

PROTESTS, RALLIES, AND DEMONSTRATIONS
FREEDOM NOW! (PART I):
DOCUMENTARY ON 1963 CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH

**Pacifica Radio Archives: “Protests, Rallies,
Demonstrations”**

(Funded by The Ford Foundation)

**Transcript of Freedom Now! (Part I): Documentary on
1963 Civil Rights March.**

**Produced by from tape recordings made in Birmingham,
Alabama, between May 11 and May 14, 1963. Contains
interviews with demonstrators, organizers, and citizens of
Birmingham. Produced by Chris Koch, Dale Minor, and
Robert Kramer. Announcer is Dale Minor.**

Broadcast on WBAI, 1963.

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Transcript

FREEDOM NOW! – DOCUMENTARY ON 1963 CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH
PART I

(MUSIC: field recording, continues under ANNOUNCER)

ANNOUNCER: Pacifica Radio presents, “Freedom Now!”

(MUSIC CONTINUES, Song: “I’ve Got A Job”- “I’ve got a job. It won’t be long.

You’ve got a job. All of God’s children should have a job. We’ve got a job to

do...Freedom...”)

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ANNOUNCER: Forty days of organization and demonstration by the combined forces of the Integration Movement, under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, culminated in the most significant turning point in the entire history of the struggle for racial justice in the United States. The direction of that turning remains in question. After a period of demonstrations that saw small children face the force of fire hoses, that saw a total of 3200 Negroes jailed (nearly 2/3 of them children of grammar school and high school ages), the forces of integration reached an agreement with leading citizens of Birmingham, Alabama, frequently termed “the most segregated city in America.” An agreement which, if followed and maintained, could prove the major breakthrough to racial harmony in this decade. And which, if violated or ignored, could break the dam of nonviolence, and expose large portions of this nation to a flood of violence and bloodshed.

ANNOUNCER: Chief among the white citizens who negotiated the “Birmingham Agreement” was Sidney W. Smyer, a wealthy businessman, and a member of the Senior Citizens Committee. On Monday, May 13th, three days after the agreement had been reached, Mr. Smyer held a press conference to explain his understanding of the accord, and the background and implications of the settlement.

SIDNEY SMYER [SS]: Well, I’m not a speaker. I wasn’t looking for all these microphones and so forth. I have been working with the community, the Negroes in the community, for some time, for the purpose of establishing better relationships in our community. As you perhaps know, we have some 39% of our population in this

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community, that *are* Negroes. Uh. I think our number one problem here, and perhaps throughout the whole world, is *economics*. What we are trying to work out is a climate in this community in which *all* people have an opportunity for a job, that are willing and able to hold that job. Birmingham like other communities, employment is always a problem. I will say, without qualification, that we have some of the finest Negro citizens of anywhere that I know. Unfortunately things have come up that tend to create hate. Hate never solves any, probably any, problem. Hate *destroys* reason. And the one thing that we want to show, that we are *sincere* in working out the problems of the citizens of this community. And let me call your attention to the fact that the Senior Citizen's Committee is a group of citizens representing, I would say, far in excess of 50% of the employers of labor, and far in excess of the monetary value of the assets of this community. Now, as a group, we did, they did, agree to appoint a committee to deal with the Negro leadership, the local Negro leadership, of this community. That ninety days after the Supreme Court decisions on the Birmingham City Government, and regardless of whether the new Mayor and Councils are seated, or whether the three Commissioners retain their jobs, eating facilities in the stores will be desegregated on a trial, or test, basis. Within thirty days, any remaining "White" and "Colored" signs over drinking fountains and restrooms will be removed and, without delay, fitting rooms (which always have been private and for the use of one customer at a time) will be desegregated. Employment opportunities for Negroes will be upgraded. Within sixty days, at least *one* sales person will be employed in one store.

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SS: Now, not asked by the Negroes, but a voluntary resolution was passed by the Senior Citizens Committee that a permanent committee will be named to meet with the Negro leaders for the purpose of working out...

ANNOUNCER: On Friday, May 10, the day the negotiations were concluded, Martin Luther King explained his understanding of the Birmingham Accords to the Negro community.

REVEREND DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. [MLK]: I want to go over with you the specific agreements that have been made. We told you that we were dealing with four points. [Audience: "yeah", "Amen"] Number One, we said that we are tired of segregation and that we would seek to break down the barriers of segregation in the places that we spend our money [Audience response of "Yes" and "Amen"]. We asked for desegregation of the lunch counters, sitting rooms, restrooms, and water fountains. The agreement calls for, Number One, the desegregation of lunch counters, restrooms, fitting rooms, and drinking fountains in planned stages within the next ninety days.

MLK: Now, you know that Birmingham is doing something that even the so-called "progressive" Atlanta, Georgia, didn't do when we made our agreement after our sit-ins to get integration at lunch counters. They were integrated after six months. But here in Birmingham, it's after ninety days. We're moving on to Freedom Land." [Applause]

MLK: Now, this will be in order to insure a smooth transition over planned stages. And to keep these *mobs* from getting aroused, you know. The Klan, they still live somewhere.

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[Audience response of “Yeah!”] We’re not announcing the dates right now. We didn’t do it for the press this morning, but each of these will be done.

