# CLARENCE JONES
## Advisor and Personal Lawyer
## Interviewed by Trey Ellis
## July 26, 2017
## Total Running Time: 2 hours 47 minutes

00:00:04:00 TREY ELLIS:
We'll just start in the beginning, if you can tell us about, you know, how you first met Doctor King and how he roped you in to all of this?

00:00:14:00 CLARENCE JONES:
I met Doctor King when I was twenty-nine years old. It was the first week in February, I believe, nineteen sixty, and he was thirty-one. The occasion for the meeting was a telephone call I had received from a Hubert Delaney, who was a Judge Hubert Delaney in New York, who had known me and had been helpful to me in making a recommendation for me to get into law school, early admission, so I wouldn't have to wait another year. I was trying to go to Columbia Law School, but they said, "No, positions are filled and you have to wait another year," and I didn't want to do that since I had already been in the United States Army and- through the end of the Korean War for two years, and I was, you know, I wanted to go and get on with my life after I got out of the Army in nineteen fifty-five. In any event, so he calls me, he says, "Clarence," he says, "I am the chief counsel of this Negro preacher, you know, this preacher in Alabama, and Martin Luther King Jr, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr." I said, "Yes, I heard of him." He said, "Well, he's been indicted by the state of Alabama for tax evasion and perjury, lying on his state income tax return. And that I have, as part of my defense team, two very able, distinguished Negro tax lawyers from Chicago. Robert Ming and Robert Leighton." One of them, I don't remember which one, was actually the lawyer for the Illinois Department of Internal Revenue Service. Encyclopedic on federal and state taxes. "And then I have a young man in Montgomery by the name of Fred Gray, all very able lawyers, but what I really need, Clarence, and I would like for you to help me. I'd like for you to be my law clerk. I'd like for you to help in the preparation of the defense of the case."

00:02:19:00 And when he first spoke with me, I thought he was talking about doing research. Now this is February nineteen sixty. And I didn't really think about it, but I figured, well, you know, I would go and do research in a library and I would just send it to him special delivery. We didn't have any internet, I don't even recall whether we had fax machines. But anyway, I knew what I would, and he said, "No, no, no, no, that's not gonna work. No, you need to go down there." And when he described in detail what he was in fact requesting me to do, and I, I said, "Judge, I am so sorry, but I simply cannot do that." And he was very disappointed in me, and it was very

difficult for me to say no to him. That was on a Thursday evening. The next morning, very early, I get a call from Judge Delaney again, only this time, he says, "I did not know it at the time of our conversation last night, Clarence, Thursday night, but, you know, Doctor King is in the air now. He's on his way to Los Angeles. He has a speaking engagement. And then he's going to be speaking as a guest preacher in the Baptist church over in a colored neighborhood somewhere in Los Angeles. But I told him to take advantage of the change in time, that he's going to land about eleven forty-five your time, and I told him the very first thing he should do is rent a car, come out and see you."

00:03:53:00 I was, I mean, in a suburb outside of Los Angeles, Altadena, California. So, I'm thinking to myself, oh no, because I already told the Judge, you know, I couldn't go down to Montgomery, Alabama, so, I didn't know how I could credibly say I wouldn't agree to meet Doctor King. Now, as I say when I tell this story, and I've told it on more than one occasion, in nineteen sixty Doctor King was very popular. Aside from having been identified with the success and earlier, four, five years earlier when the Montgomery bus boycott, he had also been on the cover picture story of TIME, Look, and Life magazine. So, when I told my wife at the time, who is now deceased, that Martin Luther King, Jr. was coming to our home, you would have thought that in two thousand seventeen terms, that an amalgamation of Michael Jackson, George Clooney, Matthew McConaughey, Ben- oh, I can't think of the Fences, you know, the great black actor-

TREY ELLIS:
Denzel.

00:05:23:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Denzel Washington, thank you. All contemporary stars. You would think that that was who was coming to our home. Thursday evening, he walks into our home, the bell rings. Go to the bell, there he is, standing there. Comes into the house. He's accompanied by Reverend Bernard Lee, who traveled with him. My wife had prepared some little snacks for coffee, sit around the coffee table. After some initial pleasantries, he leans forward on the coffee table, puts his hands on the coffee table and leans forward, closer to me, and he says, "You know, Lawyer Jones, Attorney Jones," he says, "You know, we have lots of white lawyers from the Midwest, from the Northeast, who help us with our cause.

00:06:26:00 But what we need, Mr. Jones, are young Negro lawyers like you to help me and our people as we're struggling for freedom in the South." So, I said, "Doctor King, as I said to Judge Delaney, I wish I could help you, but I simply cannot help you if it means going down to Montgomery, Alabama." And then he began to tell me, in a little more detail, of what he was seeking to do, or what he was doing. And I listened, and he asked me some questions about myself, you know. And I told him about I was the only child of live-in domestic household servants, I lived with my parents on and off before I was six years of age, and then they- I lived with them in the servants' quarters of the household of the people for whom they worked as a- my mother a maid and a cook, my father, he was a chauffeur and a gardener. I told him all that.

00:07:40:00 And that at the age of six, thereabouts, my mother principally decided to put me in a Catholic boarding school run by the- founded by Sister Katharine Drexel, member of the Drexel family of Philadelphia, very wealthy family. Apparently, she took a part of her trust that she shared with her brother, also named Drexel, founded the Drexel Institute and other things, and she funded this school that had a plaque on the outside of the doors called, the School for Indigent, meaning "poor," didn't know it at the time, Indigent Colored Boys and Indians, meaning Indians, young boys who were from the reservations in New Mexico and Arizona, because they apparently had mission schools there. So that's where I- they placed me there from the age of six until fourteen and I stayed there most of the time except during the summers, when I would spend time with my parents, wherever they were. And I told him that. And I also told him that one of the most painful experiences of my life was the death of my mother when I was in my third year in college. My mother saw me graduate as valedictorian from a public high school in *[unclear]* New Jersey. Never saw me graduate from college. Never saw me graduate from law school. Had one daughter, baby daughter at the time. Never saw her daughter- never saw her grandchild. That was, you know, that was very painful for me, you know?

00:09:36:00 And I also told him that when my mother died, I was taking an examination on January eighth, nineteen fifty-two. The date of my birthday at Columbia College. The proctor taps me on the phone, he says, "Are you Clarence Jones?" I say, "Yes." "There's an emergency call for you." And they- after some quick- he said, "Well, why don't you finish your essay, finish your" ... So, I finish my- that part of the examination, I leave, and I go into the office of the dean at Columbia College. And he said, "Yes, you have to call the hospital, there's an urgent message." I finally reach my father. They had operated on my mother that day, earlier that day, on January eighth, for colon cancer. The cancer, to use the doctor's words, had spread so much and so severely that they had to remove- bring her bowel track outside of her body, and put it outside. Colonoscopy, I didn't understand any of that at the time. They were dramatic in their description of what they had to do, and very clinical. They just said "She probably has three to four months to live, maximum, if that." That's what my birthday present ... January nineteen fifty-two. I got myself together, quickly went down, anyway, so, I told Doctor King that, and some other things. He leaves. At which point, my wife turns to me, in a somewhat, not somewhat, in a critical, almost sarcastic voice she says "What do you think you are doing that's so important that you can't go and help this man who came all this distance to ask for your assistance?"

00:11:43:00 And so, as I've said on other occasions I got into what can best be described as my young lawyer's bag. I simply said, "Anne," her name, "That is simply factually untrue. He has a speaking engagement this weekend, in Los Angeles, and Judge Delaney thought that since he was gonna be out here, that he should take advantage of being out and come to see me. But he did not come out here specifically to ask for my help." And then, I added in a kind of anger at her, and angry at the situation. I said "Besides, aside, just because some negro preacher got his hand caught in the cookie jar stealing, that ain't my problem. And if he wasn't guilty he wouldn't have been indicted." She says "I don't believe you, you're a lawyer, how can you talk that

way?" I said "That's the way I feel." So, my first book was "What Would Martin Say?" And as I describe this instance in the first chapter, that was a cold night in the Jones' household that night. She was pissed at me.

00:12:47:00 Alright. So… that was a Friday night and the next morning, very early in the morning, also California time, I answer the phone, a voice on the other end of the phone is just dripping sweet with saccharine honey. "Mr. Jones?" "Yes?" "My name is Dora McDonald." "Yes?" "You know, Mr. Jones ... " "Yes?" "You know, Doctor King, he enjoyed so much his visit with you and Mrs. Jones, but you know, Mr. Jones he forgot. He forgot to invite you to be his guest tomorrow. He's preaching in the Baptist church, in this church in Baldwin Hills. And he wanted to be sure that I reached you so that you and your wife could come as his guests." Now, my wife is about seven months pregnant at the time, and she says "Well, you may not be going to Montgomery, Alabama, but you're going to that church," still in a kind of belligerent mood. So, I, you know, I go to see Doctor King in this Baptist church... The pastor then was Reverend H. B. Charles. I'd only been in Los Angeles for seven and a half months, but I quickly came to understand that Baldwin Hills, at that time, if you were a negro of any degree of financial success; a doctor, a lawyer, a businessperson, and you had money, you probably lived in Baldwin Hills. It was the equivalent of, like, white Beverly Hills or Bel Aire.

00:14:34:00 So, I go to this Baptist church, the minister's name is Reverend H.B. Charles, about thirteen hundred people. I'm sitting about one third of the distance from the pulpit. He's introduced by the resident minister. Doctor King gets up, and he says "Ladies and Gentlemen, brothers and sisters, the text of my sermon today is the role and responsibility of the negro professional to aid our less fortunate brothers and sisters who are struggling for our freedom in the south." So, I thought to myself immediately that this is one smart dude, that he was smart enough to come and choose this place where all these black bourgeoisie professionals were, just could not have chosen a better audience to give his message. I repeat, I never seen or heard Martin Luther King, Jr. speak before. But I should also add, I never heard any other human being with the attributes and characteristics of a human being, with two arms and a leg walking around, I'd never heard anybody. His speech and his voice was mesmerizing. It was spellbinding. And he covered some of the things that he said to me across the table in my living room, with my wife and I about what he was doing in the south. But in the sermon, it was filled with much more detail, much more texture, and much more power.

00:16:40:00 And then during the course of this powerful, mesmerizing speech, he says "For example, there's a young man sitting in this church today. My friends in New York, for whom I have great respect, my friends in New York tell me this young man, his brains have been touched by Jesus." So, I'm thinking ... I mean, I don't think bears any rational relationship to me, I'm curious. "They tell me that this young man, a young lawyer, that when he goes and does research on any problem, they tell me, in his research he goes all the way back to the time of ten sixty-six and William the Conqueror, and Magna Carta." So, at that time I began to pay a little attention to him, because I'm thinking about, as well spoken as this Baptist speaker is, how's he knows anything about the history of English common law, after all I'm a lawyer, I know

something about that. So, I began to really pay attention. I said, this is a man who knows something, you know. And then he says "They further tell me that when he finds, when he does his legal research, and he writes down what he finds on a page, the words are so compelling they just jump off the page."

