

SIDE 1

Band 1 Swing Low, Sweet Chariot
Swing Down Sweet Chariot medley
(Cleo Kennedy & Choir)

Band 2 Ralph Abernathy speaking

Band 3 I'm On My Way
(Mamie Brown & Choir)

SIDE 2

Band 1 City Called Heaven
(Cleo Kennedy, acc. by Carlton Reese on Organ)

Band 2 Martin Luther King, Jr., speaking

Band 3 99½ Won't Do
(Carlton Reese & Choir)

Band 4 Ralph Abernathy speaking

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In this recording of a mass meeting in Birmingham at the height of the confrontation, you will hear all of these elements--the preaching, relevant to the struggle; the humor along with the seriousness of the situation; the singing of the choir (honed by singing together night after night in a heightened emotional period) and of soloists; the response of the congregation, typical of Black churches though again heightened by historical developments; traditional songs and those changed to fit the immediate situation.

In those years, during the early 1960's we oftentimes travelled with our large Ampex recorder--well aware that we were observers and participants in an historic time. This particular weekend, we got more than we bargained for. We had been invited to do some singing at New Pilgrim Baptist Church by Reverend Charles Billups and we hoped to record a mass meeting while we were in Birmingham. We had long followed the impressive work of Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth and the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, and now that SCLC had come in to join with the local movement in a major campaign, developments were approaching a climax.

As we tried to enter Rev. Billups' church, we were detained by Sheriff Bull Connor and finally arrested. In his mind it was illegal for whites to sing in church together with blacks. We spent the weekend in jail, our one-year-old son at a local babysitter's, getting out just in time to rush over to the mass meeting scheduled for Sunday night.

We had only one microphone and Guy maneuvered himself onto the platform at the front of the church and scurried around best he could from speaker to lead singer to choir. We were amazed, considering the situation, at the good quality of our tapes.

Guy & Candie Carawan

LEST WE FORGET VOL. 2

BIRMINGHAM,
ALABAMA, 1963

MASS MEETING

with Martin Luther King, Jr.,
Ralph Abernathy and the
Birmingham Movement Choir

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET.