MLK: Now, the first one, I’ll announce tonight. The press is in here, so I will announce the first one, and I’m going to run along with Ralph Abernathy to Atlanta tomorrow to be at our churches Sunday, but we’ll be right back here Monday. [Audience: response of “Yeah!”] Now, the first development will be Monday. It’s supposed to be three days after the settlement. Now we settled today; now Monday would be three days. The fitting rooms will be integrated by Monday. So you know now, that the fitting rooms are integrated, starting Monday. Now we will let you know the Second stage...and I’ll let you know that the second will be the water fountains and the restrooms. Now, we’ll let you know *exactly* when that’s gonna be. We’re going to do this through the mass meetings. So that, number one is clear. And this is a great victory for justice in Birmingham. They have agreed to desegregate *all* the facilities in the stores of Birmingham, Alabama, and I think this is a great and significant victory.

MLK: Number Two. We made it clear that we are tired of getting poor jobs. We’re getting tired of being the last hired and the first fired. We made that very clear. We made it clear that we wanted some *jobs* that are comparable to the jobs that any White person can get in Birmingham. (Crowd responds with “Amen”) Now, this is the Agreement: The upgrading and hiring of Negroes on a non-discriminatory basis throughout the industrial community of Birmingham. This will include the hiring of Negroes (listen to this) as *clerks* and *salesmen* within the next 60 days. So this means, when you go down - (APPLAUSE) - and then a committee will be appointed within two

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weeks, composed of business, industrial, and professional leaders to get Negroes in *new* positions that they've *never* been in before, throughout the total industrial complex of Birmingham, Alabama.

MLK: Now we just asked for some clerks in the stores, Negro clerks, so when you go down, you see some Negroes standing behind these counters. But we're going to get that, but even more, we're going to get *more* than we asked for, on this point. No other city in the South, I want you to listen to this, on the question of employment. This is a significant victory for the city of Birmingham, Alabama (APPLAUSE). Now, you've been to jail. Do you feel that you went to jail in vain? If going to jail is going to get all these new jobs, don't you think it was really *wonderful* to go to jail? (APPLAUSE, "Yeah"]

MLK: Now, on the Third point. We made it clear in our negotiating sessions over the last two or three days, that this Movement, and these demonstrations, would not stop. That the Movement would not bring a halt to the demonstrations, unless *all* the people in jail could come out (APPLAUSE). We were not going to leave any body in jail. (APPLAUSE). We made it very *clear* that this had to be done. We talked in terms of the dropping of the charges. And this, I am happy to say, is being worked on. These cases are going to be *handled*, and something good is in the making on this point. The first thing, the City of Birmingham doesn't want the *burden* of having to try some 3,000 people. They'll be trying these cases until my little seven-year-old daughter is in college (LAUGHTER). So, so, that things are going to be worked out there. But I am happy to

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say to you this evening, I'm happy to say to you, that *everybody* is either out of jail, or on the way out of jail (APPLAUSE) that has been arrested in this Movement.

ANNOUNCER: Monday afternoon, Birmingham's Mayor Hanes addressed himself to the negotiations and the negotiators.

MAYOR ARTHUR HANES (AH): I think the situation, here in Birmingham, is, uh, is stable right now. Uh, it's calm. Thank goodness for the Governor and his courageous stand, and his firmness in sending his Alabama Highway Patrol in here, under Colonel Al Lingel [Sp?]. Uh, I think now that we have some, uh, forces of the law in here.

(TELEPHONE RINGS) That the riders, perhaps, were frightened down.

MAYOR HANES: And this business of the federal troops standing by, of course, is *ridiculous*. Now, gentlemen, here's what's happened, as usual. For forty days now, or more, we have protected the Negroes, uh, aided and abetted, and fomented, and stirred up, and agitated uh, by people who have come to Birmingham. By people who, in the past, have been associated with organizations that have been subversive. They have, uh, been constant companions. They have shared, uh, speaking, uh, engagements with known Communists. And they have come in to our town and stirred it up, which is nightmarish and it is *ridiculous*. Gentlemen, if any of you or I would organize us a little band and go to a city, and whatever the cause was, if it were religion, if it were race, or sex, or just plain blackmail, and we made a shambles out of this city, and if we divided that city, uh, people all over the world would say, "Put those madmen in jail. Put them out of the way so that they couldn't continue doing this to this great land of ours." Yet this is exactly what's happened here in Birmingham.

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MAYOR HANES: Now we have *protected* those niggers. They've had their *fun*, and they should go. They've demonstrated. They've got the point over. Of course, this was, this was not the issue with those niggers. They've used every known trick that the Communists have ever used. And "appealing to the world," you see, how "mistreated they were." *All* emotional appeals. Using the churches, under a sanctity of religion, to foment chaos and confusion and strife. Uh, then, too, they've used kids, which, of course, is ludicrous and ridiculous, and uh, should not have been tolerated. They've contributed to delinquency of these minor children. Uh, in great numbers. And to use them - So then, they went out worldwide, and they said, "Looky here, just innocent little children parading, and those mean police have arrested them." We told those children from the beginning, "Now, you should be in school." We took their placards away. We said, "Go back to school, where you belong. You have no business down here." Yet those kids were just coerced into participating in this thing.

