Thomas



“We Shall Overcome”

<sup>10</sup> A Statistical Summary, State-by-State, of Segregation-Desegregation Activity Affecting Southern Schools from 1954 to Present, Together With Pertinent Data on Enrollment, Teacher Pay, Etc., in William T. Shelton Desegregation Materials, Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Central Arkansas Library System, Little Rock, Ark., Series 1, Box 1, File 5.

<sup>11</sup> Interview of Willie Mae Thomas by the author, at her home next to the Old Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Albany, Ga., August 7, 2001; interview of Geneva Collier by the author, at her home in Albany, Georgia, August 9, 2001.

But most of the families like that of Mrs. Geneva Collier seriously discussed who of the family members was to be the designated candidate for mass arrests. Often housewives like Mrs. Collier were “chosen.”<sup>11</sup>

The author also got in touch with Mr. C. B. King, Jr., an African American lawyer succeeding his father. C. B., Jr. is the counselor for the plaintiffs of the long time lawsuit requesting the “integration” of the schools. Now the chief of the defendants, the superintendent of the schools of Dougherty County, also an African American, worries about the residential segregation beyond the city and the county borders, the same situation as the metropolitan areas in the North.<sup>12</sup>

Let us move on to Birmingham, Alabama, the place Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led one of the most successful local struggles in the spring of 1963, which caused President John F. Kennedy to propose the most comprehensive Civil Rights Act. The author would like to focus on Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, the behind-the-scene leader of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, who alone had been confronted with the segregation in the South for seven years before Dr. King came there in 1963. Just after the end of the Birmingham campaign, Rev. Shuttlesworth accepted an offer from a church in Cincinnati, Ohio, and still now is the pastor of the Greater New Light Baptist Church. When the author interviewed him, he was 82 and still very active. By joining a Sunday morning service before the interviewing, the author realized the atmosphere of the '60s.<sup>13</sup>

As for the Birmingham Campaign, the author happened to find a so far unknown fact that there were two versions of an “agreement.” The significance doesn’t lie in the question which is the true one, but in the fact that an agreement of any kind was reached by local efforts. The JFK administration couldn’t have intervened in the riot caused by the KKK’s bombing without the “agreement” just



Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth



Statue of Confrontation

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<sup>12</sup> Interview of C. B. King, Jr. by the author, at his office in Albany Georgia, August 9, 2001; Lee W. Formwalt, “Southwest Georgia: A Garden of Irony and Diversity”, in *The New Georgia Guide* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), 517.

<sup>13</sup> Interview of Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth by the author, at the Greater New Light Baptist Church, Cincinnati, Ohio, 18 August 2002.



David Vann



“We Dare Defend Our Rights”

reached the previous day. That is the only one example so far in the history of the U.S. for the federal government to intervene the local government to restore the law and order. JFK’s actual purpose was to maintain the “agreement structure” established mainly by the local people. After taking into consideration all the costs, the most idealistic and youngest president so far finally made up his mind to introduce the most comprehensive Civil Rights Act to the Congress, the passage of which cost him his life.<sup>14</sup>

When visiting Birmingham in the summer of 1999, the author paid a short visit to the Kelly Ingram Park, where several statues were placed, including the ones showing school children harassed by police dogs. Those who dared to join the marches changed dramatically the situation after their mass arrests by the thousands. After their arrests, they were all expelled from the schools. However, the expel orders from the schoolmasters were withdrawn by an order from the federal court of appeals.

As one enters the State of Alabama on Interstate 20 westward from Atlanta, there is a stone monument in the information center, saying “Alabama: We Dare (to) Defend Our Rights.” The words of the monument may invoke the old notorious “state rights” arguments. The author would like to pray that the “We” in the inscription includes every human being. On the same highway, however, near Anniston, where once a long distance bus full of “Freedom Riders” was set on fire on Mother’s Day in 1961, there was also the sign “Welcome Honda to Alabama” written in Japanese.

During his stay in Birmingham, the author interviewed some local people, including the late David Vann, ex-Mayor of Birmingham. According to Mr.

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<sup>14</sup> For more detailed arguments, see the author’s article in Japanese, 「バーミングハム闘争再訪——複数の合意文書からその歴史的意義を考察する試み (The Birmingham Campaign of 1963 Revisited: In Search of its Historical Significance by Examining the Two Agreements)」『アカデミア (人文・社会編) (Academia: Humanities and Social Sciences)』第 79 号 (南山大学, 2004 年 6 月), 195-320 頁。

Vann, he felt the inevitable change of the stream, beginning with the end of World War II, when he himself as the law clerk of Alabama-born Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black with his own eyes and ears saw and listened to what the chief Justice Earl Warren argued the historic *Brown* decision on the very day of 17<sup>th</sup> May, 1954. Then he was one of the main staff members of the JFK campaign in the 1960 election. He sat in company with Dr. King in every negotiation during SCLC's Birmingham campaign in the spring of 1963. After the settlement of the confrontations he made every effort to fulfill the agreement. Finally in the mid 1970s, he became the last white mayor.<sup>15</sup> Despite of his dedicated efforts, on the morning of Sunday September 15, 1963, the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church, once the main base of the marchers, was severely bombed and four African American girls were killed. The surviving suspects finally got guilty verdicts and lifelong sentences in the state court system in 2001 and 2002.