00:18:17:00 Now, at that point, I then become very interested, because knowing that it bears no rational description to me, I then begin to think opportunistically. I've only been to Los Angeles for seven and a half months. Whoever this young man is he's describing, when this church service is over, I'm gonna find out who he is, because if he's that good, he can be helpful to me. You know, he's gotta be something, so, you know, so… And then he seamlessly went on, he said "You know, but I had a chance to meet this young man the other night in his home in Altadena, California," and I said to myself, "Oh, Lord," and I sort of tried to just make myself as small as I could in the pew of the church. Now, now, what I had told Doctor King in the discussion about myself and my parents being live-in domestic household servants ... It wasn't any state secret, but I didn't expect him to go repeat it to 1300 strangers, so it was reminiscent of that hit song years ago, by Roberta Flack, "Killing Me Softly with Your Songs." He was killing me softly, telling me the songs about my life. And then he did something that was very unfair. He said, "You know, his parents were live-in domestic household servants. His Momma was a maid and a cook, and his father was a chauffeur and a gardener, but he has forgotten from whence he came."

00:20:09:00 And then, there is an actual poem by Langston Hughes, the negro poet and author, captioned "Letter from Mother to Son." It's an actual poem. Now, in the poem that Langston Hughes wrote, it describes a negro woman who was a domestic, who was scrubbing stairs, and she pauses periodically, and she says, "I'm doing this for you, Son. Life ain't been no crystal stair." So what Doctor King did, he changed the lyrics and made my mother the actor in the poem and changed the lyrics like my mother was talking. But when he did that, I started crying. *[unclear]* with tears. I'm sitting there ... Because I immediately saw, like, a video picture of my mother in her domestic uniform, serving uniform, my parents, and I'm really disturbed. Church service is over. I said he was very popular, so he was standing outside of the church on the steps to the pulpit signing autographs, and as I came into view walking over to him and he saw me, he says, "You know, I never mentioned your name, Mr. Jones. I never mentioned your name. Sometimes we Baptist preachers- I never mentioned your name." I didn't say anything. I just kept walking. I walked over to him until I got to him, and I took my left arm and grabbed his right arm and took my right hand and put it in his right hand and pulled him to me, still a little teary eyed, and I said, "Doctor King, when do you want me to go to Montgomery, Alabama?" Now, that's what I call, in writing about it, the making of a disciple.

TREY ELLIS:
What happened with that tax evasion case?

00:22:31:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, the verdict came out in April nineteen sixty in Montgomery, Alabama before an all-white jury, an acquittal. Now, think about it, here is a controversial civil rights

leader that gets acquitted by an all-white jury in Montgomery, Alabama. So when the jury was polled, and you found out that the reasons behind the acquittal- first of all, the jurors lived in the community, and the two tax lawyers, principally from Chicago, they just destroyed, they wiped the floor with the government's case. And it was clear in the published accounts of the trial that if somebody had voted for conviction, they would look like a fool. They would've been- people would've say, "I'm not an integrationist, I don't agree with anything Martin Luther King did, but I'm not dumb, I'm not a dummy." You know? And so, he was acquitted by an all-white jury, and I remember him saying, "We did it." And I said, "No, we didn't do anything," I said "Judge Hubert Delaney and Fred Gray and those two tax lawyers, that's what did it." And I said, "I want to try to get over." And he said, "No, you're my lucky rabbit's foot. You can't go." So, we all insisted on going out and having something to eat thereafter before I could go back to New York. It was extraordinary that local citizens put their own pride of not being made a fool of over their racism. In that case, anyway.

00:24:45:00 Now, I know you're probably going to ask me maybe some other questions about Martin Luther King, Jr., and other questions about that period of time. I'm- as I said, I'm eighty-six. I didn't say it, but I'm eight-six, going on eighty-seven years old in January. And, you know, there's an African proverb that says if surviving lions don't tell their stories, the hunters will get all the credit. So, I'm more than anxious to tell some of those stories. Martin Luther King, Jr., to the extent that we will talk about him further, and other people ... I hate to burden you with the consequence of my also being a professor. I teach ... And when I teach students particular courses I created, for example, called "From Slavery to Obama: Renewing the Promise of Reconstruction," and we get to that point in the course, which is a 15-week course for undergraduate students at the University of San Francisco, which I originally taught at Stanford University at the graduate school for students getting their master's degree in liberal arts. But when we get to that point in this political survey of slavery, the institution of slavery, the concomitant doctrine of white supremacy, take it on up to Obama and past. Okay?

00:26:34:00 And we talk about the period in that journey when Martin Luther King, Jr., in the twentieth century comes on the scene, and I say to my students ... I want them to have a very accurate remembrance of the position of Martin Luther King, Jr. in the landscape and pantheon in American history. And this is the time I say to them, "This is the only time during this course," they come to my course with laptops and iPads and notebooks. I say, "This is the only time I want you to write down every single word I'm about ready to say to you, because I don't want there to be any confusion." And I say, "First of all, you should understand in the twentieth century that Martin Luther King, Jr., was the preeminent apostle of nonviolence, love, and the commitment to the pursuit of personal excellence.

00:27:41:00 But, in order for you to bracket his position in the pantheon in the journey of American history, this is what you must remember: in twelve years and four months from nineteen fifty-six until April fourth, nineteen sixty-eight, the date of his assassination, with the exception of the presidency of Abraham Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation of eighteen sixty-three, Martin Luther King, Jr. may

have done more to achieve political, social, economic justice and access to economic opportunity and voting rights than any other person or event in the previous four hundred year history of the United States. Translated in two seventeen vernacular, he was a bad dude." That's the person for whom I had no interest, but I ended up being privileged to work for initially as a political advisor, personal lawyer, and draft speech writer for seven and a half years.

00:29:29:00 And we can talk about other things, but one thing I just wanted to set the record straight, when I said he was a preeminent apostle of nonviolence, he was. But I was not committed to nonviolence when I met Doctor King, and I made that very clear to him. And that used to upset him because he tried to convince me that- No, I said, "No, no, no, that's what you believe and I respect you and try to be the best lawyer." But I said, "White man puts his hand on me, he's going down, Martin." And he said, "Well, why do you say that? Why do you think" I said, "Well, you know, I mean, you know, I was in the United States Infantry, you know, United States military, played football, you know, I mean, I'm physical, that's just not my style, you know. I'm not for initiating any kind of violence against anyone. But somebody puts a hand on me, forget it." He said, "Well, I can't, you know ..." Dorothy Cotton used to say, you know, "We can't have Clarence involved in any demonstrations, you know, because he says I've been disciplined to be non-violent.'" I say, "Yeah, Martin." I said, "Well, that's smart." That's why jokingly he said, "Well, that's why I don't ever want you to be part of a demonstration." He said, "How's it going to look if my lawyer's in jail," like that. So that's just ... But you know, that was ...

00:30:51:00 There was a lot that happened during the period of time, you know. I hear ... As we are now getting two thousand eighteen coming on the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination, in two thousand eighteen, of his assassination in Memphis, all sorts of media, all sorts of people are coming out of the woodwork, are asking questions about him, many of them asking questions which have what I call their own revisionist theory of history. They talk about Robert Kennedy; they talk about Jack Kennedy, they talk about Malcolm X, they talk about President Obama. And I paraphrase something that is very relevant to today's discussion spoken by Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. "Everybody's entitled to their own facts, but they're not entitled to their own opinion." Now, I know there are other people, I mean, there are people for whom I have great respect like John Lewis, Dorothy Cotton, C.T. Vivian, Diane Nash Bevel, Jesse Jackson, maybe others I'm omitting, of course, that ... Xernona Clayton and people like that who were alive at the time when Martin King was alive. They had a different relationship with him. The relationship that John Lewis and Dorothy Cotton, Jesse and Andy had, they're quality and they're different than the kind of relationship I had. I… they were part of the, in one way or another, the SCLC organization.

00:32:55:00 I was not part of the SCLC organization. SCLC didn't pay me. There was a period of time when my work with him overlapped when I was also an investment banker in Wall Street. I think it's fair to say that as a lawyer, from practicing law and other things, I know as a matter of fact that in one year I made more money than all the combined salaries of everybody on the staff of Southern Christian Leadership Conference. They didn't pay me a damn thing. Everything I did, didn't even pick up

my, occasionally, they'd pick up a hotel, but most of my travel was picked up on my then American Express card and reimbursed by Southern- So- And that, in a strange way, I think it affected how Doctor King looked at me and another person I was very, very close to, Stanley David Levison. Neither of us were in any way financially dependent, nor ever took or wanted a penny from him or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

00:34:08:00 In fact, as the history will record, and it's uncomfortable for some people, but the fact of the matter is there are persons like Harry Belafonte, Stanley David Levison, and at sometimes a white lawyer by the name of Harry Wachtel, and myself, collectively; we were the collective financial reservoir that kept Doctor King and his family afloat. And chief among them was Harry Belafonte. And so, I get really personally offended when I hear or read one of the more adult King children say, one, they didn't know about it, or two, they express this anger at Harry over one thing or another. And I say, "Well, hold on. He's the man that paid for their schooling, that let them go to school. He's the man that paid for the domestic household servants." And when there was a critical time when he didn't have any money, it was Danny Levison, Harry Wachtel, Harry Belafonte and Clarence Jones that sent the King family money. So, I don't want to hear a damn ill word about any one of those persons who spoke, particularly Harry who is ninety years old.

00:35:50:00 TREY ELLIS:
Can you tell us a little about, as long as we're talking about Stanley Levison, can you set up who he was and his relationship…?

00:35:57:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Stanley David Levison. I believe Stanley met Doctor King in nineteen fifty-six. I think he was introduced to him by Bayard Rustin. Stanley knew Doctor King before I did. Stanley was a very interesting person. He had an identical twin. They had different names, but they were identical twins. You seen them in the room it was just like identical twins. The identical twin's name was Roy Bennett. Stanley was a real estate management person, real estate lawyer, and he and his brother, they figure prominently in the history of the civil rights movement, particularly related to Doctor King, because he and his brother at one time had, in fact, been members of the Communist party. In fact, they had, in New York, been one of the principal sources of financing for, not only the Communist party in New York, but the Communist party nationally. They were very successful business entrepreneurs. They owned some car dealerships, laundromats and- at least Stanley did, owned a laundromat in Guayaquil, Ecuador, also some various entrepreneurial scrap metal business with another left-wing person by the name of Joseph Filner whose son became the mayor of San Diego before he shot himself in the foot over some sexual nonsense.