MAYOR HANES: Now, the punch line was, of course, to raise money. And, uh, uh, for what purpose, I don't know. I've got a pretty good idea. But the point is, I think here in Birmingham that the police and the White people have taken all of this mob action that they're going to take. And I advised the Attorney General of that yesterday on the telephone, and asked him to investigate this revolutionary, King, and his henchmen, who have made a shambles of our city. But as usual, you tolerate, and they push you and they push you and they push you and they push you, and I say it's asking too much of a city to prove that they're tolerant, and that they're a good city. And we've seen here in Birmingham, a political mob, a mob to me analogous to a bunch of highwaymen who

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would ride up to a city and threaten them, and say, “If you don’t send us out \$10,000 in gold we’re going to sack your city.” And we say there are a bunch of weak-kneed Quislings in the city of Birmingham, who are responsible for these entire outbreaks, bow down and say, “Oh please, go away, we’ll give you whatever you want.” Now, isn’t this a great spirit of America? Isn’t it a great spirit of those who founded this country? You know what they’ve done? They’ve adopted the old philosophy and swallowed it, “Better Red than dead”; “Better Black than fight.” You see? Where are you going to make a stand? This is a bunch that would appease the Communists and say, “Oh, we don’t want any trouble. Give them what they want.”

REPORTER: Mayor Hanes, are you referring to the Bi-Racial Council? Is that correct?

MAYOR HANES: I’m referring to that “Bi-racial Council.” This is a bunch acting without authority, who took it upon themselves last year, to meet with the Negroes and guarantee them certain things, without the knowledge, without the consent of your City Commission. Now, when they approached the City Commission, and told us what we had – what they had done, we said, “Of course, we don’t intend to live up to those commitments. It’s wrong.” And then the merchant – the Negroes threatened to boycott. And then the merchants said, “Oh, my God, we’ve got to do something. We’ve got to live up to these commitments. If we don’t, the niggers will boycott us.”

MAYOR HANES: So, then they were acting in concert with the local newspapers. Of course, they started this campaign to discredit the City Commission, to change the form of government, to get us out of here. To get some people in here, uh that would do better for the niggers and meet their demands, and there would be peace and tranquility. That

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would be for a little while, until next month, the niggers made up their mind they wanted something else. Then, like little bad children, they'd form a mob, and they'd demand "this."

REPORTER: May I ask you, Mayor, Mr. Smyer just told us, he's a spokesman for the Biracial Council, and he told us he believes that Birmingham will "buy" this integration deal that they've made. What is your reaction to that?

MAYOR HANES: Well, of course I don't know. You tell me that's what Mr. Smyer said, but I can assure you right now, that the City will not buy that. I'm not saying that there will be any violence. I am saying they will show their displeasure at this action by copying a book from these niggers. They will organize, now, and I'll assure you that the merchants who implement these agreements will find out that the 95% or 90% White trade is more important to them than the Negro trade, the 5% or 6% or 10% Negro trade.

ANNOUNCER: We talked with Charles Morgan, a Birmingham attorney, and the sole representative of the American Civil Liberties Union in that City. We asked him about some of the points that Mayor Hanes raised.

CHARLES MORGAN [CM]: Everybody in the South has always been sure the White community would boycott, and always does, for about a week. Not very well organized.

INTERVIEWER: You think it won't?

CM: Well, I think they may boycott, but who cares? They're not very well organized. They can't keep a boycott going. They haven't been able to any place else, and I'm sure Birmingham's sense of originality is no greater than Atlanta's, or some - I mean the uh,

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the White man is not as cohesively bound together as are Negroes in a Movement fighting for their rights. So, consequently, I wouldn't worry about that more than a week or two, and besides that, who cares? The uh -The sales have been off 40% to 50%, as it is. Maybe if they were off 100%, they could close the stores down and save the overhead.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think - What's your impression of the feeling of the White community in general, towards the demonstrations, and toward the agreement?

CM: Ah, well, I think towards the demonstration there were probably shades of feeling. Of course, there's a large group that is opposed to any demonstrations, opposed to any concessions, and opposed to anything else. And there would be another group, the uh, I guess you would say the more moderate folks, who would say, "We're willing to make the changes, but we would have made them ourselves had it been - anyway had there not been demonstrations.

INTERVIEWER: That's roughly the difference between Smyer and Hanes?

CM: Well, that's part of the difference between Smyer and Hanes. Of course, there's a greater difference than that between them. Ah, then there's another group that would say, probably, that the Negroes were unfair in the timing of the demonstrations. In that Birmingham was in the position of the Congo, we had two governments. We couldn't tell who was Lumumba, who was Kasavubu, who was Moise Tshombe. We've got two Mayors and at the same time - we - and really the prosperous citizens in town live in a section called Mountain Brook which isn't in the city limits to start with. Which is sort

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of the Katanga Province. And I guess, in that sort of circumstance, you had to have the Justice Department there to at least act like the U.N. in mediating the dispute, but the, uh, the timing of it came in for a considerable bit of criticism from folks who say that they would have made the concessions anyway.

CM: Now, of course there's always an objection to timing. There's no "right time" ever. And, who knows, I don't –

INTERVIEWER: Do you think the timing was particularly bad?