COVER PHOTOS BY CHARLES MOORE

Recorded by Guy and Candie Carawan of the Highlander Center

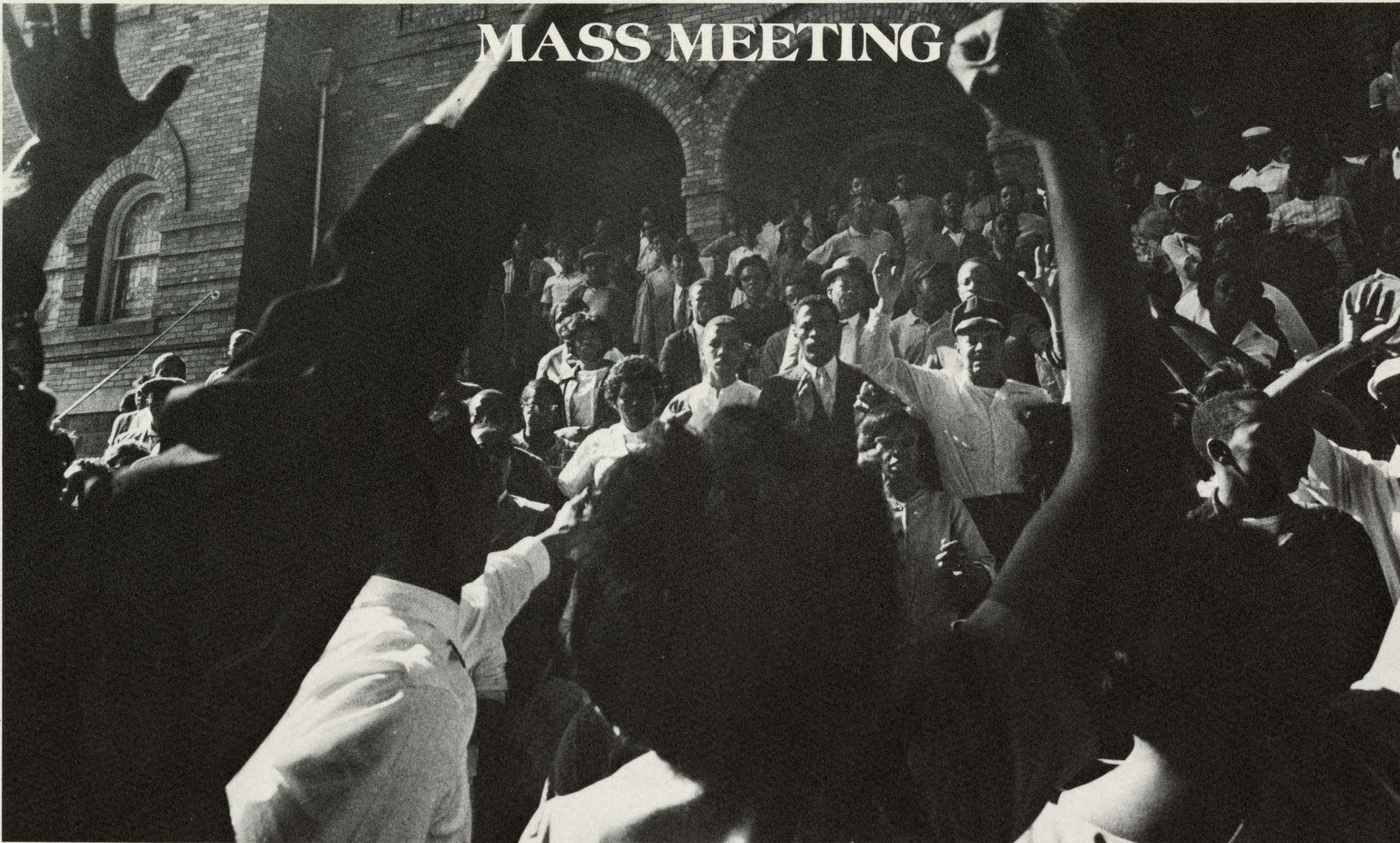
FOLKWAYS RECORDS FD 5487

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, 1963: MASS MEETING

FOLKWAYS FD 5487

LEST WE FORGET Volume 2

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BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, 1963



Martin Luther King, Jr.

Ralph Abernathy

Birmingham Choir

Recorded by Guy and Candie Carawan of the Highlander Center

BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, 1963

MASS MEETING

Recorded by Guy and Candie Carawan
of the Highlander Center



Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, president of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, speaking at a mass meeting in Birmingham.

photo credit: Danny Lyon

Introduction

The confrontation in Birmingham (the South's largest and worst city in terms of race relations) was one of the chief watersheds of the nonviolent movement. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was an immediate and direct result. The movement had gained legitimacy and national strength and the March on Washington followed that same summer with 250,000 in attendance.

There were several necessary ingredients that made the Birmingham movement the huge success that it was, and chief among these was the fact that the Birmingham movement was a great singing movement. Most of the key figures were handsomely skilled song leaders. Andrew Young, Dorothy Cotton, James Bevel, Fred Shuttlesworth, and Bernard Lee

were accomplished song leaders, and none was better than Ralph Abernathy.

A standard technique of the movement was to move the mass meetings from community to community in order to encourage support and provide information. It is important to note that on the very day that demonstrations were launched in Birmingham, the city bus system went on strike. Without public transportation, it was thought that the infant movement was doomed. Yet for thirty-nine nights, without interruption, the rallies were held in support of one of the most significant struggles in the South. A great deal of the stimulus for the sustained rallies was the quality of the music that made the mass meetings attractive in spite of the transportation dilemma.

The strength of the movement throughout the South was mobilized and programmed through the

instrumentality of Black sacred music. The great churches, both in influence and in size, came to their positions of prominence with the heavy influence of the music of the Black religious tradition. The large numbers of people gravitated toward the music that was familiar to their experience and spoke to their hearts and souls.

Music is one of the three major support systems in Black Church worship. Preaching and praying are the other two. It is difficult to say conclusively which is the most important. After the act of emancipation in 1865, preaching became central and remains so today. However, the characteristics of authentic Black preaching have been so heavily influenced by the characteristics of Black sacred music that a strong argument could be advanced to establish that singing is of equal importance. The fact is that most ministers follow a tradition of singing or attempting to sing and that any preacher who sings acceptably has a decided edge on the preacher who does not sing at all.