00:37:50:00 But anyways, Stanley's older and had developed a very close friendship with Doctor King, and when Doctor King began to tell Stanley about me, as I look back on it, I didn't know it at the time, Stanley was one of the people who encouraged Doctor King to see whether he could persuade me to move from California to New York so I

could be more helpful to him because Martin had spoken so highly of me to Stanley. So that's how Stanley and I became good friends. He was a political advisor and draft speech writer for Martin Luther King, Jr., and I began to join him in that role. And there came a time when Stanley's former- having been an open member of the Communist party, was used by the Kennedys, particularly Robert Kennedy. Specifically, there was a meeting planning the March on Washington in June twenty-first or June twentieth, in the Rose Garden in nineteen sixty-three and President Kennedy pulls Martin Luther King, Jr. aside and he says, "I want to have a walk with you. I want to talk with you." And they walked in the Rose Garden, and Kennedy says, "My brother and J. Edgar says that one of your ... you have two close people working with you, Stanley Levison and a Jack O'Dell, and they are members of the Communist party, and you've gotta get rid of them immediately." And, Martin, he tells me the story later, he says, "Well, I knew about Stanley. I did not know about Jack O'Dell."

00:39:57:00 Now, Jack O'Dell had been a member of the Communist party, been apparently on the Communist party's so-called national committee, but he'd also been an organizer in Louisiana in the National Maritime Union, I think. And so, one thing lead to another after that meeting in the Rose Garden, I never will forget, Martin said, "I have to see you urgently." And I said, "Well, no," "I need to talk to you urgently," I said, "It would just take…" "No, I don't want to talk about it over the phone." So, we agreed that I would meet him in Washington, D.C. at which point he told me about what had been told to him by the President. And then he turns to me, rather funny, he says, "Well, what do you think? Do you think Stanley's a communist? Do you think Stanley has returned or become a communist again?" And I said, "What are you asking me for?" I said, "You introduced me to Stanley," I said- and then I said something like, "As a matter of fact, if Stanley Levison is a communist, he's got to be the most flexible human being with time I've ever seen. I spend so much with Stanley. Every time I see him the only time he's spending with his wife and his young son, Andy. And he and I spend so much time with Doctor King and then he's managing his real estate properties for this woman Alice Lowey. I don't know when he has the time to be this so-called communist. And he's never discussed it with me." "Well, I need you to do an investigation." I said, "You want me to do what?" He says, "Yes."

00:41:46:00 So, now I think about it, boy, when you start giving into red-baiting. He wanted to create a process where he could go back to the Attorney General and said that he had done what the Attorney General had asked. And so, he made me the chairman of an ad hoc investigative committee of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and we were having a special meeting in Asheville, North Carolina, and I was to investigate about whether Stanley was a communist and then report. So, I then go and I meet with Stanley. I tell him exactly what happened. Now, Stanley's reaction ... And I'm writing about this, so I don't mind telling you. You're not going to preempt what I'm writing about because the more people that know the better ... Stanley's immediate reaction, "You have to tell Martin that he has to immediately stop calling me. He cannot call me anymore." He said, "It's clear that they want to use me in order to discredit him." You have to tell him, "Don't take any exceptions. He cannot

talk to me. I will not call him. If he wants to know anything, you and I talk anyway. You can talk to him, you can share with him. Okay? Now, Jack is another problem," he says, "We're going to have to…"so we had to work out a strategy, and his recommendation was that we were going to have to tell Martin to say that he didn't know what he didn't know, he didn't know that Jack, whom I became very close to, loved, still love, he's still living, ninety- I'm going on eighty-seven, Jack is about ninety-one, the Vancouver commission. So, we had to terminate Jack, to let him go. But the point is, Stanley's reaction was, I mean, instant, his dedication to Martin. Now, when I told Martin Stanley's reaction, he resisted. He said, "No, no, no." I said, "I'm just telling you verbatim. He does not want you to call him. He says, this you have to do."

00:44:19:00 Now, let me go back and tell you about what Kennedy- what Martin said that President Kennedy said to him. I wasn't there. I'm only telling you what Martin King told me. Okay? And I think Nick Bryant, who wrote a book, "Bystander," he reports the same thing, almost identical to what I'm going to tell you. Apparently, President Kennedy is walking with Martin Luther King, Jr. in the Rose Garden. He says, "You know, we're in the Civil Rights thing together, and if you go down, we could go down." He says, "I don't want to be in a situation of like Harold Macmillan." Harold Macmillan was a prime minister, labor prime minister, of the UK government, and one of his cabinet ministers, Lord Profumo, had been having an affair with a woman by the name of Christine Keeler, who at the same time was having an affair with a top Soviet espionage agent, and this on the disclosure caused the Macmillan government to fall. And Kennedy said, "If we have something like that, we could fall, so you have to take immediate action." Stanley was brilliant. He loved Martin Luther King, Jr., Martin Luther King, Jr. loved Stanley Levison.

00:46:06:00 A very difficult time occurred for me and Doctor King and Stanley Levison, when sometime, I think it was nineteen sixty-two, I have to check my records, Stanley got a subpoena from the Internal Security Committee, the McCarran Committee or something, dealing with communists. And so, the first question on getting the subpoena, the first question, did we- we have to tell Martin, and who's going to tell him and when should we tell him? And a related question, we both said, "Well, I can't represent you. I can't." And so, it was such a sensitive matter, Stanley said, "I want you to use your best judgment as to who do you think should best represent me without having any negative adverse effects on Martin *[unclear]*." And I had developed a very good relationship, so had Doctor King, with William Kunstler. William Kunstler was an excellent trail lawyer, had his own practice, but did some work with the American Civil Liberties Union. And Stanley says, "But I don't know Bill Kunstler," and so I had to go over and see William Kunstler in his office, and I had to tell him why I was coming to see him, and I had to get his agreement under certain specific conditions, that he would represent Stanley Levison, which he did. And then, of course, I told Stanley his ultimate advice that he should rely on is Bill Kunstler, not me, even though we were very close as the lawyer, but Stanley also said, "Well," he says, "There are legal issues and there are political issues." Stanley was a very smart guy.

00:48:24:00 TREY ELLIS:
You talk about you had a vision- You were nonviolent until you came to nineteen sixty-seven. There was this- You had a sort of "come to Jesus" moment.

CLARENCE JONES:
Yeah.

TREY ELLIS:
Can you talk about that?

00:48:36:00 CLARENCE JONES:
November twenty-second, nineteen sixty-three, John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. November twenty-third, Saturday, that was- November twenty-second was a Friday. November twenty-third, Doctor King flew up to LaGuardia Airport to meet with me, because he was being besieged about having to write a letter to issue in response to the Kennedy assassination, and the elevation of then Vice President Johnson to the presidency. So, we spent about four and a half hours drafting a statement in the lounge area of Eastern Airlines. But I never will forget Doctor King coming down the- deplaning from Eastern Airlines, and seeing me, but almost as if he wasn't talking to me. It was just like he was talking to the public. He says, "You see, if they can kill the president, they can kill any me- they can get to me." As he's walking up he said, "We've got to stop all this nonsense," about trying to protect him. Now, three people, you and I and two other people and Doctor King, we're walking down the street, having a conversation, and a car would backfire, we would continue our conversation, and you would look down and Martin would be all clenched down, immediately crunched down.

00:50:24:00 He had come to the conclusion after the assassination of Doctor King- and the assassination of President Kennedy, my apologies, it was more likely than not somebody was going to kill him. You know, I never thought about that macabre- I mean, we thought about it, but not so actively, until that incident. And then I wasn't there all the time, but just for a brief period of time, but I heard how he was treated when he went to Chicago, when he went to Skokie, Illinois, Skokie, and Martin said to me, he says, "Clarence, I've seen some hate-filled eyes and mouths in Mississippi and Alabama," he said," but the hate I saw in Illinois was equal or greater than the hate I've seen in Mississippi." He was really shaken. I began to see, after this fanfare of the March on Washington, after the efforts of the Poor People's Campaign didn't work out, and so forth, particularly after he went to Illinois, I began to see the absolute sheer, raw courage. He was fearless- no, he was fearful, but he was fearless. You know, one of the reasons he was fearless was that he deeply, genuinely believed that no human being, no person, no entities could protect them except one, in his mind being, a spiritual being. And quoting his words and that was his "Lord Jesus Christ. Nobody can protect me. Nobody." But it inflamed a certain courage that was remarkable. And so, I saw him over a period of time of how courageous and fearless he was although he was afraid. And it humbled me.

00:53:16:00 I had observed Doctor King, whom he indicated to me and to others, that there was no human being or anything on this earth that could protect him, that he was under the protection of his Lord Jesus Christ. So, you might say, well, that's the deep belief of a religious fanatic, you know. Well, I wouldn't call him a fanatic, I would call him a deeply committed person to his Christian religion. But I also had a chance to observe him, who was afraid, but in the end, he was fearless and it humbled me. And I said, that this man goes into situations that I wouldn't even think about going into, you know. I mean, willingly initiates them. And I have to say that that's a bad dude. That is really a bad dude. And so, I don't remember the exact date, but sometime I know it's between sixty-six and sixty-seven, and I said I hope someday to be able to have the courage of a Martin Luther King, Jr. because of all how bad I was trained in the United States Military, how bad I was at times of football and so forth, I had not mastered to overcome fear like he had. And so, it was the example in which he became an exemplar of the power of nonviolence. And I say he's got me. And that's why I just became committed to nonviolence intellectually and philosophically and spiritually.

00:55:48:00 And then what really got me committed was when he and I would have a discussion about the political effectiveness of nonviolence in which he said, "Clarence, segregationist adversaries and adversaries that oppose social justice, that thing that they would like to use to blur out or to dismiss the content of the truth of the message of what we're seeking to do, is to have all that blurred up by the form in which they think we're trying to communicate it. They want the public to focus on the violence of what they're going to characterize as violence, because then they can get the public to focus on what they will characterize as our violence. Then they can dismiss the content of our message." So, then I said this is one brilliant MF. Because what he's saying, he's saying the reason why nonviolence is effective politically because it removes, it disarms a weapon of your adversary to obscure it and defeat the content of your message. Now if you can't tell me that that's not a brilliant dude, I don't know what. Okay. Now, fast forwards. Okay? I've said this- I delivered this message to some of the leaders of the Black Lives Matters movement, not, and I want to make it very clear, not in any way that they were advocating violence, but I told them about the strategic necessity of having the discipline in their movement. They can shout and call the man any sort of names they want to call him, and carrying whatever placards, but don't fall for the bait of being violent because that's exactly what your adversaries want to do to obscure the truthfulness of your message. So, that's why I said he was without question the most powerful person in the Western World in the twentieth Century, in my opinion. And admittedly that's not an objective opinion.