CHARLES MORGAN: Well, I think it would have been a whole lot worse if it had been the day before, or the day before that – which was Election Day. That's, and of course, the demonstrations were held off until after the election. But they've been held off until after other elections, prior to this. And I suppose the demonstrators said, "Well you've always got an election going in Alabama."

INTERVIEWER: Mr. Smyer mentioned to reporters that Birmingham had a, I've forgotten just exactly what term he used, but a very happy relationship between the races prior to April second. Is that true in your opinion?

CM: No.

INTERVIEWER: It wouldn't seem to be true in the opinion of at least one part of this.

CM: I don't think it's true – Well, it's certainly true with the Negroes. But you see, when the community itself doesn't know how people feel – a man - an employee has a Constitutional right to lie to his employer. At least he does it. I'm not saying that you do, or someone else does, but most folks say what people want to hear. Very rarely do

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you interview somebody and tell them they're a pompous fool, or something of that nature, even when you think it.

INTERVIEWER: I'd be out of a job.

CM: Well, that's right. A maid is going to say the same thing to her employer, and so is someone else. They're going to say, "No, we're happy, Master Tom, everything's fine. What problems we got? No, it's those other fellows, Shuttlesworth and King, those agitators." And they go and they take half their pittance of a salary, and they contribute it to the Movement.

ANNOUNCER: Mayor Hanes also had his own opinion of conditions of life in the Negro community.

MAYOR HANES: (AT PRESS CONFERENCE) - and gentlemen, I don't know whether you realize it or not, but the niggers' plight in Birmingham, I'd like to tell you a little bit, would you like? Of course, you're not going to print it, I understand that, and put it out, but some of the advantages of the niggers of Birmingham, Alabama, in the past, and what they've had here. You talk about economics for niggers, their standard of living in Birmingham is 100% higher than that of the Black people throughout the world outside of the United States, and I'll say, higher than 80% of the White people outside of the United States. Their average household earnings. We have eleven hundred Negro schoolteachers in the city of Birmingham Alabama school system alone. Eleven hundred, mind you, which is more Negro school teachers than you have in the entire state of Ohio, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and all of New England combined. Right here in Birmingham. And let me tell you one other thing. That their average pay is higher than

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the average White schoolteacher's pay. I don't know whether you know that or not. The curriculum taught in our schools is the same, construction-wise, dollar-for-dollar it's the same. So, how can you say that there's discrimination? We have four swimming pools for Whites, and four for Negroes. Three out of the four Negro pools far excelled all four White pools. Four and Four. Now how is that discrimination? Have a golf course for 'em. Cost the taxpayers \$22,000 a year to subsidize it, for the niggers to play golf. Now, what is so wrong to ask them to play golf on their own golf course? Which is the same as the ones the White people have? Or to go to school with their own kind? In the same type school, same architecture, same structure, same curriculum, same books, and the teacher is making more money than the White teacher? Now gentlemen, how unfair is this? And one out of two Negro families in Birmingham own their own homes. Two out three own automobiles; 96% own television sets. We have as fine housing projects for them here as you'll ever see. Five bedrooms, two baths, all utilities, \$20 a month. Free food program for them. Free medical programs. Welfare. They work in our homes, and you have to give all of them "tote'n privileges," or they won't work for you. You know what I mean by "tote'n privileges?" If you don't they won't work for you. Tote'n privileges? They bring a little sack to work with them, a little tote sack. They take a little bit of soap, and a tote a little bit of this every time they leave your house. Oh yeah, and they take that every time they leave your house, but we tolerate that, we understand that, that's the way the Negroes do.

MUSIC: SINGING, "A GREAT DAY FOR ME!" (CD 1 / Band 4 / 8"07)

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(“Great day for me, Oh, I’m So Happy, Great Day for Me”) (CROSS-FADE TO INTERVIEW)

MARY HAMILTON: I have been helping out with the demonstrations in one way or another, and on Monday I was asked to help clear the sidewalk of the pedestrians, so that the Freedom March, so that the, uh, demonstrators could walk on the sidewalk without interference. And this...(Continues, fades under ANNOUNCER)

ANNOUNCER: This is Mary Hamilton, 18-year-old Field Representative for the Congress of Racial Equality [CORE], one of the last people to be released from jail Saturday evening.

MARY HAMILTON: ...to work with the Freedom Walkers. But, they had been seeing me around, and uh, generally the case is, when they see an Organizer around, if they can they will arrest you. So, I had been ordered by the police to stay off the sidewalk. I had merely stepped up on a ledge, as the, as the, uh, demonstrators were walking towards us, and I lost my balance. It was really this simple. I had lost my balance and stepped down to regain my balance, and the minute I stepped down on the sidewalk, I was nabbed, and, uh, I was placed in the police car, and I was arrested.

MARY HAMILTON: At that time, about eighty people were arrested. Two groups were placed in two different buses. And we were taken to the City Jail. These demonstrators were – the average age range, I would say was about, um, seventeen [years old], although the ages ranged from seven – seven [years old] to thirty-five or forty [years old]. Now this was the Demonstration in which Dick Gregory was arrested.

INTERVIEWER: Uh-huh.