The music of the Black Church has a traditional and natural division: that which is performed by specialists, such as soloists, lead singers, and choirs, and that which is sung by the congregation. All told, the "music time" in most Black churches easily outstrips the "preaching time."

However important the message of the minister, the music of the Black religious tradition is a tool, a device, to raise the expectancy of the listener to a peak level in order that the maximum attention and effect are corralled for the sermon.

Wyatt Tee Walker

Chief of Staff to S.C.L.C. in 1963

Excerpts from his book
Somebody's Calling My Name:
Black Sacred Music and Social
Change. Judson Press, 1979.

Background on Birmingham: Two excerpts from *Black Protest* by Joanne Grant, Fawcett Premier, New York.

*People in Motion**

The Story of the Birmingham Movement

"We want a beginning now! We have already waited 100 years."

—Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights: the Statement of Principles

IN MAY, 1956, Alabama politicians "stood on the beach of history and tried to hold back the tide." They outlawed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in a desperate attempt to halt the movement for Negro equality. But their action had precisely the opposite effect. For almost immediately the Negroes of Birmingham came together to form a movement which during the last ten years has transformed life in Birmingham—which has shaken America.

"They could outlaw an organization, but they couldn't outlaw the movement of a people determined to be free," said the Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, president of the new group. And at a mass meeting called by a committee of Negro ministers, the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights

(ACMHR) was born. Many Negroes in "the Johannesburg of North America" were afraid to join. But many others echoed the sentiments of Mrs. Rosa Walker, one of the first members: "I was frightened, but I figured we needed help to get us more jobs and better education. And we had the man here to help us."

In its original statement of principles, the ACMHR stated:

As free and independent citizens of the United States of America, we express publicly our determination to press forward persistently for freedom and democracy, and the removal from our society of any forms of second-class citizenship . . . We Negroes shall never become enemies of the white people. But America was born in the struggle for Freedom from Tyranny and Oppression. We shall never bomb any homes or lynch any persons; but we must, because of history and the future, march to complete freedom with unbowed heads, praying hearts, and an unyielding determination.

The new organization's first efforts were directed toward getting the City of Birmingham to hire Negroes as policemen. When petitions and delegations failed, a suit was filed against the Personnel Board, demanding the right of Negroes to take examinations for all civil service jobs. But it was not to be until ten years later, after months of picketing and marching outside city hall and the county courthouse, that the first four Negro policemen were hired.

In its first year, the movement also filed suit in federal court on behalf of a Milwaukee couple arrested because they sat in the "white" waiting room in the city's railway station.

Both these actions followed the pattern of court action es-

* Published by the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, in cooperation with the Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., 1966. Excerpted by permission of Rev. Fred L. Shuttlesworth, President, ACMHR.

ished by the NAACP, and indeed, suits have always been one of the ACMHR's most effective weapons. But in December, 1956, the movement entered a new phase, and took on the character it was to retain—of a movement of people putting their bodies into a challenge to the system.

It was in December, 1956, that the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that bus segregation in Montgomery was illegal. This was a climax to the historic year-long Montgomery bus protest.

Immediately, the ACMHR announced that a group of its members would test segregation laws in their city by attempting to integrate Birmingham buses. The protest was scheduled for December 26.

But Christmas night, the night before the protest, the home of Rev. Shuttlesworth was bombed. The bed in which he was sleeping was directly over the spot where the bomb went off. The bed was blown to bits, but he escaped unhurt. Members of the ACMHR say he was saved to lead the movement.

Shuttlesworth took a neighbor who was hurt in the explosion to the hospital. Then he took a bus home—and he rode in front. The bombing strengthened the determination of his followers in the same way.

"On the 25th day of December, that's when they blew up Rev. Shuttlesworth's house," says Mrs. Walker. "And when I went to the meeting the next morning Rev. Shuttlesworth was the first thing I saw. And I knew as how their house was blowed up, and I couldn't figure out how he was there. And I said then, that I'm going into it. And I went into it on that day."