00:58:37:00 TREY ELLIS:
The- I wonder- You talk about- You talk so personally about Doctor King, Martin King, as your friend. In terms of personally- you know, people talk about how he was funny or irreverent. For a reverend he was sometimes irreverent. Are there any examples of that? Things that people would you know ...

00:58:55:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, actually quantitatively Andy Young, for example, probably spent much more time quantitatively with Doctor King than I did. And Dorothy Cotton to a lesser extent. My own personal humorous experience is that I know he was conflicted by what I call the public and the private persona about smoking. I did smoke. And he was always, he would struggle. He really wanted to smoke, but he didn't want the public, he didn't want to be perceived as a smoker. And the other thing he felt that being around him subjected him to have to deal with a double standard because I would, you know, I'd sit down and openly I'd order some martinis, then after some martinis I'd have a Jack Daniels. And he liked bourbon you know? And a little scotch sometimes.

01:00:11:00 TREY ELLIS:
Sorry, we have to pause because of the sound.

CREW:
Helicopter.

01:00:17:00 CLARENCE JONES:
We were- not that we never ate out at restaurants, and when we did, it was always in negro, colored restaurants. But many times, we would be having- we would be the guest in homes that one or more of us would be staying in. We were staying, people would fix us dinner for him and others of us who were close with him. And I remember being on one occasion, where he would say to his host, "Now, don't sit Clarence next to me because Clarence, that," he says, "that young brother," he said, "he may be a good lawyer, but he don't have good manner sometimes because if you turn your back, he's snatch a piece of chicken right off your plate," which I would do, if I thought his chicken looked better than mine. He would tell me- I said, "That's how I'd been raised in boarding school." We had to snatch whatever food came to the table quickly.

01:01:12:00 And he had a good way of imitating people, you know, and he would imitate Andy, or he would say, "Now, have you seen the way Clarence Jones walks into a room sometimes, when he's in New York? He walks into it like he owns the place. You know, he's walking in there with his tailormade suits and his Rolex watch." He says, "I'd like to know where that comes from." He had humor, and he would also sometimes in a kind of maudlin kind of humor and dealing with the possibility that he or somebody else could be assassinated, never talked about himself, but he would say, like, "Now, Andy, if you do something foolish and you go out there and get assassinated, killed," he said, "I promise, I'm going to preach the best funeral for you. I'm going to preach a funeral for you." And that was a way of externalizing the fact that he had to somehow talk about the elephant in the room that we all had to live with.

01:02:27:00 He had great affection for Andy, great affection for Andy, great affection for Bernard. Sometimes Andy and Martin would be like two boys, you know, jostling with one another. In Doctor King's case, I thought it was always a case of covering this twenty-four-seven sense of fear, which he never talked about, but you could sense. And the most difficult time in his life was the eighteen months before his assassination, very difficult time. He went through what somebody- what some could describe as very difficult emotional times. He had a doctor in New York, Doctor Logan, his first name escapes me now, married to Marianne Logan, personal physician. And Martin was in a very difficult period of time in nineteen sixty-seven, and I know that Doctor Logan wanted him to have some other kind of support counseling, psychiatric counseling, for example.

01:04:50:00 And there came a time when Doctor Logan wanted to talk with me, and I wouldn't have a discussion about Martin King without Stanley Levison. I remember sitting with Doctor Logan, and he's, you know, we're protecting the patient-doctor confidentiality, but generally felt that the state of Martin's emotional health was such that he maybe should seek some kind of third-party independent psychiatric counseling. I'm sitting in a living room with Doctor Logan and Marianne Logan. I look at Doctor Logan, just as I'm looking at you, and I said, "That's not going to happen," at which- he was very fair-skinned, but he turned beat red. He says, "What do you mean? You're a lawyer. You're not a doctor. You're not qualified." I said, "I know I'm not qualified, but there's no circumstance I can conceive of that I could directly or indirectly participate in any circumstance where Doctor King would see a third-party psychiatrist." "Well, you're not qualified to make that judgment." I said, "I know, but I am." Whoo! You would have- *[makes explosion sound]*.

01:06:37:00 I had come to the immediate conclusion, Stanley is not here to speak for himself, but I can say that he shared my opinion, I know Doctor Logan was adamantly opposed to what I'm going to tell you, and which I said calmly- I just sat there calmly, "There is no circumstance under which I have any influence that I would ..." I used a bad choice of words because he used those words against me. I think I used the bad choice of words, because I initially said, "Under no circumstance I would permit." I should have never said that. I admit that was the wrong choice of words. Right? Who am I to say? But I wouldn't- confidence, I wouldn't support, but rather "permit" is the wrong word. And I was very blunt and I said, "If not within twenty-four hours, within twenty-four days, the FBI would find out, and they would get to that psychiatrist, and everything that Martin King said to that psychiatrist would immediately be in FBI files, can't take that chance." Now, I did not know it until well after that incident, so I'm not going to claim clairvoyance, but I didn't know how right I was until years later, years later, I learned under the Freedom of Information Act that every single telephone conversation that took place between Martin Luther King, Jr. and myself from July thirteenth, nineteen sixty-three, to December thirty-first, nineteen sixty-seven, when Ramsay Clark became the new Attorney General, every conversation was wired tapped secretly by the FBI and the contents of the conversations written down, transcribed verbatim, and put in files marked "top secret."

01:09:17:00 Fast forward, two thousand fifteen, I'm visiting with former director James Comey in his office. We have a meeting of about, I don't know, an hour, an hour and fifteen minutes. And one time during the course of the meeting, he asks me to get up and walk to the corner of the left side of his desk- that is left side from the standpoint of *[unclear]* in there. And underneath the glass top of his desk is a photostatic copy of the memorandum from J. Edgar Hoover requesting authorization from then Attorney General, Robert Kennedy to wiretap the phone of Martin Luther King, Jr. And the counter signature of approval of former Attorney General Robert Kennedy. James Comey says to me, "Every new agent that's hired and every time there's a meeting of agents in my office, I remind them to stop by and take a look at that memo under the glass top of my desk. And say to them, 'We never want this great agency to ever become like that again.'" So that's why, recently when I was somewhere, I think I was at the Aspen Ideas Festival, and they said, "Well, you know, Mr. Jones, the Aspen Ideas Festival, it's a non-partisan festival. We don't like to talk politics." But the issue of the FBI came up and I said, "Well, listen. I've been through a lot of FBI directors in my life. As far as I'm concerned, the best one I've ever seen is James Comey.

01:11:22:00 So, I don't know about anybody else. That made a lasting impression on me.

So, why do I tell you this story about that? Because there was a psychiatric and emotional toll that was taking place. I was his lawyer. He said and did things in my presence that I think he felt comfortably in saying and doing because it never occurred to him that I would disclose what he had said or what I observed to a third party. It just wouldn't have ... It didn't occur to me. And since that is so, I don't intend to do so now. Now, I know the legal niceties about, "Well, the attorney ..." I'm not practicing law anymore, so I'm not theoretically attorney practicing, you know, I'm not theoretically ... Actually, for that matter, you know, lawyer- the client dies, you know, you can be released. That doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. Under no circumstances do I feel released from an ethical, moral obligation, because I look back on the texture. I remember very well how comfortable he was in discussing very controversial, political issues, and some personal issues around his family, because he did it, because he trusted me. He never even conceived that I would ever discuss them with a third party. And so, I don't intend to start today.

01:13:10:00 TREY ELLIS:
And speaking of those ... the wire- the tapes and how they've come out, what do you say to the detractors? People have come to use the personal problems, the familial problems he was having, the hotel rooms that have been bugged, to try to-

CLARENCE JONES:
Denigrate.

TREY ELLIS:
-denigrate his entire legacy?

00:00:00:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, for those persons who were part of the Christian religion- I was raised as a Catholic, so let me first address the religious persons, and then I'll speak to the secular persons. Now, to those religious persons, in my religious trainings, the last perfect person I know, I was taught he walked on water, he prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, he was betrayed by one of his best friends for thirty pieces of silver, and then crucified for a crime for which he didn't commit. Now, that is the last perfect person I know about. Now, Martin Luther King, Jr. was human, was not a religious deity by definition. He had, what some could judge to be, personal defects and shortcomings. He was fearless. His integrity in terms of his personal commitment to what he was seeking to do was inviolate. That he may on more than one or more occasions ... I'm not saying that he was, I'm not saying that he wasn't, I'm not saying that I observed him, I'm not saying that I didn't observe him, but to the extent that third parties removed, even family members, on circumstances on which I may have … been in which I would know, I would see or I would hear… He was a work in progress. And he was seeking to be the very best that he could be.

01:16:28:00 His love for his family was unchallengeable. He was conflicted by traveling so much, and by other matters, that he may not have felt that he was being the best father or husband that he could be. As I said, the last perfect person I know, allegedly walked on water, was crucified, betrayed by his very best friends. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a human being, and he was imperfect. But his imperfection, within total scheme of things and humankind, during that seven and a half period that I got to know him, was minuscule, comparatively. I'm not saying it was unimportant. I'm just saying, comparatively, given the weight of all the other things in his life. I ... Some people are going to be uncomfortable with what I'm about ready to say. You know, he was assassinated. Now, when one was assassinated, you don't say, "They gave their life." They didn't give their life, their life was taken from them, you know. But the fact of the matter is, he perceived the risk, and knew the risk, and was willing to go forward anytime, knowing, in my opinion, in the last year of his life, I don't think there was any question in his mind as to whether or not he would be killed. The only question in his mind is when it would occur.

01:19:30:00 And yet, under those circumstances, America, fifty years, April two thousand eighteen, African Americans particularly, but not just African Americans- Amer-our country- we owe a debt, we owe a debt of enormous… incapable of repayment proportions. Soon be coming up on the fiftieth anniversary of Detroit, the riots in Detroit. Now, we could talk about the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Doctor King's assassination in April two thousand eighteen. But what people don't talk you- maybe, they will talk to you about- and some of the FBI files, the CIA files, once they get disclosed- few people know between the riots of Detroit and the riots that occurred on his assassination, how close this country came to coming apart. People don't know. People don't know that we were just, just a little bit below the surface of civil war. We not only had the alienation of the African American community that would be reflected in Detroit, but you had, you had white middle-

class people saying that something's wrong with the system. They're forming the SDS, the Student Democratic Society, the Weathermen. They're all sort of things getting alienated from the system.