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MARY HAMILTON: And we were taken to the City Jail and unloaded. Uh, we were just – we were left standing. The Police had their clubs out. They had clubs, these big bully clubs in their hands, and these leather -- I don't know if you call them blackjacks or not, they slip their hands through...

INTERVIEWER: Saps?

MARY HAMILTON: Pardon?

INTERVIEWER: Saps?

MARY HAMILTON: I don't know. I don't know what you call them. But they were thick, heavy leather, with a ball that's tied in. And I know this is the first thing that struck me. That here there were these little children. There were no more than three adults: myself, [Dick] Gregory and a fellow who was with Gregory. We were the only three adults there, and the rest of these were just the High School kids, and some seven and eight year-old children. And, uh, this is the first thing that struck me, was how outrageous this was that these policemen had to have clubs and, and this other object. And rather than tell the policemen telling the children to step – to move back, to move out of the driveway, or to move to a different area, they would take their clubs and push against the children. And shove the children back. And so I stepped up to one of the policemen, and I said to him, "It's not necessary for you to push these children around with your clubs, or even to push them at all. If you just tell them to step back, they will quickly step back." Well, the policeman proceeded to use much profanity against me, and he took his club and he pushed it into my stomach. He, he did it twice. He jabbed me in the stomach, and then he jabbed me again, and he made me fall back.

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INTERVIEWER: How were the children taking it?

MARY HAMILTON: The children were taking it magnificently. I mean, they weren't frightened. They were, they were very bright – I mean, they were alert. You could see their little eyes were sharp. They were looking all around them. But they were like children every place, except that they were very brave. You could - There was no fear on any of their faces. There was anger on the faces of myself, I am sure, and Dick Gregory and his assistant, because we were seeing what was happening to these children, and we felt helpless to do anything. Uh, but the children were really magnificent.

MARY HAMILTON: So, all of – all the girls were placed in a downstairs cellblock, which was, uh, divided in half. One section, uh, was, uh, composed of individual compartments, which are, uh, the isolation compartments.

INTERVIEWER: Uh, huh.

MARY HAMILTON: The girls in, say, the first section, where the, uh, where the isolation cells were, had no toilet facilities and no water. They were in there from, say, three o'clock until about six o'clock with no water and no toilet facilities.

INTERVIEWER: For three hours?

MARY HAMILTON: For three hours. It then - I may be confused on my time, but they were there a good two or three hours. Uh, and uh, it then began to rain, and so we all climbed up and looked out the window. And here were these children, uh, a good two hundred children, out in the rain, just being drenched. The rain was just coming in torrents. And, uh, people were milling about, and the police were out trying to drive

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people away. There was plenty of room in the cell block in which I was in, to put these children. But instead, the police preferred to leave them out, and it rained on those children for two hours. In the meantime, we had become angry, and we decided that we had to do something to protest.

INTERVIEWER: Now, let me, let me break in here. The children were out in the rain for two hours?

MARY HAMILTON: The children were out in the rain for more than two hours. It rained for two hours. They were not only out in the rain for two hours, but they were left out there, even after it stopped raining.

INTERVIEWER: Hmmm.

MARY HAMILTON: This is the report I got, because, in the meantime, I had been put in “solitary.” But, um, from the time it began raining to the time that first the whole group of us was put in solitary, it must have been, say, twenty or thirty minutes. Now, the later reports I got, because these - part of this group that was out in the rain, did not get in to our cell (we were removed), until about three o’clock in the morning. And they were, uh, they said that they had not been inside of a building until that time. At any rate, uh, the rain was coming down in torrents and, within a brief few minutes, everybody was just soaking wet who was standing outside. So, we began banging on the, uh, – there were steel doors, with bars. And two - There were two steel doors. And then, of course, there were the doors on the, uh, in the isolation cells. So every - all the girls began opening and shutting these doors. Banging these doors. We were just banging as loud as

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we could possibly bang. So, a mob of policemen came in. They wanted to know what was going on. So I told them that there was plenty of room in the cellblock for those children. There was no necessity to leave them out in the rain. So, they then pulled me into an office, which was filled full of policemen and plainclothes men, and I reiterated the same thing. I was, of course, very upset and I was very angry. And, uh, the thing that struck me was that they, the men just stood there and looked very sheepishly at me. They didn't strike me at that time. Uh, uh, they just, they just looked at me. They didn't say a thing. It was like they couldn't understand why everybody was so upset about these little children being left out in the rain. And so, uh, one of them said, "Well, we know what to do with the whole group," and so they herded us all into, uh, into these Solitary Confinement cells, which were about 2 x 2. You could take two steps, two short steps in both directions. Had nothing in them but a little steel, uh, seat that came out from the wall. There were from twelve to fifteen of each of us in these cells.

INTERVIEWER: In each?

MARY HAMILTON: In each cell.

INTERVIEWER: And how long were you left there?