More than 250 others "went into it" with Mrs. Walker. Twenty-one of them were arrested that day, one the following day. They were convicted and fined, and they then filed suit in Federal Court, in January, 1957. . . .

The question of desegregating the buses wasn't over until late 1959. At that time, Federal Court rulings held the police were wrong in arresting Negroes who rode the buses integrated in 1958 and the Milwaukee couple who sat in the railroad station in 1959. But the segregation signs were still up, and by now ACMHR people knew that court rulings only come to life when people put their bodies on the line in a challenge to the old ways. . . .

The victories were important and gave people the knowledge that they do have strength, but as yet life in Birmingham had not really changed. Ever since the movement began leaders had received threats of death over the telephone and through the mail. Phones rang all night and strange cars circled the blocks where leaders of the movement lived. Every night after the first bombing in December, 1956, volunteer guards sat all night watching the Shuttlesworth house and church.

Police joined in the harassment. They tapped the telephones and searched and arrested guards at the Shuttlesworth home. Every non-white who came through his street was stopped and questioned. One man was arrested for distributing literature in alleged violation of Alabama's anti-boycott law. Each week city detectives attended the ACMHR mass meetings. They stopped and searched members leaving the meetings and charged them with blocking traffic. One man, the Rev. Charles Billups, was arrested on a charge of interfering with the entrance of a detective at a meeting; it was said he "touched the officer's coat." Later he was tied to a tree and beaten by the Ku Klux Klan. Other ACMHR members were threatened with loss of their jobs, and some were actually fired. . . .

During 1960 and 1961 the ACMHR filed a variety of suits—to desegregate the parks and schools, to open airport eating facilities, and to stop the police from attending ACMHR meetings. When the case against the police came to trial, Shuttlesworth was the lawyer. He didn't win, but the trial provided a dramatic moment as it brought face-to-face Birmingham's leading adversaries: Shuttlesworth and Police Commissioner Eugene "Bull" Connor, notorious for his enforcement of segregation. Thus one of the South's leading integrationists was in the unusual position of firing the questions while one of the South's leading segregationists was under oath on the witness stand. . . .

During the last three years Birmingham has been less in the news than it once was. This does not mean that the movement has become any less active. Nor, unfortunately, does it mean that the power structure has begun to meet most of its demands. Masses of people have been demonstrating almost constantly during that time.

In October, 1963, demonstrations were resumed because city officials and business leaders had broken the agreements which ended demonstrations the previous spring. They had agreed to upgrade Negroes and to end segregation in places such as the city hall rest rooms and eating places. Although the signs came down, discrimination continued by subterfuge. "Our officials appear to think that mere discussion by an advisory committee can take the place of positive action," Shuttlesworth said.

The new demonstrations lasted for more than a year, through a winter so cold that pickets sometimes had to be relieved every fifteen minutes. Finally the 1964 Civil Rights Bill was passed. Because the people of Birmingham were already in motion they were able to make this the first city in the South to have mass tests of the new law.

Miss Notie B. Andrews described the first test:

After the Civil Rights Bill was passed, everybody knew we was going to town that morning. All the newsfolks in town was there—looked like everybody was there. We had a news conference and then we hit the streets.

Around two o'clock we went to all the restaurants and theaters downtown and stayed there all afternoon. Where I went, they were real nice. The other people were staring at us to see how we would react, but we acted just like they weren't there. We stayed so long that when we got back we found Rev. Shuttlesworth was wondering whether we was in jail, because the others were all back.

After that, every day for about two weeks we would send a different group of people, in order to let them know we really meant that we were going to come in.

It was in this period too, that each of the five major downtown stores finally hired at least one Negro clerk.

Also that summer, papers qualifying the NAACP to resume operations in Alabama were accepted and processed by state officials—eight years after the group had been banned, touching off the founding of the Alabama Christian Movement. Alabama officials removed the ban after the U. S. Supreme Court decided unanimously it was unconstitutional.