The next city is Chicago. With the passage of the two federal laws, that is, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the principle of "equality under the laws" was finally established just a century after the end of the Civil War. But this was just the beginning of the confrontation with the non-legal, de facto segregation in the North by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who moved to an apartment, 1550 South Hamlin Avenue in North Lawndale on the West Side, Chicago, in February 1966. The author made on-the-spot researches three times in both of the two African American districts, the South and the West Sides.

One of the unforgettable interviewees was Mr. Richard Barnett, a resident for over half a century of North Lawndale, the notorious "crime-infected" district. According to himself, Mr. Barnett was a "foot soldier" of the Chicago Freedom Movement (CFM) in 1966. He participated in every demonstration, including the ones invoking very violent responses by the white residents in early August near Marquette Park in the Southwest Side. On August 5, a brick thrown by the mob hit just below the right ear of Dr. King. Dr. King was cited as saying he had never met with such hatred even in Mississippi or Alabama. Looking as the nuns were harassed violently, too, Mr. Barnett could not help feeling the limit of the nonviolent movement.<sup>16</sup>

Take a look at the photo showing Mr. Richard Barnett standing in his beautiful garden. With his personal efforts, his neighboring community has attained stability to a considerable degree. According to Mr. Barnett, even a news reporter of the local African American newspaper wrote an article of the elementary school near there without paying a visit there, probably for fear of being implicated in a crime. Kindly he escorted the author to 1550 South Hamlin Avenue, where once

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<sup>15</sup> Interview with David Vann by the author, at the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, August 18, 1999.

<sup>16</sup> Gene Roberts, "ROCK HITS DR. KING AS WHITES ATTACK MARCH IN CHICAGO," *The New York Times*, Thursday, 6 August 1966, 1, 52; interview of Richard Barnett by the author, at his home in North Lawndale, the West Side, Chicago, September 2, 2001.



Richard Barnett



1550 S. Hamlin Av.



Timuel Black



Middle-class Houses in Chatham

the apartment of Dr. King was. On the way there, Mr. Barnett and the author met several young people, all of whom showed Mr. Barnett and the author good manners and greeted with cordial words. One of the reasons for this may be that Mr. Barnett had worked as the delegate of the neighborhood for the nearby William Penn Elementary School Council for eleven years. As the other photo shows, there is nothing except for some weeds on the bare concrete in the place of Dr. King's old apartment.

Mr. Timuel Black of Hyde Park on the South Side, a long time African American labor union activist, hinted to me the "differences" between the two African American districts, that is, the South Side and the West Side. Historically speaking, there were two waves of the "Great Migration," the one began with the 20<sup>th</sup> century and reached the peak around World War I, when the "pull" power of the labor demands became stronger as the war hindered the influx of the immigrants from Europe. In total about 1.8 million African Americans migrated from the South to the North. Most of them lived in the Near South Side and the Near West Side, which began to be called the "Black Belt" of Chicago. As the number of African American residents increased, the "Black Belt" expanded westward and the southward. But the second Great Migration, during which some 5 million Southern blacks left their home in three decades beginning with



(Left) The closed door of the Olivett Baptist Church

(Above) U.S. Sen. Barack Obama

the outbreak of World War II, gave much more dramatic and decisive effects to the City of Chicago. The “push” power caused by the mechanization of cotton picking jobs in the plantations of the rural South was stronger than the “pull” power of the gradually deindustrialized urban North. The second and the third generations of the first Great Migration now became somewhat well-off and could afford to move to the southern part of the South Side, which was becoming more and more a black district. The photos show Mr. Timusel Black of Hyde Park and the currently middle-class district in Chatham of the South Side.<sup>17</sup>

Dr. King’s CFM stimulated not only the improvement of the ghettos but also the governmental support of the black outward mobility to the suburbs. With a decision by the federal Supreme Court in 1976, in two decades until 1998, more than 7,000 inner-city families got a chance to escape from the ghettos to more affluent suburban communities on the “Gautreaux Program” named after the late plaintiff. The author got in touch with the organization responsible for the implementation of the court order, that is, the Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC), established in November 1966, one of the products of the “Summit Agreement” between the CFM and Mayor Richard Daley with the other establishments of Chicago’s power structure.<sup>18</sup>

By the way, not all the established leading African Americans in Chicago, especially in the older South Side, welcomed the coming of Dr. King. As the photo show, the door of Rev. Joseph Jackson’s Olivett Baptist Church facing

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<sup>17</sup> Interview of Timusel Black by the author, at his home in Hyde Park, the South Side, Chicago, August 27, 2001.