MARY HAMILTON: We were left in there – we were left in there a good two hours. Uh, two or three, it could have been three hours, really. Now, mind you that the girls who were previously in this section, had been in there two hours before that, without toilet facilities and water. So you can understand how uncomfortable they were. We were very uncomfortable, still. And so, after about three hours, we started banging again. I said to the girls, I said, "Look -" I said, "this," - the girls were very miserable, and I

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said, “Look, this can’t go on. We can’t ruin our health.” So we began banging on the walls, and the sound of course was a big noise and everything. The policemen crowded in again. It’s one thing that – there seems to be a characteristic about these cops. They can never be alone by themselves, and they always must come with their guns and their clubs and their helmets. Anyway, they all herded into the cell and they wanted to know what was up. And I told them, I said, I said, “The girls have been in here for five hours without bathroom facilities and without water, and you can’t treat people this way” and I just went on like this. So, they took all the girls out except me. [Laugh] And left me in there by myself. Well, I was in there for about two hours, and then, finally, I had to leave - [giggle] - So I began banging. And, uh, so they all came in again. Well, they, they, they cussed me out. They just called me everything but a child of God. And uh, one of them came in and said – Well, they discussed, “What are we gonna do with her? How are we going to make her stop the noise?” you know, and so one of them said, “Well, I know what to do with her.” And he opened the gate and he came in, and he – I thought, they had said, said “Willie, take her shoes off of her.” So, I had thought they were just going to ask me for my shoes. Well no, he just came in and he just snatched me, and he just encircled my body with his, his, his arm and he took my shoes off. Well, well, by this time I was pretty angry, and uh, and I guess I was trying to get out, get out of his grasp, and uh, so he got – it was very easy – he just - there was nothing I could do about it. He just slipped my shoes off. And he walked out. And then he must have thought a minute. He walked back in and he snatched me, right in the front and he walloped me with his fist upside my head so hard. I was just stunned. And he was furious. You could

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just see it on his face. And he walked out and locked the gate, and I told him, I said, “You, you ought to be ashamed of yourself. Here you can come in here. You weigh 185 pounds, and you can strike a woman who weighs 105 pounds.” I just let him have it. I told him – and then they were all back in their just laughing and ridiculing me. And so anyway, anyway, so they just left me in there.

MARY HAMILTON: A couple of hours later, they herded us all out and took us up to the third floor. On the way up – I was the last one they took out. - On the way up, uh, uh, a policeman (Badge Number twelve) used his billy club to push me in the back, in my kidneys, up the steps and through the hallways. I wasn’t walking fast enough for him. You learn in jail – I mean, it’s a defense mechanism, in order not to- in order - it’s sort of a natural protest movement, you don’t move as fast as they want you to move. So you just sort of learn automatically to walk slowly. And this was what I was doing. And so he took his club, and he was just pushing me in my kidneys, and he would jab me.

ANNOUNCER: The releases, made possible by parties to the Birmingham Accord who posted bond to free the demonstrators from jail, were slow even on Saturday. Parents and friends stood outside the City Jail as the demonstrators were freed, singly and in small groups, throughout the day.

[Sound outside the jail – traffic, voices, birds, etc.]

REPORTER: I’m standing outside the entrance to the Birmingham City Jail now. There are approximately a hundred people waiting here for friends, relatives, children to be released. They’re being released very slowly. There’s a gentleman here whose been waiting since, when sir?

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FATHER: Since Monday, since Monday.

REPORTER: And who do you have in?

FATHER: I have two daughters.

REPORTER: How old are they?

FATHER: Seventeen and twenty-one.

REPORTER: Seventeen and twenty-one. And how long have they been in?

FATHER: They've been since Monday.

REPORTER: Since Monday. Did they suffer any injuries?

FATHER: No, they said they ain't - they're just not being treated exactly right.

REPORTER: How do you mean they haven't been treated right?

FATHER: They haven't been getting the proper meals, haven't had a good place to sleep on the floor, and all like that – all kinds of inconvenience.

REPORTER: Would you mind giving me your name?

WOMAN: Mary Baca [Sp?].

REPORTER: And you just got out of Birmingham City Jail, did you?

MARY: I sure did.

REPORTER: How long were you in?

MARY: Nine days.

REPORTER: Nine days?

MARY: Uh huh.

REPORTER: When were you arrested?

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MARY: Uh, Thursday.

REPORTER: Thursday?

MARY: Thursday, May 2, May the second.

REPORTER: What were you arrested for?

WOMAN: I was, uh, picketing in front of Kress's [store].

REPORTER: You were picketing in front of Kress's. Well, how were you treated in there?

WOMAN: Oh, well, I was treated – I wasn't treated so good. I mean, we slept on iron beds without any cover. No mattress for four or five days. And then they come in and offered us some filthy mattresses, and we wouldn't accept them. They put them on our bunks and we took them off and piled them back up in the corner. So day before yesterday they come in with some more mattresses. They was kind of clean, but we still refused them. We told them we didn't want them, as soon as they come to the door. But they brought them all any way, and piled them up in the middle of the floor. And so, well he said, well, he say, say "Y'all catch a fire, that should be in this," you know what I mean? And so we stepped over the mattress, and we were yelling, "We don't want them, we don't want them." So another police would come in and say, "If you all don't want them, you all don't have to have them." So he take them - they taken them out of the room.

REPORTER: And now you're here waiting for somebody else to come out.

WOMAN: I'm waiting for my daughter.

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REPORTER: You're waiting for your daughter to come out. How old is your daughter?

WOMAN: Well, she's eighteen.

REPORTER: She's eighteen. And how long has she been in there?

WOMAN: Since Thursday.

REPORTER: JoAnn Anderson. How old are you, JoAnn?