Now the movement turned its attention again to the police force. Renewing a campaign that had been started by Rev. Shuttlesworth ten years previously, even before the founding of the ACMHR, they demonstrated for the hiring of Negro policemen. Although the legal barriers to Negroes taking the civil service examinations had been dropped as the result of an ACMHR suit in 1958, no Negro policemen had ever been hired. From June until December, 1965, the movement staged mass marches to the courthouse and city hall, day and night. By the time they stopped, Negro clerks were employed at the city hall. And in March the first four Negro policemen were hired.

In December, 1965, SCLC workers entered Birmingham for the first time since the 1963 demonstrations, to help the ACMHR mount a massive campaign for voter registration. At the time, out of about 120,000 eligible Negro voters in metropolitan Birmingham only about 22,000 had registered to vote.

And again, as in every battle the Negroes of Birmingham have fought, they had to take to the streets to win.

In the winter of 1965-66, officials in Birmingham were still throwing up every possible roadblock to Negroes' registering to vote. So the ACMHR demanded federal registrars. They also demanded registration in the people's neighborhoods at night, instead of during hours inconvenient to working people. "We want the courthouse brought to the people," Shuttlesworth said.

They marched again in the streets—and they won these demands. By May it was estimated that as many as 50,000 new Negro voters had been registered.

The marchers were also demanding employment of Negroes in various civil service positions in the city and county governments. . . .

The Birmingham freedom movement today, in late 1966, stands like the movement in many places at a crossroads.

When one considers the original demands of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights when it formed in 1956, a remarkable number of them have been at least partially achieved. The buses are desegregated, and so are the parks with the shameful exception of the closed swimming pools. School segregation has been broken, even though integration is still token. Public eating places are integrated if one can afford to eat in them; Negro police have been hired, although in token numbers. At least a few Negroes are working in jobs never open to them before; the bars to Negro voter registration have been torn down.

And, all important, white police cannot with impunity terrorize and brutalize Negroes on the streets and in their homes as they once could and did in Birmingham.

But no one here feels that the struggle is over or that the perfect society has arrived. The integration that exists is still token, for the great masses of black people jobs are still non-existent or at the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. And the old and dilapidated houses along the streets of Birmingham's inner city stand as a reminder that this city has slum ghettos as depressed as any in the South or the nation.

In short, the Birmingham movement stands before the problem that the movement faces everywhere: the fact that our society simply has not found the way to provide great numbers of its citizens with a chance for a decent life. . . .

four intersections surrounding the park were dozens of white-helmeted officers.

With the Birmingham police were reinforcements from such nearby cities as Bessemer, Fairfield, and Leeds. Also on hand were deputy sheriffs of Jefferson County and a sprinkling of State Troopers. The officers seemed fearful. This fear was expressed in marathon chatter and forced joviality as they waited for the ordeal that was to come: another massive demonstration.

Pressing on each cop were the eyes of 4,000 Negro spectators—women, men, boys, girls and mothers with babies. They were on the porches, lawns, cars and streets surrounding the park. They didn't talk much, just looked . . . and waited.

Frequently both the policemen and Negro spectators turned toward the 16th St. Baptist Church. From the more than 2,000 persons inside the church, and 300 pressing toward its doors on the outside—mostly grammar and high school students—came the loud songs of Freedom: "We Shall Overcome," "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around."

The temperature hit 90 degrees. Everybody was sweating. "Freedom! Freedom!" A roar arose from the church. The cops almost as one, faced the church. Some unleashed clubs from their belts. The faces of those I could see had turned crimson. Jeremiah X, Muslim minister from Atlanta standing near me, commented: "At any moment those cops expect 300 years of hate to spew forth from that church."

"Y'all niggers go on back. We ain't letting no more get on those steps," a police captain ordered as I approached the church. I turned away. The time was 1:10 p.m. Four fire engines arrived at the intersections and set themselves up for "business." Each disgorged its high-pressure hoses, and nozzle mounts were set up in the street. I was to learn the reason for the mounts later, when I watched the powerful water stripping bark off trees and tearing bricks from the walls as the firemen knocked Negroes down.

Before I could get back to the motel the demonstrations began; 60 demonstrators were on their way, marching two abreast, each with a sign bearing an integration slogan. Dick Gregory, the nightclub comedian, was leading the group.

At a signal, 40 policemen converged, sticks in hand. Up drove yellow school buses.