01:21:20:00 The astute observation that Eldridge Cleaver write about in "Soul on Ice" he says why young negros are running to get integrated into white middle-class society. Young whites are running out the other way to get out of it, so the alienation. If you get Penn State, the Vietnam war. And this occurred- the Vietnam war begin to explode a little bit later, but the point is, if you read the nineteen sixty-eight Kerner Commission report on the riots, and as we will see in this picture that this- is coming out. And some of the *[unclear]*, this country was about ready to come apart. And it's only by invoking the legacy and the power of Martin Luther King, Jr., were we able to keep this thing together. America owes a great debt to this man, owes a great debt.

01:22:36:00 So, I'm here in Silicon Valley. So, I sometimes hear, people in the Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, computer science, algorithm generation. "Well, you know? He was a great person, so forth, but, you know, he was a great person, he did what he did and so forth, but the real contributions, he never lived to see. It's all information age and technology information age." And I say, "Well, hold on now." Now I admire the brilliance of Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook, and of Sergey Brin and Larry Page, of Google, and of other people. I admire all that. Well. Let me tell those young people who may see this interview. If you foolishly believe, if you mistakenly and foolishly believe that you would have had the opportunity in this country, in this society, to be able to create and enjoy the benefits of this technology without the contributions of the foundation laid by Martin Luther King, Jr., you are historically ignorant and you should be ashamed of yourselves. Because without you, there would have been no country. They would have continued on to enable us to enjoy the magnificent benefits of your extraordinary psychological achievements. So, with all due respect to your extraordinary innovations, every day you should walk over to the Stanford University campus and genuflect in front of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Research and Education Institute. And say, "Thank you, Martin. Thank you, Martin. Thank you, Martin."

01:25:02:00 TREY ELLIS:
After the passage of the Voting Rights Act, was there a sense of- on that high, was there a sense of uncertainty in the movement of where to go next? Like, what would be the next- either whether Chicago or Breadbasket fights or like, you know?

01:25:16:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, without question- first of all, I don't want to diminish the achievement of the Civil Rights Act of nineteen sixty-four. There was a high over that achievement. You know? It was an especial high after the achievement of the Voting Rights Act, which came in the wake of the march from Selma to Montgomery and the efforts led by John Lewis, Hosea Williams, and Mrs. Boynton to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge, that registers people to vote in Selma. Yeah, there was no question. There was a high

when President Johnson convened a special joint session of Congress as he is introducing the Voting Rights Bill for their action. And he says, among other things, "There comes a time, there comes a time in the history of every nation when special leaderships," this is a paraphrase, "is required, so it was at Lexington and Concord, so it was at Appomattox, so it was in our Civil War," buh, buh, buh, and so forth. And he talked about the special courage that had been experienced by those people seeking to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

01:27:01:00 And of course, you could have knocked everybody off of it with a feather when Lyndon Johnson talks about introducing his new voting rights legislation, for congress to take immediate action. And he ends off by paraphrasing the words of the Civil Rights song, "By doing this, we shall overcome." Well, I wasn't with Martin King, but John Lewis and others tell me, who were with him when President Johnson made that speech. They said that Martin started- tears started coming down his cheeks. You know? It was powerful. So that was a very seminal moment. And so, was it important? Well, I don't have the exact figures, but let's just say within the five-year period of time after the Voting Rights Act was passed, right, you had a five-fold increase in voter registration in states like Mississippi and Alabama. Not only did you have an increase in the number of blacks elected to congress, but more importantly, in various southern states, not just states in the north, you had blacks being elected to sheriff's department, the water boards, the water authority, the school boards, you had them being elected to almost ...

01:28:44:00 TREY ELLIS:
Right. But I'm wondering- but after that high, with this sense of what do you do now, what's this ...

01:28:48:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well. After the high, after the high there was a great, there was a great- the greatest disappointment, of course, occurred in two thousand thirteen, I think, when the Voting Rights Act was challenged in the case of Shelby v. Holder, in which Chief Justice Roberts said that section five of the Voting Rights Act, which had required those states that had an unchallengeable record of keeping back blacks away, they said, "If you're going make any change, you have to first come back to the justice department to cleared." Pre-Clearance Section. Justice Roberts says, two thousand thirteen or fourteen, I can't remember the date of the decision, that's no longer constitutional. That was the beginning of the downward spiral. Guess what? Within seventy-two hours of the announcement of the Shelby v. Holder decision, states- Pennsylvania, Michigan, North Carolina, South Carolina, Florida, whole group of states, they convened special sessions to re-write the voting requirements, the voting laws. Now, you would think they would re-write the voting requirements to make it easier, but no, they wrote voting laws to make it more restrictive, so there would be less opportunity. That was a major blow.

01:30:22:00 TREY ELLIS:

I was just thinking about after- At that time, after the high of Selma, then moving on to this, moving to Chicago, and to the March Against Fear, the Meredith March.

01:30:35:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Let's just take Chicago. Is that notwithstanding the symbolic effort of going to Chicago and renting an apartment and living there and so forth, he underestimated the entrenchment of segregation, say, in an urban city. Okay? He underestimated that Richard Daley, Mayor of Chicago, that Martin King could do all he wanted, hold all the demonstrations, shout up and jump up and down all he wanted, you know. Mayor Daley said, in so many ways, you in my town now Martin King. I got the power. You don't have any power. And he tried to humiliate him, tried to undermine his ability to make effective inroads. Notwithstanding, he went and rented and lived in a slum in order to demonstrate his own authenticity. The political power to maintain enforced residential housing segregation was so strong in Chicago that he could not break it, could not break it.

01:31:46:00 TREY ELLIS:
And did you also feel, at that point, would you have any discussions with him in that summer of sixty-six, that King's coming north, but there's also Black Power from the March Against Fear and Stokely, that's rising, the Vietnam War was rising –

01:31:58:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, you remember black power, of course, started in nineteen sixty-five, with Stokely Carmichael, but it continued to grow in nineteen sixty-six. There came a period between nineteen sixty-six and nineteen sixty-five, if you can believe it, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee that had been on the front line, the shock troops of the Civil Rights Movement, led by a coalition of young, white and black students, north and south, Stokely Carmichael gets control of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating and literally does, what I call "the Soviet Union's done," he purges, he purges the organization of all white people, all white leaders. He didn't give a damn how dedicated you were, if you were white and you were in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee when Stokely Carmichael came in, he said, "You go back and work in your community, we want to have total control, Black Power." That was a very destructive move, and it had consequences that rippled throughout the movement.

TREY ELLIS:
And did you feel at that time that King was pulled between marching again
*[crosstalk]*

01:33:12:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, there's no question about it. He was seeking to find his ground. He was not as sure-footed. He was- how are you going to be sure-footed when you're in, operating in an urban ghetto. Remember, the civil rights movement was a religious, church-based movement. You even had black clergy in Chicago who were beholden to

Mayor Daley, who were opposed to Doctor King. They didn't want this negro preacher from the South coming in, you know, they're coming in their territory. And so, he did not- he was not- Chicago did not receive him, and certainly Chicago black clergy community, and black political community, did not receive him with open arms, because he was going against what they conceived to be the self-interest of their patron.

01:34:04:00 TREY ELLIS:
I'd like to switch a little bit to the FBI. When you first heard about the wiretaps back then, was your sense of- some people would joke about, starting a conversation, sort of addressing the FBI before-

01:34:15:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh. I was- not some people, I'm the one. Not the "some people," I'm the one. If you hear about that, we would often have conference calls, and I just say as a matter of fact, conference calls sometimes would be originated by me, it be like ten or ten-thirty at night. And, you know, I had had two or three martinis earlier in the day and maybe a little Jack Daniels, while I'm having a conference call, and sometimes when the conference call would start, I'd get very animated, and I would say, now before we have this conversation, I would say now, "Mr. FBI man, Mr. FBI woman, you got your pen and pencil ready before we start the call?" And Martin would criticize me. He said, "Clarence, will you stop all that theatrics? You know, don't you know that the FBI has more important things to do than to be listening into our conversation, they've got more important things to do. Don't you know that?" Hello? We were naïve- or let's put it this way. He was naïve. He was so, sometimes he would become so exasperated with my suspicions that the cruelest characterization of me of all, he said, "Sometimes, Clarence, you know I love you and I respect you, but you really like, you're like a left-wing McCarthyite. You see an FBI agent under every bed. You're just like a left-wing version of Joe McCarthy." It was the cruelest thing he could say to me.

01:35:54:00 TREY ELLIS:
Did you have any feeling about, was it Jim Harrison, the SCLC comptroller, who was actually, an informant, who is still alive to this day, did you know that, were there any suspicions back then that, that's what-

CLARENCE JONES:
Yes. I did.

TREY ELLIS:
Could you talk about that?

01:36:11:00 CLARENCE JONES:

I had suspicions, for example. I said to Doctor King, I said, "You have to assume," I said, "I hope you know your children well." I said, 'They're too young." I said, 'How do you know I'm not an FBI agent? How do you know? How do you know I'm not a plant?" "Well, I don't know." I said, "Well, how you don't know? I said, how do you know when every time I meet I don't have something, a wire, I'm wearing." He said, "I don't know," he said, "but I don't think you are." "But why, why do you think I..." He said, "Well, first of all you are always talking about FBI." "But that could be my cover." I would challenge him... I'd say, "You don't know." But I said, "Martin, you have to assume that right in the SCLC there's an FBI informant." "Why do you say that?" I said, "They could put FBI agents in the communist party, and if the CIA can put FBI agents in Russia, we have the capacity to do that." "Oh no, no." And I had suspicions about the controller, Jim Harrison, I did. And I had told him. And his reaction was he was the most loyal, the most dedicated employee. I said, "That may be." I said, "But ..." And then… and then… Now, Doctor King's been assassinated, right, and I'm looking at FBI files, my own FBI files and sometimes his FBI files. And you read through pages of meetings, particularly meetings that took place in his office. Now, I remember the meetings, and as I read through the meetings- as I read through the pages, there's always one person who was at the meeting, but his name is not recited because the names are redacted. So, I kept going back and forth. I said, "There's something wrong here." Some of these meetings are actually in Jim Harrison's office. Jim Harrison was always in his office, but you don't see him mentioned, and that's when I said, "Aha. He was probably the agent."