JoAnn Anderson [JA]: I'm eighteen.

REPORTER: You're eighteen. And when were you in jail?

JA: I was in jail the Thursday before D-day.

REPORTER: How long were you in?

JA: I was in four days.

ALEXANDER BROWN [AB]: I'm Alexander Brown.

REPORTER: How old are you, Alexander?

AB: I'm sixteen.

REPORTER: And when did you go to jail?

AB: I went to jail on D-day.

REPORTER: On D-day. And how long were you in?

AB: I was in eight days.

ANDREW MORRISSETTE [AM]: My name is Andrew Morrisette [Sp?]. Twenty years old. I went to jail the Friday after Easter Sunday - I mean the Monday after Easter Sunday, I didn't get out til Friday. I stayed in five days.

REPORTER: How did you treated while you were in?

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AM: Well, the sanitation was lousy on the first days. We had – it was about – there were about 365 of us in one cell, and we were sleeping three abreast, maybe three on top of another. The food was something terrible, you know. But, uh, uh, after Monday – from Thursday until Monday, we suffered, but after Monday we were taken to a new section of the jail, with these ultra modern facilities, and, uh, the food changed considerably. We were served from steam tables and the food was hot, and clean.

REPORTER: Why were you arrested?

MALE DEMONSTRATOR 1: I was arrested for trespassing after a warning, at [UNLCEAR] a department store in town.

REPORTER: Were you arrested with a group, or by yourself?

DEMONSTRATOR 1: I was arrested with a group, there were five of us, and I was the group leader of this group. And they carried us to jail, and they took our pictures, and they fingerprinted us, and they put us in a cell with the rest of the demonstrators, and we stayed there. I mean, we didn't have any beds or showers, just the faucet. We could wash our face and hands. I mean, we couldn't take a shower. We didn't have anywhere to sleep but on the floor, tables and benches. Of course, I mean the food was lousy, but you had to eat a little something to live, you know.

REPORTER: Andy, why were you arrested?

MALE DEMONSTRATOR 2: Well, I was arrested for, uh, march - parading without a permit. There was ninety-seven of us in our group on D-day, and I was the leader of this group. We were arrested. We were officially put under arrest three times before we were

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actually carried to jail, because every time they would stop our group, another group would pass and the policemen would get in the rush and try to catch the other group, and we would go on. So the last time my life was threatened, and so they finally got us.

REPORTER: Your life was threatened?

DEMONSTRATOR 2: Yeah, "Nigger stop or I'll beat the hell out of you."

REPORTER: By a policeman?

DEMONSTRATOR 2: By a policeman. Who was in position right there to crack my skull with a night-stick.

DALE MINOR: The agreement had been reached, but it was, in fact, only a decision to begin. A host of variables remained. And a heavy warning hung over the Negro community, ignored by none, except apparently the Birmingham police. Birmingham had already seen the ushering in of a new phase in the Integration Movement. The Movement had begun to utilize the power of its numbers. It had begun to act en masse, and, for the first time, it involved actively and embraced large numbers of the working class, the poor, the less well-educated. Mothers and fathers, strangers to direct action before, saw their children leave school and stand up to the hated and feared white cops. They were enraged at the hosing and jailing of their children. They learned they did not have to be afraid. They were, however timid at first, proud and impressed with the strength and courage of their own. The nonviolent movement had broadened its base. And, in so doing, based itself on new and unknown factors, some of them not only unknown, but highly volatile. The effect of this demonstration of power on the more

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extreme white segregationists of Birmingham could be expected to cause trouble, and was.

DALE MINOR: All day Saturday, the unnamed threat sat on the Negro community like a dark fog. The questions Negroes asked themselves were less “if?” than “when? where? what?” Some expected trouble to come from official quarters, perhaps the police, for the City Administration under Mayor Hanes had volubly expressed its disgust with the agreement and had indicated it would oppose its implementation.

DALE MINOR: This reporter tried to speak with Police Commissioner Conner, “Bull” Conner, as he is known in Birmingham, whom most Negroes blame for the violence that marked the last two days of the demonstrations. Commissioner Connor, however, had been too often burned by the Northern press.

(SOUND, TRAFFIC, BACKGROUND NOISE)

DALE MINOR: Excuse me. Is Commissioner Connor or – (UNCLEAR) here?

VOICES: He died right here. He got killed.

DALE MINOR: Mr. Connor, Dale Minor, WBAI, New York.

EUGENE CONNOR: Now, wait a minute, I ain’t talking for *no* New York newspaper.

MINOR: Well, couldn’t you just give us a few words, if possible?

CONNOR: Not for *anything* in New York.

MINOR: Well, we just wanted to talk about the whole thing, you know.

CONNOR: But I told you to start with, I won’t talk to no New York newspaper, or TV, or radio.

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MINOR: Well, one of the problems is, we can talk to the Negroes, you know, all we want. We can get them a dime a dozen.

VOICE: This is where you're getting the bad press.

CONNOR: No, I ain't getting *no* press at all, the hell with them - in twenty-two years I've always got a bad press. What the hell's the press? Just a bunch of...if there's another war, that's what's going to cause it. You got that damn thing on?

MINOR: It's around my neck -

CONNOR: You got it hooked on? You taking this down?