Tougaloo College



Prof. Charles Bolton

Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive has been kept closed since Dr. King's coming to Chicago, to the author's great surprise.

The next interviewee the author has to mention is Mr. Barack Obama, an "African American" politician, born and raised in Hawaii, currently U.S. Senator, then State Senator, the very person *The New York Times* calls the "future President" of the U.S. The author was introduced to him by Professor William Julius Wilson of Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. What struck the author the most was his answer to the question: why the notion of "social rights" is so weak in the U.S. He indicated that the necessity and effectiveness for every social movement to pursue their goals of establishing social rights not in the court house but in the Congress, finding the ways to adjust to "Americanism," universal value system based on the strong belief in individualism, self-help, and the consent with the governed in general. Another fact he revealed that interested the author very much is that the "Black Power" politicians are the most difficult to negotiate with.<sup>19</sup>

Among other interviewees, Rev. Willie Barrow, vice-president of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition pointed out the current problem with the more diversity, for instance, recent frictions between the Korean store owners in the South Side and the local residents, the type of frictions, which unfortunately caused a fatal turmoil in Los Angeles in the spring of 1992. At any rate, the Chicago's South Side with its firm Civil Rights legacy has successfully avoided this kind of deathblow so far.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Interview of Mary A. Davis, Senior Vice President, and John Lukerhart, Vice President, Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities (LCMOC), at the head quarters of the LCMOC, 12<sup>th</sup> F., 111 W. Jackson Blvd., Chicago, September 6, 2001. As for the history of the Gaureaux Program, see Leonard S. Rubinowitz and James E. Rosenbaum, *Crossing the Class and Color Lines: From Public Housing to White Suburbia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

<sup>19</sup> Interview of Barack Obama by the author at his lawfirm office in downtown Chicago, August 30, 2002.

Lastly the author would like to talk about Mississippi, the only place in which the local movements were spread state-wide in the 1960s. The author visited there to do on-the-spot research in 2000 and 2001. The photos show Tougaloo College, a former African-American-only missionary college established just after the Civil War, and Professor Charles Bolton of the University of Southern Mississippi located in Hattiesburg. The author heavily depended on Tougaloo for collecting historical materials as well as on the Oral History Project of the University of Southern Mississippi for information on accessing suitable interviewees. The author is especially indebted to Chuck Bolton for the contacts with the movement people.

The next photo shows the former Governor William F. Winter, the first “liberal” governor Mississippi had ever elected, whose efforts made the two separated Mississippi Democratic parties integrated into one single party and supported the Carter Administration in the latter part of the 1970s. The author is indebted to the late Professor Charles Wordell for the website to look up the governor’s private phone numbers. The author made a phone call from Japan to the governor and he kindly made an appointment. The most impressive thing was his answer to the question, whether the nature of the Mississippi Freedom Movement in the early 1960s was an indigenously and voluntarily developed movement, or the movement was much influenced by the “outside agitators.” His answer was: “It was a very indigenous movement, although it is true that there were outsiders. If it had not been for local support, the movement would not have been so successful like this. That is why I think so. The local people’s frustration had accumulated so much by then.”<sup>21</sup>

The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) is said to have



Gov. William F. Winter



Holmes C. MFDP and Walter Bruce

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<sup>20</sup> Interview of Rev. Willie Barrow, vice-president of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, at the meeting room of the headquarters of the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition, 940 E. 50th St., Chicago, August 28, 2002.

<sup>21</sup> Interview of William F. Winter, former Governor of Mississippi from 1980-84, by the author at his law firm, Jackson, Mississippi, August 15, 200.



Bob Moses in the “Algebra Project”



Hollis Watkins of the “Southern Echo”

disappeared by the fall of 1968, just after the Democratic Convention in Chicago. But the Holmes County Freedom Democratic Party still exists and the photo shows Mr. Walter Bruce, the long time chair since 1970. The photo was taken by the author when he paid a visit to the trailer house headquarters located in a suburban part of Lexington, Mississippi.<sup>22</sup>

Former Mississippi-born COFO (the Council of Federated Organizations)-SNCC activists are now living in various places within and outside the state and are still engaged in a lot of activities. The author visited some of them including Rev. Edwin King, a white MFDP member, and Mrs. L. C. Dorsey, both of whom are now teaching at the Medical School of the University of Mississippi, Mr. McArthur Cotton, a former field secretary of the SNCC, who is now engaged in a construction work in Attala County, Mr. Lawrence Guyot, the de facto last chair of the MFDP, who is now a Civil Rights lawyer in Washington, D.C., and Mrs. Victoria Gray-Adams, the former executive secretary of the MFDP, who are now living in Petersburg, Virginia. Visiting from one interviewee to another was a precious opportunity for the author to feel the still strong mental bonds of the former activists. The author was often asked to play the role of messenger to say one’s hello to others or “Howdy? I am fine.”<sup>23</sup>