"Do you have a permit to parade?" asked the police captain.

"No," replied Gregory.

"No what?" asked the captain in what seemed to be a reminder to Gregory that he had not used a "sir."

"No. No. A thousand times No," Gregory replied.

The captain said, "I hereby place you all under arrest for parading without a permit, disturbing the peace and violating the injunction of the Circuit Court of Jefferson County."

Bedlam broke loose. The young demonstrators began shouting a freedom song. They broke into a fast step that seemed to be a hybrid of the turkey-trot and the twist as they sang to the tune of "The Old Grey Mare":

"I ain't scared of your jail
cause I want my freedom!
. . . want my freedom!"

And for the next two hours this scene was repeated over and over as group after group of students strutted out of the church to the cheers of the spectators, the freedom chants of those being carried away in buses and a continuous banging on the floors and sides of the buses—a cacophony of freedom.

That day, the dogs were kept out of sight. The Birmingham riot tank was on the side street. The fire hoses were kept shut. The police clubs did not flail. The thousands of spectators also kept calm. The police savagery of the preceding week was contained.

* Len Holt, "Eyewitness: The Police Terror at Birmingham," May 16, 1963, reprinted from *National Guardian* newsweekly, May 16, 1963, by permission. Len Holt is a civil rights attorney and author of *The Summer that Didn't End* and *Act of Conscience*.

Birmingham Demonstration, 1963*

LEN HOLT

COMING FROM THE airport May 6, we drove past the post office and onto Fifth Ave. toward the A. G. Gaston Motel, integration headquarters. Then we saw why the downtown area was "cop-less." On the roofs of the three and four story buildings surrounding Kelly-Ingram Park were clusters of policemen with short-wave radios over their shoulders. At the

Back at the Gaston Motel, there was a joyous air. Leaders in the organizational work, such as Dorothy Cotten, James Bevel and Bernard Lee of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; Isaac Wright, CORE field secretary; and James Forman, William Porter, William Ricks, Eric Rainey and students of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, joined others in the motel parking lot in a parade and song fest.

Victory was suggested by the absence of the dogs, the lack of violence. Added to this was the news that a judge had continued the cases of 40 persons because "there was no room at the inn" for those sentenced. The threat of the Movement to fill the jails had been realized in Birmingham.

Rejoicing was short-lived. At 6 p.m. word got back to the motel that the 1,000 students arrested earlier had neither been housed nor fed. With Jim Forman of SNCC I drove to the jail. There were youths throwing candy bars over the fence to the students; spectators had passed the hat to purchase the candy. While we were there it began to rain. The students got soaked. The spectators, too, got wet. There was no shelter for the kids. The cops and their dog got into the squad car. They stayed dry.

Forman begged the cops to put the kids inside, in the halls, in the basement of the jail, anywhere. Nothing was done. A new day had not yet come to Birmingham.

That night the weather turned cool. We learned that the students were still in the jail yard, unsheltered and unfed. The same message got to the others in the Negro Community. An estimated 500 cars and 1,200 people drove to the jail with blankets and food. The police responded by bringing up dogs and fire hoses. The food and blankets were given to the kids. The crowd waited until all of the children were finally taken inside.

Later that night Forman and Dorothy Cotten of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference met with the student leaders. In the planning emphasis was placed on the need for speed and mobility. Heretofore the demonstrators seldom got downtown, or if they did, never in a large group. It was decided that instead of starting the demonstrations every day at 1 p.m., when the fire hoses were in place and the police were all on duty, an element of surprise would be introduced. The next demonstration would begin earlier. Picket signs would be taken downtown to prearranged spots in cars where the students could pick them up.

That night five of us slept in a motel room designed for two. We were crowded, but so were the 2,000 students crammed 75 or more in cells for eight in the city jail. Our room was hot that night, but not so hot as the unventilated sweat boxes in which Cynthia Cook, 15, and other girls were placed as punishment by the jail personnel when they refused to say "sir." Those on the outside were tired, but not so tired as the hundreds who had been forced to make marathon walks because they sang "We Shall Overcome" in jail. And there were beatings for many.