MINOR: No, sir, it's not even connected here.

CONNOR: (ASIDE) You go ahead and find me somebody...

(TO MINOR) You know what's the trouble with this country, huh?

MINOR: No, Sir -

CONNOR: Communism, Socialism, and journalism. (LAUGHS)

ANNOUNCER: Saturday afternoon, at a Youth Rally held in the 16th Street Baptist Church, to begin the next item on the Movement's agenda, the voter registration drive, the Reverend James Bevel read aloud a circular, widely publicized that morning, and broadcast once over a local radio station.

(REVEREND BEVEL READING AT THE CHURCH)

REVEREND BEVEL: Because it's violent to disrespect - (UNCLEAR) - Now, I'm going to read something to you. See a lot of folks are thinking of going home to celebrate. We have nothing to celebrate, not yet. I am going to read this. "Attention

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White Christians, Americans of Birmingham. The United Klans of America, Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights Incorporated...

[REVEREND BEVEL FADES, CONTINUES UNDER ANNOUNCER READING]

DALE MINOR: [Reading]: The United Klans of America, the Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the Knights Incorporated, present a public speaking, "White Citizens, Know Your Rights." The City of Birmingham, and the entire United States of America, which was created by your ancestors, for your personal benefit, is under attack. It is under attack by Jews and Negro Communist citizens! The two low races of mankind, the Jew and Negro, are trying and succeeding in their efforts to take over the country that your ancestors fought and died for. The Jew leaders have said, "We shall destroy and import doctrine whether Americans like it or not." The Knights of the Ku Klux Klan rally will assemble on the grounds of the Moose Lodge at 7:30 Saturday evening. The Moose Lodge is located on the Bessemer Highway, Route 11. The date is May 11, 1963. There will be parking for automobiles. Mongrelizers beware! The Klan is riding again."

[REVEREND BEVEL]: - "The date is May 11, 1963. There will be parking for automobiles. Mongrelizers beware! The Klan is riding again."

DALE MINOR: Seven o'clock, Saturday evening. A threatening telephone call was received at the Gaston Motel, warning that that motel would be bombed some time that night. Commissioner Connor's police were immediately notified. Their reply was reportedly: "If you see anything, call us."

DALE MINOR: I talked to Reverend Bevel later Saturday night about possible trouble, and its likely effect on the Agreement.

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(SOUNDS OF TRAFFIC)

REVEREND BEVEL: They are supposed to make some basic change downtown, Monday. And I think they'll make it. So I'm generally satisfied with the Agreement. I wish it could all happen tonight, but tonight you have a Klan's meeting. This is a real problem, and a real dilemma for the merchants here. This bombings and things that have gone on, eighteen or so, none of them has been disc - This is a real dilemma for White people of good will. And I, *we* have to recognize this.

(SOUNDS IN COFFEE SHOP)

ANNOUNCER: Our interview concluded at about 11:30 PM. Afterward, three reporters sat in the coffee shop of the Gaston Motel, headquarters for Martin Luther King and the various elements of the Movement. From 11:30 'til midnight we talked shop, wondered aloud, and waited. As the hour approached midnight, one of the three, tired of waiting, rose to go.

(SOUND EFFECTS: TELEPHONE RINGING, FOOTSTEPS, TELEPHONE IS PICKED UP)

ANNOUNCER: This has been Part One of Pacifica Radio's "Freedom Now."

End of Transcript of "Freedom Now!" – Part One

NOTES:

1. "Freedom Now!" was produced from tape recordings made in Birmingham Alabama, and New York City by Pacifica Reporter Dale Minor. Field recordings were made between May 11 and May 14, 1963. ACLU attorney Charles Morgan was recorded in

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WBAI studios in New York City. The program was produced and edited by Dale Minor and Chris Koch. Technical production was by Bob Kramer.

2. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., [1929 – 1968], President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). His work in the American Civil Rights Movement was honored by the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1964. He was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting striking sanitation workers.

3. Reverend Ralph Abernathy, [1926 – 1990], Baptist minister, Secretary-Treasurer of the SCLC, who, along with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized seminal protests against segregation, including the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott in 1955.

4. Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth, [b. 1922]. Co-organizer of SCLC (with Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. and Reverend Ralph Abernathy).

4. Democratic Republic of the Congo (Republique Democratique du Congo), formerly Zaire (1971-1997), earlier the Belgian Congo, gained independence from Belgium on June 30, 1960. Patrice Lumumba (of the leftist Mouvement National Congolais) was elected Prime Minister; Joseph Kasavubu (ABAKO) became head of state. Soon afterward, under the leadership of Moise Tshombe led Katanga Province to secede from the union. He became president of Katanga. Still in 1960, in an army coup, Kasavubu displaced Lumumba, who was assassinated after being turned over to Katangan forces. American, Belgian and United Nations involvement kept the west-central African nation on front pages around the world in the early 1960's.

[Source: infoplease.com]

5. SEARCH: Pacifica Radio Archives Public Access Catalog for related recordings. “Dale Minor” “Chris Koch” “Martin Luther King” “Ralph Abernathy” “Lumumba” “Civil Rights”

6. SEE: “Freedom Now!” Part II.

Pacifica Radio Archives Number BB0385b

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