01:38:40:00 Now, let's switch to another subject to show you the power of the FBI. Do you know that the number two person to Elijah Muhammad, John Ali, was a stone-cold FBI agent and that everything that went on in Elijah Muhammad ... in the Nation of Islam that went through John Ali or that he had knowledge of was immediately transmitted to the FBI? So, the FBI's got a person in the ear right next to Elijah Muhammad. So, it was interesting. They wanted to have somebody there where the money was, okay, because there was always this allegation that somehow that Doctor King was getting some secret money, stashing money. So, couldn't have a more important FBI undercover agent than the comptroller. But he used to challenge me. He used to challenge me because he thought that I was a left-wing McCarthyite, thought I was- I could see- I saw an FBI informant, agent, under every bed. I was like the other side of Joe McCarthyism. And I just would always answer, "I know how the FBI works. I know how important you are. I know that nothing they would like more than to discredit you." You know what happened. I mean you don't know *[unclear]*.

01:40:34:00 The very next day after the March on Washington, April twenty-eighth, nineteen sixty-three, the number two person sends a private email ... email to Hoover. I think the number two person was DeLoach at the FBI. And he says to Hoover, "After yesterday's march on Washington, it is clear," in so many words, "that Martin Luther King, Jr. is the most powerful and the most dangerous Negro in America. And if we had not thought about stopping him before, we now must devote our resources to it. It is now clear that Martin Luther King, Jr. is the most dangerous and the most powerful Negro in America." So, from a political standpoint ... and I just say this as a student of political strategy ... On the least charitable way, I could say that Martin

King's efforts in the North were probably a failure. In a less charitable way I would say that he had underestimated the implacable intransigence of the political power in the North to maintain segregation and overestimated the willingness of local Negro leadership to support him and that neither of us has accurately and thoughtfully analyzed the new relationship of forces that existed in the North as opposed to the South. We forgot to remember that the hallmark of the strength was- the Civil Rights movement was a church-based movement. When you left the church base and tried to replant and tried to replace and put the tactics on a different kind of base, it didn't always work.

01:42:59:00 TREY ELLIS:
We're leading up to this idea of the growing sense of Martin going public against the war and the discussions that he might've had with you and Andrew Young about his journey to, you know, the idea of publicly coming out against the war and the sacrifices he made about that.

01:43:21:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, when he had come to conclusion that he could no longer- when Doctor King had come to the conclusion that he could no longer remain silent about the Vietnam War, now initially, among his so-called kitchen cabinet of advisors, Andy Young, Stanley Levison, Professor Reddick from Moorestown, Moore *[unclear]* State University, sometimes Cleveland Robinson, the labor leader, Andy Young sometimes, Harry Wachtel, but always Stanley Levison, myself, Andy Young and also Walter Fauntroy. The leaders of the peace movement- Reverend William Sloane Coffin, the Berrigan brothers and Doctor Spock- very prominent leaders of the war against Vietnam- they were reaching out to Doctor King and wanted him to get more actively and publicly involved. My initial first reaction was that they wanted to preempt the mantle of Doctor King's national leadership for the wrong purposes. That was my initial reaction. And then I began to reflect on it and to see that there were rallies taking place in San Francisco and Washington, D.C. and in New York and Central Park where there were five-hundred thousand people were showing up, almost, an excess of five-hundred thousand, all opposed to the war in Vietnam. So, I knew there was something. But I resisted because I felt- my initial reaction was I felt that they were trying to appropriate, the legitimacy they didn't have, that one thing.
01:45:35:00 So, we had a meeting, a couple of meetings, long meetings and with the issue of whether he should or should not publicly oppose the war. There were two principle fishes that immediately came to the floor. One was expressed by, I think, Walter Fauntroy and maybe ... I don't want to say what Andy Young thought, but I remember Walter Fauntroy, and he echoed a little bit of what I initially thought and that is, well, hold on, Johnson has really shown a failure of leadership in the war in Vietnam, which he did initiate was *[unclear]* John F. Kennedy. He was a successor to the war. And politically we had to be very cautious about whether or not we wanted to publicly criticize what could be described as having been the greatest civil rights president, or president for civil rights, since Abraham Lincoln. This is after the Voting Rights Act of nineteen sixty-four- sorry, this is after, correct that, this is after

the Civil Rights Act of nineteen sixty-four this is after the Voting Rights Act of nineteen sixty-five, and here we're going to publicly excoriate and criticize the man whose leadership, without whose leadership none of this would have been possible. Of course, it was all possible because of the groundswell of the Civil Rights Movement, we understand that, but without a president this probably wouldn't have happened. And so, it was very hotly debated.

01:47:49:00 What I knew and Stanley Levison knew, but others did not know in that meeting, is that sometime before he made a decision to speak out he had received a cable, an invitation by cable sent to Paris, from a North Vietnam- a peace group in North Vietnam, offering to meet him in Paris to discuss how there might be a way of ending the Vietnam War. He felt that after having received the Nobel Peace Prize in nineteen sixty-four that he had a different, special obligation, rising above his so-called stature as a civil rights leader. And I said categorically, "You cannot go." "What do you mean I can't go?" I said, "That would be the worst possible thing you can do at this time." *[Unclear]* I said, you know, "The FBI and the government will use it against you." He said, "Well, they don't know anything about it." I said, "Excuse me, Martin," I said, "You can believe within ten minutes of that cable being transmitted from North Vietnam there's a copy on a CIA desk at Langley, and that they've had it for as long as you've had it. And you don't need to go down that direction at this time."

01:49:41:00 So, we had that discussion, discussions back and forth. And since I was equivocal, but mostly seemed to be opposed, he says, "Well, since you feel this way Clarence, why don't you try drafting something." So, I did try doing an initial draft. Now, my draft started out by just reciting dispassionately, objectively, clinically, just what the facts were about the war in Vietnam and the state of the failed peace negotiations at that time, about a two-paragraph summary, or something. And then I would go and I'd write something I thought was very passionate about why there should be an effort to find a negotiated solution, an end to the war. But then I would say, but on the other hand, and then I would write another equally balanced passage that would counterbalance what I had said before, and that's the way I went back and forth the whole letter. Say one thing, but then I would say, I was giving deference to both sides. Doctor King gets a copy of the speech, and he calls me up, and he said, "Clarence, I thought you were my radical." I said, "What do you mean?" He says, "I don't get this. On the one hand, and on the other hand. You, above all people, should know that the Vietnam War is either morally right or morally wrong. And I'm a minister of the Gospel. I don't segregate my morals, I don't segregate my moral principles. What is this ‘morally right?’" He said, "You know, I love you, this is, you know, I can't use this, but I'm surprised you even wrote this. This is the first time-"

01:51:54:00 By the way, that was the first time he ever rejected any draft completely. I had to draft things in which he would add, rewrite and subtract and so forth, and massage, but never reject out of hand. He said, "I can't use this. I'm going to have to consult with my brother Vincent. Vincent Harding, you know Vincent.” At that time, he lived about four blocks from him in Atlanta. He said, "We got to, I got to write something because I've gotta make a statement on this. I want to go to New York." And so, at the end of the day the so-called time to break the silence, the speech that

he gave on April fourth, nineteen sixty-seven to the committee of certain laymen and clergyman in the Riverside Church publicly opposing the war in Vietnam, was written by him and Vincent Harding. Martin acknowledges the writing. The thoughts and contents were both of them, but a lot of the writing was done by Vincent. So, I get their letter that they had jointly written, and I read it, and I call them up, and reflecting my earlier teachings by Catholic nuns about English grammar, using old fashioned phrases like the topic sentence, I said, "Now, I don't know, in the topic sentence of the twentieth paragraph, are you sure you want to say this?" "Well, what do you mean?" I said, "You have a sentence that begins and says, 'The United States today is the greatest purveyor of violence in the world, period.'" I said, "Do you want to say that, first of all, and if you want to say it do you want to start that as the first sentence of your paragraph?" "Well, it's true," blah, blah, blah.

01:53:56:00 Anyway, in the final version of the speech what they did is they kept the sentence in but they didn't make it the first sentence of the paragraph they embedded it in the paragraph. It was an extraordinary speech. But that speech, and the reaction to it, maybe when he gave is so-called "I have a dream" speech April twenty-eighth, nineteen sixty-three, using current parlance, maybe his approval rating was like sixty to seventy percent. I can assure you at the time he gave this speech on April fourth, nineteen sixty-eight, five years later, his approval ratings were probably only thirty percent, at most, in the country. And what really hurt him and hurt me and angered me is that all of these people who have said he was the greatest civil rights leader of all time, and extolled him for his great civil rights leadership, then turned on him. And then what really hurt him, initially, then he got over it, was when you would have people like Roy Wilkins, president of the NAACP, and Whitney Young, president of the Urban League and all of these- and some newspaper- negro newspaper publishers, and presidents of negro colleges and universities coming out and criticizing him, all prompted, of course, by Lyndon Johnson, he was attacked viciously.

01:55:48:00 And a common denominator of the attacks from some of the civil rights movement that really angered him is that, "You know, Doctor King, we admire you for the civil rights leadership, but you're a negro minister. You don't know anything about foreign policy. You don't know anything about foreign policy you should just stick to what you know". Never saw- never did I hear such anger from him other than when he wrote his letter from the Birmingham jail, and he was angered by this full-page ad that this group of white clergymen in Birmingham, had taken out an ad in the Birmingham Herald newspaper criticizing him for having come to Birmingham to initiate nonviolent protests and segregation. And never have I heard him feel so offended and angered and somewhat betrayed. He really felt betrayed. And he said over and over, "They don't know me. Don't they know that I am a minister of the Gospel and became a minister of the Gospel long before I was a civil rights leader? As I told you Clarence, as a minister of the Gospel I do not segregate my moral concerns." The Vietnam War is either morally right or morally wrong. The takeaway from this, among other things, that was the beginning of the downward national spiral, which he hoped that he would gain some moral legitimacy by coming and publicly speaking up on behalf of the sanitation workers in Tennessee.

01:58:01:00 TREY ELLIS:
It took him awhile to publicly come out against the war. He must have personally felt against it long before and knowing that it would create this rupture with Johnson. Can you talk a little bit about, was it sort of, was it affecting him personally, did you feel it affecting him personally this struggle to, when would be the right time to come out against the war and talk a little bit about what you knew about the rupture with Johnson after that?