At 6 a.m. Tuesday SNCC and CORE fellows hurried to the schools to get out the students. Before 10—and before the police lines and firehoses were in place—600 students had been to the church and been given assignments downtown. Cars were dispatched with picket signs. The clock struck noon. The students struck. Almost simultaneously, eight department stores were picketed.

I was standing near a police motorcycle, and could hear the pandemonium at police headquarters. Police not due to report until after 12:30 were being called frantically. Policemen speeded, sirens screaming, from Kelly-Ingram Park to downtown. Inside the 16th St. Baptist Church the folk laughed and sang "We Shall Overcome."

Over the police radio I heard Bull Connor's voice. He was mad. He had been betrayed. Never before had the students

demonstrated before 1 p.m. I suspect the merchants were mad. And the kids downtown, all 600 of them, sang "We Shall Overcome." And they did overcome. No arrests were made. When the police finally got to the area, they merely ripped up the signs and told the youngsters to go home. The jails were full.

For the students, "home" was back to the 16th St. Baptist Church. There they were reassigned to go to Woolworth's and six other department stores, sit on the floor, and not move unless arrested. Since the jails were full, the cops still weren't arresting. A policeman went to the church to tell somebody from the Movement to ask the students to leave. When the announcement was made in the church, 2,000 persons went downtown. These thousands were joined by 2,000 spectators and made a wild, hilarious parade through downtown Birmingham, singing "We Shall Overcome."

Then the nearly 4,000 persons returned to the church from the "victory march." And while the throngs joyously sang inside, preparations were being made outside. The cars with dogs drove up. About 300 police officers surrounded the church and park area. Fire hoses were set up.

For a few minutes I left the area of the church and went to a nearby office. When I emerged I saw 3,000 Negroes encircled in the Kelly-Ingram Park by policemen swinging clubs. The hoses were in action with the pressure wide open. On one side the students were confronted by clubs, on the other, by powerful streams of water. The firemen used the hoses to knock down the students. As the streams hit trees, the bark was ripped off. Bricks were torn loose from the walls.

The hoses were directed at everyone with a black skin, demonstrators and non-demonstrators. A stream of water slammed the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth against the church wall, causing internal injuries. Mrs. Colia LaFayette, 25-year-old SNCC field secretary from Selma, Alabama, was knocked down and two hoses were brought to bear on her to wash her along the sidewalk. A youth ran toward the firemen screaming oaths to direct their attention from the sprawling woman.

Meanwhile, over the public address system inside the church, I could hear a speaker admonishing the people to be non-violent . . . "We want to redeem the souls of people like Bull Connor."

I wondered how long it would be before some Negro lost his restraint. It had almost happened Monday, the day before, when cops flung a Negro woman to the ground and two of them had put their knees in her breast and twisted her arm. This was done in the presence of the woman's 19-year-old son and thousands of Negro spectators. Four 200-pound Negro men barely managed to restrain the son.

The terrible Tuesday, May 7, ended finally. There was much talk about an impending "settlement." This news discouraged all but the most cursory plans for the next day. Everyone realized the influx of state troopers would make downtown demonstrations difficult.

A strange thing about the demonstrations up until Wednesday was that all of the brutality had been police brutality. Where were the thugs who with razor blades, a few years previously, had cut off the penis of a Negro? Where were the men who stabbed Mrs. Ruby Shuttlesworth when she attempted to enroll her child in the white high school? Where were the whites who repeatedly bombed Birmingham churches and synagogues?

On Wednesday, after almost five weeks of protesting, the non-uniformed racists had not spoken. On May 12th, Mother's Day, they spoke . . . and the cup of non-violence of Birmingham Negroes overflowed. America learned that the patience of 100 years is not inexhaustible. It is exhausted.

The royalties from this album will be going to the We Shall Overcome Fund.

The WE SHALL OVERCOME FUND

The We Shall Overcome Fund supports efforts to preserve and develop Black culture, especially Black music, in the southern U.S.A. Begun in 1966, the Fund provides small grants to projects which reflect a blend of culture and struggle, a blend embodied in the song "We Shall Overcome." Music festivals, workshops, conferences, and field research are among the efforts the Fund has supported over the past ten years.