Among others, let us focus on two activists. The one is Mr. Robert P. Moses, the legendary figure of the Mississippi Freedom Summer. Professor Curtis Austin, an African American friend of the author at the University of Southern Mississippi, one day sent an e-mail informing the author of the fact that Bob Moses was teaching at a special extra-curriculum algebra class at a high school

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<sup>22</sup> Interview of Walter Bruce, Chair of the Holmes County Freedom Democratic Party, by the author, Lexington, Mississippi, August 25, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Interview of Edwin King by the author, Jackson, August 21, 2000; interview of L. C. Dorsey by the author, Jackson, August 23, 2001; interview of McArthur Cotton by the author, Kosciusko, Attala Co., Miss., August 16, 2000; interview of Lawrence Guyot by the author, Washington, D.C., August 26, 2000; interview of Victoria-Gray Adams by the author, Petersburg, Virginia, August 26, 2000.

in Jackson. The author paid a surprise visit to Bob Moses at Lanier Senior High School. The thing that shocked the author was the existence of a metal detector and a policeman and a policewoman each sitting with a hand metal detector in their hands just inside the main entrance. Bob Moses was in exile first in Canada for one or two years and then for nine years in Tanzania just after his application for a conscientious objecter was suddenly rejected. He returned to the U.S. in 1977 when the Carter administration issued amnesty. He has been engaged in the Algebra Project, an NPO, receiving annual donations and subsidies as much as \$2 million. He insists in the “radical equation” of mathematics for the ghetto youth in the age of information technology with voting rights for sharecroppers in the early 1960s. It is true that the means is different but the purpose and passion of Bob Moses are the same. The author visited Bob at Lanier High twice. After talking to him and taking a look at him teaching the youngsters, the author became convinced of the reasons numerous activists and volunteers followed him beyond the fear of their lives. The author came to believe in the importance of the charisma Bob himself has hated.<sup>24</sup>

Mr. Hollis Watkins, a former field secretary of COFO-SNCC, is now engaged in an NPO named “Southern Echo” after he had been keeping some distance from social movements. The Southern Echo is assisting the local community to empower themselves.<sup>25</sup> There seems to be something common between Hollis and Bob, that is, the endeavor to bring their social activities to terms with Americanism. In any event the networking of the former activists has been recovering and renewing.

The time has come for the author to make a consolidation. After a brief general view of the local struggles, the first thing the audience have noticed may be something like a “Northernization” of the South, in other words, homogenization of the U.S. societies. As in Albany, Georgia and elsewhere in the more and more urbanized South, Hattiesburg has been experiencing the de facto residential segregation in a larger urban area rather than within the city. It is doubtful to what extent the *Brown* and the following local struggles to help implement it and their precious fruit of the Civil Rights Act have changed each of the local communities and the nation as a whole. The change may be from illegal discrimination to more seemingly legal one and economic disparity tends to be justified as an inevitable result of the lack of self-effort now that the laws ban discrimination. Homogenization of the two-party system may be the biggest change the *Brown* and the Civil Rights Movement have ever produced.

The shift from manufacturing to information technology and service sectors has

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<sup>24</sup> Interviews of Robert P. Moses by the author, Jackson, August 15, 2000, and August 23, 2001. For more detailed information of the Algebra Project as well as his personal history, see his own accounts in Robert P. Moses and Charles E. Cobb, Jr., *Radical Equations: Math Literacy and Civil Rights* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001).

<sup>25</sup> Interviews of Hollis Watkins by the author, Jackson, August 16, 2000, and August 21, 2001.



been bringing polarization of the job and income patterns. The percentage of African American households under the poverty line is 24% in 2003, three times higher than that of white households. According to an article of the recent *New York Times*, U.S. Army consisting of all volunteers since 1973, is now made up of twice as large percentage of African Americans as the civil society. On top of that, most of the African American soldiers have high school diplomas but lack the chance to go on to college. The Americanism doesn't seem to give enough rewards to its self-helping young citizens of color unless they dare to risk their lives.

On the other hand, in Alabama and Mississippi, state courts have begun to reexamine the past violent criminal cases related to the Civil Rights Movement. This is one of the un-deniable changes the local and national movements have produced.

Finally one more photo from an article on the front page of the August 9, 2001 issue of the *Albany-Herald*. It features a Japanese historian visiting this small urban community in the rural southwest Georgia.