01:58:31:00 CLARENCE JONES:
I think it was easier for him to struggle about coming out against the war. Separate, apart from Lyndon Johnson's *[unclear]* moral issues, religious issues. The issue with Johnson was a strategic and tactical question best articulated by someone like Walter Fauntroy and even I initially felt it that we had to give him some pause. And that is, does he as the perceived, widely celebrated civil rights leader, want to oppose the President that enabled the passage of the sixty-four Civil Rights Act and that was singularly together with the movement from Selma and everything, of crossing the Edmond Pettus Bridge, enabled the passage of the voting rights act. Did he want to oppose this white southern President, who had probably been the greatest civil rights President from Lincoln, because he disagreed with him about pursuing a war that had nothing to do with civil rights. Now that premise I've just stated, he challenged. Because he said, that notwithstanding, whatever rhetoric that Johnson may give about civil rights- and particularly, this was at point in time when Johnson had announced a war on poverty.
02:00:24:00 He said there's only so much money in the treasury, and with all of Johnson's rhetoric and pious statements, there will be no money to implement what he says he wants to do because he is expending all the money, or most of the money, on Vietnam. He says, “The worst thing I get criticized- what's worse than being a civil rights leader who may want to speak about civil rights and some people will criticize me. It's worse to have a negro civil rights leader who can't count.” He says, "I can count!" He says, “You know this Baptist preacher you gotta know how to count with the collection plate and so forth." I said " I am not an accountant, you know, I don't have to be a math genius. You know? If there's only a million dollars in the treasury to fight the war and gonna be seven-hundred fifty-thousand dollars to spend for Vietnam, there's only two-hundred fifty-thousand left to fight the war and poverty. And Johnson is giving great rhetoric, but he's not giving us any resources, he doesn't mean what he says.” And that's… that emboldened him because he felt that… not looking at the reality of the use of money, was really betraying all of Johnson's rhetoric about what he was saying about the war and poverty.

02:02:05:00 TREY ELLIS:
You talked about his- this depression he had and how with the riots and the hot summer and how difficult things got for- how he was not so popular. He talks about

his, you know, his unshakable commitment to nonviolence, like, did that become harder as he became less popular and at the ... message?

02:02:25:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Absolutely not. Never, never, one iota one millionth of an inch did he ever shake or deviate from his commitment to nonviolence, never, never. His position was that if he had to be the only person standing alone, he would still be committed to nonviolence, never. And then the part of that came from something that I didn't have and don't have, it comes from a deep understanding that if he pursues his quest for justice nonviolently, that he is involved in a very noble, religiously redeeming, cause. That is Jesus Christ would applaud and protect him. And why would he want to besmirch, or in any way taint that possibility, since he knew, that he was right. He knew that if you want to be morally consistent, and politically effective you have to be committed to nonviolence as your form of social struggle. Otherwise, it is- you are diminishing at best, and at worst, undermining the prospects of ever being successful in transforming society and in making any fundamental transforming-transformative social movement, you won't be able to do it. Because putting *[unclear]* the means will destroy the purity of the ends, no matter how laudable what you seek to do. If you do it through the process of violence, you will have diminished and demeaned the quality of which you seek to do. That's just spiritually, but politically, the brother was so smart. He understood, that when you are foolish enough to pursue violence, is that you give your adversary the opportunity to defeat you. Because you give him or her the use of violence to obscure the content of your message, so that the content of your message will never be heard. Everybody will only focus on the form of your message, the violence.

02:05:35:00 TREY ELLIS:
What about the redemption march, and after the sort of *[unclear]* provocateurs and the rioting, leading up to the assassination, but you know ...

02:05:45:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, oh, oh, oh, well, uh-huh, now you're touching on a very sore subject. Let the record reflect that for practical, tactical reasons, not strategic reasons, I was opposed to his going to Memphis. Why was I opposed? Was I opposed to his supporting the garbageman workers? No. I was opposed because thirty days before, deciding that he was going to go to Memphis, he had begged me, pleaded with me, to set up important meetings with potential donors in New York who would support the work of Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which is what I did. These are busy people. Many of them business people from Wall Street, you know? He would have private dinners with them in which they would make a commitment to make a donation, significant contribution. So, it was very difficult to set up these meetings. And I had set up at least four within the four weeks. And he tells me, "I'm sorry Clarence, I appreciate what you done, but you have to cancel all this." I said " But, I didn't come to you, you came to me!" I said "Yeah, I know." I said, "You just tell

them that you can come to Memphis, but you can't come now. You have to come at a later time. You can't come now." He said, "No, I have to go now."

02:07:26:00 And he says, "Think about it. How inconsistent, how morally inconsistent it is, and how much against it's our overall political strategy, when here, the least of these, the poor people, we tried to get attention to The Poor People's Campaign, here we have ... And I've been committed to working with the labor leaders and so forth. This is something the American ..., AFSCME, American Federation of something ... the union leader, they were involved in supporting the garbage workers, I think the fellow's name was Jerry Wurf, he asked me to come down and get involved. I can't turn my back on labor. Labor, as you know, had been so good to me and so I have to go." And so, I said, "Martin, I'm not saying that you don't go, but can't you not go ... Do you have to go at this time?" He says, "This is the only time. This is the time when they most need me." So, I was opposed to his going and really angry from a tactical reason because I had to go and change all these meetings.

02:08:38:00 And then after I better understood what was going on, clearly it was the right thing for him to do. What happened, you know, is that, I think the mayor of Memphis was a fellow by the name of Loeb, Mayor Loeb, I think he had a very hard line, paternalistic, white supremacist paternalistic attitude toward these black garbage workers. And that prior to the time of the garbage strike, one or two garbage workers had been seriously injured by the machinery of the truck. And the things that they were asking were not revolutionary; it was like, you know, just changing the working condition and hours and so forth. And so, Doctor King goes. And one of the most powerful things that you see during that time is all of the garbage workers and many of the union supporters had these sandwich board signs that said "I am a man;" that was saying to Loeb, we are not children. We wanted to be treated with the dignity of a man. Now during one of the first phases of the march, some of the young men took the wooden sticks that had held some of the "I am a man" signs together and broke them off and used them to smash windows, downtown windows. Martin called off his participation in the march.

02:10:33:00 And then he went in for the next couple of days before the march would resume and he went in from pool hall to pool hall on the main section of downtown Memphis, confronting some of these young gang members, telling them how counterproductive what they were doing would do to we're seeking to do. And said to them that, "If you're going to participate and you want to continue that I would only continue if I had commitment that you'll be nonviolent. If you continue violence, I'm walking away." Well, there was community pressure parental pressure because they didn't want Doctor King to walk away. But it was touch and go; it was touch and go because there were thug elements, boyhood gang elements whose attitude's they wanted to take those sticks that held together the sandwich boards and use them to smash windows.

02:11:41:00 TREY ELLIS:
And were you in New York at the time? Or were you—

CLARENCE JONES:

I was in New York at the time.

TREY ELLIS:
And when was the last time you saw him or spoke with him?

02:11:48:00 CLARENCE JONES:
The last time I spoke with him ... was on the evening of April second ... late in the evening. In which he had shared with me the arrangements that he was going to be speaking that following night, April third in a temple, Masonic Temple in Memphis, Tennessee. And it had more to do with logistics about Bernard Lee will be in touch with the office, let us know when you're coming in, we'll have somebody to come right from the airport, have a car take you right from the airport to come right to the temple. So, on the… evening ... on the afternoon of April fourth, that's what it was ... On the afternoon of April fourth, late afternoon, I was headed for the airport to go down and see Doctor King. I don't recall whether earlier that evening on April fourth he had spoken; I think on April third he spoke at the Masonic Temple, but I know that I was on my way to Memphis. It was not on April third, it was on April fourth, early. And as I am rushing to go from my home to the airport, my phone rings, and I just had an instinct reaction; I'm not going to answer. Then somehow, I said, okay, I'll answer it, before I was going to go out and hail a taxi; and it's Harry Belafonte. And I said "Harry, I can't talk to you now." I'm about ready to hang up, and he says "Turn on your television, Martin's been shot." I said, "What?" And then he hangs up. And I turn on the television, and lo and behold, all over the television, Doctor King's been shot, assassinated in Memphis. So, I'm, I mean I'm stunned.
02:15:01:00 I then get on the phone. I try to call down to Memphis, I can't get through. The lines are busy and so forth. I call Harry back, his line is busy, can't get anything. The phone rings again, I said, "Harry, I've been trying to reach you. Martin's dead." What? He said, "Well, what are you going to do?" He says, "I don't think you do anything". Harry says, "I don't think you should do anything. I think the Rockefeller family wants to help, they may want to make a plane available to us, but I don't think you should do anything. You should stay put, see what's going on." I was devastated. Within the first ten seconds that the television had announced that Martin Luther King, Jr. was dead, within the first ten seconds, the very first immediate thought that came into my mind was, "They finally got him. They finally got him." Because I knew it wasn't a question of whether, it was only a question of when. So, I've told over and over, my first reaction was, "they finally got him."

TREY ELLIS:
Do you have any memories of the funeral itself?

02:16:29:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Yes, I do. What I remember is getting a call from one of the close members of the Kennedy family, by the name of William J. vanden Heuvel. Very close friend of mine, lawyer, able lawyer, partner in Allen and Company, very close former assistant U.S. attorney, close friends of Robert Kennedy in particular. And he said

that Mrs. Kennedy would like very much to pay her respects to Mrs. King. And I had recommended to the family that you would be the person that we should try to ... Can you help? I said, " Yes I'd be delighted to help." There came a day, it may have been a day before the funeral, I think it was the day before the funeral, in which Mrs. Kennedy was delivered to wherever I was staying. And we jointly were driven to the home of Doctor King, Coretta Scott King and I remember escorting Mrs. Kennedy up the stair case, up the stairs, to the King home. She's wearing a black veil, very unsteady, she seemed to be semi-medicated and I take them into the King home and Mrs. King is there, I stand back as Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy walks over to Mrs. King. The now two widows embrace and they hold one another in their arms for a while. I'm standing back I don't hear any of their conversations, I move out and away so that I'm out of the room, so that they don't feel I'm an uncomfortable presence. I remember escorting Jackie Kennedy to the funeral the next day, I remember.

02:19:11:00 TREY ELLIS:
We talk so much about the ... King and his struggles, but- and you're living history, this history, what do you see sort of the link to our struggles today? What should we be doing today? What are the messages we should take from King and the work he did, the work you did together to bring us to activate us to make today a better place?

02:19:35:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Go back and reacquaint ourselves with the eleven years of reconstruction after the Civil War. To read Howard Fast's book, “Freedom Road,” which is a fictional account of how the slave power tried to undermine the reconstruction coalition of white and black people that took place. To go and read Professor Henry Foner's Pulitzer prize book called “Reconstruction: The Unfinished Revolution.” To go and read the text and if you can hear and see the voice and picture of President Barack Obama's speech at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge in the fiftieth Anniversary of Selma, which I believe, of all the speeches he gave during his presidency on race this is the best by far of any speech he gave during his presidency. To understand the challenges confronting our country particularly those people who would like to succeed in the social justice leadership movement of this giant of the twentieth Century Martin Luther King, Jr., you have to refresh yourself on the eighteen fifty-one or fifty-seven speech- I must be getting old- that Fredrick Douglas gave in Northern New York, in which, among other things he said in that speech, "Power concedes nothing without a demand, it never has, it never will."