How the Fund Works: Grant applications are reviewed by a seven person Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee's recommendations are subject to the approval of the Executive Committee of Highlander Folk School, the organization that houses and administers the Fund. One member of the Advisory Committee represents Highlander. This seat is held by Guy Carawan, Highlander's musical director. Three members represent the Civil Rights Movement, impetus for the Fund's creation, and its cultural manifestations: Bernice Reagon, culture historian concerned with the presentation and analysis of Black culture, was a member of the SNCC Freedom Singers; Dorothy Cotton, currently Manager, Social Division, Bureau of Human Services for the City of Atlanta, was director of SCLC's Citizenship Training Program; Faye Bellamy, Media Specialist around criminal justice issues, was member of Central Committee of SNCC. The three remaining seats represent on-going cultural projects throughout the south. Members are selected each June at a Conference on Culture and Struggle held at Highlander. For 1977-78 members are: Jane Sapp (singer, composer, field researcher); Eq Cabbell (director, John Henry Memorial Foundation, W. Va.); Worth Long (folklorist presently investigating material culture throughout Ms.)

How to Apply: Any person or organization working in the area of Black southern culture may apply for a grant of up to \$500. Fill out the application form included in this packet or write a letter briefly describing your project. The letter should tell how your work blends culture and struggle and how you plan to use the grant money. Applications are accepted at any time. Decisions are made within four weeks. If your application is funded, you will be asked to submit a final report.

"We Shall Overcome": A Brief History

Versions of "We Shall Overcome" are part of the Black traditional sacred repertoire, found especially in Baptist churches throughout the south. The song was first joined to political struggle in the early 1940's by Black tobacco workers striking in Winston-Salem, North Carolina and Charleston, South Carolina.

In 1947, "We Shall Overcome" was taken to Highlander by white members of the Charleston Tobacco Workers Union. The version they taught Zilphia Horton, Highlander's musical director, was an interpretation of the song they had heard sung by Black workers on the picket line.

Horton worked with the song until she had an easily singable melody. It quickly became a basic part of Highlander's musical repertoire and remained so for twenty years. It became a popular labor song. Horton sang the song to Pete Seeger who carried it north in the late 1940's. "We Shall Overcome" appeared in People's Songs, a labor and peace-oriented songbook, in 1948. It was first sung on the west coast by Frank Hamilton. There Guy Carawan who was to become Highlander's musical director heard the song.

When leaders of the Nashville Sit-In Movement came to Highlander in 1960, they learned "We Shall Overcome." They took it back to their struggle. It was in Nashville that "We Shall Overcome" became a part of the Civil Rights Movement. The song seems to have taken its place as the musical symbol of the Movement during a 1961 SNCC organizing conference which drew together activists from the sit-ins, the freedom rides, and the student movements. Throughout the activist period of the Civil Rights Movement, "We Shall Overcome" was sung across the United States: at every demonstration, picket line, sit-in, in every jail, church and mass meeting. It spread around the world and is today an international statement of peoples' determination to struggle and overcome fear, exploitation, and repression.

The Copyright: As the song "We Shall Overcome" spread across the U.S.A., Guy Carawan became concerned that some profiteer might copy-right it and about protecting the integrity of the current version. Discussions with Pete Seeger resulted in a decision to copyright the song. Four names appear on the 1960 copyright: Zilphia Horton, musical director of Highlander when the song brought there by Charleston tobacco workers; Guy Carawan and Pete Seeger who added lyrics; and Frank Hamilton who re-arranged several sections.

Royalties from the copyright were to be put into a special fund, the We Shall Overcome Fund, and an advisory committee established to recommend how the fund's resources should be used.

The condition of the copyright was that the royalty funds would be used for cultural-movement activities.



Guy and Candie Carawan

Other records & books by Guy & Candie Carawan

DOCUMENTARY RECORDS

- "Nashville Sit-In Story", Folkways Records, 1960
- "Freedom in the Air: Albany, Georgia", SNCC, 1963
- "Story of Greenwood, Mississippi", Folkways Records, 1965
- "We Shall Overcome: Songs of the Freedom Movement", Folkways Records, 1963
- "Sea Island Folk Festival: Moving Star Hall Singers and Alan Lomax", Folkways Records, 1966
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