02:22:35:00 You ... Those of us today, particularly younger people, who want to take up the sacred, the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., that legacy can be described in two words: voting rights. I'm sitting watching television and some demonstrators are being interviewed by a local broadcaster in New York were protesting outside of Trump Towers. And a young white boy carrying a placard and a young African American woman carrying an anti-Trump placard are being interviewed. And during the course of the interview, they said, "Well, who did you vote for?" White boy says, "I didn't vote ... I didn't vote." Interviewed the young black girl, "Oh no, I didn't vote!" I just know he's gonna-" And I thought to myself, I said, "These people are out

there carrying placards protesting Trump and they didn't even bother to exercise the most elementary available form of power to register and vote." So, my first advice for the current generation, we used to have an expression in my time about selling wolf tickets. People would talk bad, you know, "I'm gonna kick the white man's butt, I'm a do this and do that." Well, it's one thing to talk about you gonna kick the white man's butt on a hundred twenty-fifth Street and Lenox Avenue, in the heart of the black communities, it's another thing to sit down in Jackson, Mississippi in nineteen sixty-four and register to vote talking about kicking the white man's butt. It's a whole different ... So, if you care about the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr., then you have to be willing to take the tools of power available to you to protect and implement that legacy. Because if we don't vote, if we don't challenge the level of morality going on in certain basic questions, we relinquish the ... we just… we dishonor his legacy. So, don't just shout and walk around with picket signs. Acquire the political power to implement your point of view. That would be the greatest way to honor Martin Luther King, Jr.

02:26:27:00 The brother that's on the national scene without question in my mind is William Barber the second from North Carolina who has his Moral Monday. That is the closest, living, walking, baddest dude today. That is Martin Luther King, Jr. today. He's got it, he's got it because he understands the necessity of coalition and the necessity of vote. There is pending right before the United States Supreme Court, as of this, well, I don't know when this interview is going to be aired, but there ... right today in the last week in July in two thousand seventeen there's a major case pending for the United States Supreme Court on gerrymandering, rigging the voting system in certain states. I think the case is come up from the state of Wisconsin and the state of Texas. The results in this case, together with the results of the case of Shelby v. Holder, which gutted the Voting Rights Act of nineteen sixty-five, will be the most important pieces of legislation regarding the exercise of power. Don't tell me you're gonna be celebrating the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of Martin Luther King, Jr. in two thousand eighteen and walking up and down and singing all these songs and carrying placards. That all means nothing! Empty rhetoric! Almost to the extent of being insulting and denigrating unless you understand that the core of his legacy sitting on the tripod of being concerned about militarism, racism, and violence.

02:28:35:00 That's not- that's the core! Nonviolence, concerned about militarism, racism, and, of course, poverty. So, walking around carrying empty signs and placards, and shouting up and down is nice, but as I said perhaps in an earlier part of this interview, more powerful than the march of mighty armies is an idea whose time has come. In the twentieth century, Martin Luther King, Jr. embodied an idea whose time had come, and that is that you can summarize the condition and the concerns of the African American diaspora in three words: here, now… can't think of the other one. All! Yeah, all, here, and now- that summarized- what does it mean? We want all of our rights, we want them here, and we want them now. We don't want them in the afterworld. Now I know he said very beautifully in his last speech before he was assassinated, "I may not get there, but I've been to the mountain top and I've looked over and I've seen the promise land. And that we as a negro people would get to the

promised land." I understand that. That was his prophetic relief. But the reality is about power.

02:30:56:00 TREY ELLIS:
Go back to that Meredith March. You had several conversations with Doctor King leading up to that march. Can you tell us about the circumstances leading up to it and you talked a little bit about how you were, what were your feelings about it? He felt he had to go to the ... once Meredith got shot, he felt-

02:31:16:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, he felt he had to go and I was always concerned about ... You've made the point. You know that the lion is roaring, he's ready to eat whoever walks up to the den. Why do you want to walk up to the den now? Let the lion calm down. Like Doctor Winston, I felt it was an unreasoned, unreasonable or, what is it, not a reasonable weighing of the risk. He was concerned about whether or not his credibility would be undermined by the SNCC people who frequently refer to him as "de lord," you know. That he. . . They would frequently say he would only come in and march when it was, quote, "safe," after, quote, the implication was after they had done, or other people had done the dangerous work. Well, the fact of the matter is he was the person that could bring most national press and attention. And so, his time had to be brutally managed. But he never thought that way, he never thought that "Well, I'm gonna wait until I can go in and get all the credit." There wasn't a scintilla of evidence that suggested that he thought that. He was the least opportunist person I ever knew in my life.

02:32:50:00 TREY ELLIS:
Was there a sense that once he decided to jump into the March Against Fear, that they could take that small, Meredith's small march and convert it into something big?

02:33:00:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Yes, there was always the fear that, not just in the Meredith March, in other circumstances that if they're not an SCLC trained cadre, so to speak, who were trained in the cadre to spread nonviolence, is that he would get all the publicity, he would bring the press, but he had no ability to control the people who associated with him and if anything went wrong he would be blamed. That was always a kind of dialectic contradiction he was in. He needed to be there, at the same time he was always concerned that by being there it would attract elements over which he would have no control, and if something went wrong, he would be blamed. Now the other side of that is if something went well, he got much of the publicity and this caused some resentment, you know, feeling that he… success was inappropriately or unjustly allocated to him when other people did equal if not more work. So, there was some element of that.

02:34:06:00 TREY ELLIS:

And how did he feel about . . . In the video he seems a little uncomfortable walking with Stokely and with Stokely saying, "Black Power! Black Power!"

02:34:14:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, he's very uncomfortable! He's very uncomfortable, but he knows that he has to be there and on the one hand to support the courage of Stokely Carmichael without supporting the message, or the form of the message. Doctor King was not opposed to power, if anything he understood the importance of acquiring political power, but he also understood was to elevate so-called Black power over White Power would break and destroy that which he was seeking to build, that was a coalition among white and negro people, black people, and so he guarded that jealously.

02:35:10:00 TREY ELLIS:
And jumping forward to the Poor People's Campaign. At that point the SCLC had been pushed in a lot of different directions, can you talk a little bit about the state of the SCLC at the time of the planning of the Poor People's Campaign? And I know there's some internal division about the campaign as well.

02:35:29:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, yeah, when you have a disagreement on a strategy- this wasn't just a tactical, this was a strategy whether or not you do it at all. This is recurring in a hostile national environment, an environment that was less receptive. But he felt that and listening to charismatic role of Jesse Jackson, and his leadership at that time, he felt that he had no choice, that he had to be a part of and exercise a leadership of bringing poor people to Washington similar to what A. Phillip Randolph had done in the nineteen forties in bringing veterans to the front lawn of the White House. He was trying to bring poor people to Washington so that the nation, the Congress could see that these are real people who need help. And so, what he was doing- he was putting his stature on the line. He didn't have, in the local communities where he tried to organize the Poor People's Campaign, say in Washington D.C. and other places, he didn't have- remember, the civil rights movement in the South was a church-based movement. What was the Southern Christian Leadership Conference? It was a conference of clergy of various churches. So, you have in the Poor People's Campaign, you're having to rely sometimes on community organizations, on ministers that, at best, have a tenuous credibility in some of their communities.
02:37:43:00 And so, working away from the venue that he was most comfortable, that is the South, the Southern based movement, he's moving into communities which are community-based, in which you're talking not about ending racism, but talking about ending poverty. And then there are all sorts of logistical problems because the contributions to the SCLC are significantly lower. You had the divisions created by the Black Power movement, you had the divisions created among the civil rights organizations themselves. He is probably, aside from SNCC and George Wiley who had a welfare rights organization, one of the few leaders that really consistently tried to focus on the issue of poverty. I happen to think that the reason, one of the reasons he was so responsive to be active to the campaign in Memphis, Tennessee was that

he was trying to in some way resurrect the credibility of the SCLC on the issue of poverty that had not been successful in the Poor People's Campaign, and here in Memphis, Tennessee he had a chance to show he could deal with poverty that he was unable to successfully deal with in Washington. That's my opinion.

02:39:30:00 TREY ELLIS:
And finally, I just, I just remember seeing you in the Aspen- looking the video with Michelle Norris and you talk about how the Gospel was such an important part, and those Songs, were such an important part of the movie.

02:39:44:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, yeah! The gospel was the antidote to fear, besides being an effective organizing tool.

02:39:53:00 TREY ELLIS:
And then you went to Catholic school, you had a pretty good voice when you were singing.

02:39:56:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Oh, yeah, of course, I suppose I have a good voice, brother. Yeah, I mean, I was, you know, you can't be part, you can be part of a movement- you can be a lawyer, you can be a doctor, but if you're in a leadership role, in which I was at different stages, I was not in a leadership role equivalent to Andy Young or John Lewis or C.T. Vivian, I was an adviser. But I was very- they knew how close I was to the men that they adored and worked for. They knew how much he thought of me, and knew I had earned my own spurs of credibility. You could not have been around a man like Martin Luther King, Jr. that you would not have been inspired. He was an inspiration to me. If there had not been a Martin Luther King, Jr., I suppose then the history of this country, we would have had to computer generate and create someone like him to meet the challenges of our time.

02:41:33:00 TREY ELLIS:
Dorothy Cotton sang, you know, her voice is beautiful, I thought your voice was really interesting.

02:41:38:00 CLARENCE JONES:
Well, my voice, my voice is, my extent is that I'm just a derivative imitator. First of all, I mean, I have, I know a lot about music and I defy anyone to be around those many meetings and places that I was where every meeting, every place involved, if it didn't start with a song, you wouldn't be in a place in which there would be some singing and sometimes the singing would be at a pitch of hallelujah. I mean, these people would be like what I call “come to Jesus singing,” and people would be jumping up and down, and, you know, shouting "Lord, Amen," I mean, it was like, it was like a church meeting. So, when I walked in and I'm being introduced I said I wanted them to get a flavor of the legacy of this man, so I walked in and said, "I

woke up this mornin' with my mind set on freedom, I woke up this mornin' with my mind set on freedom, I woke up this mornin' with my mind set on freedom, hallelu- hallelu- hallelujah." And then I segued to "Oh, freedom, oh, freedom, oh, freedom over me, and before I'll be a slave, I'll be buried in my grave, and go home to my Lord and be free."

02:43:14:00 And you've got to magnify that by five hundred other people, seven hundred and fifty people at a minimum, but sometimes a thousand people singing that, together. Sometimes it was their collective antidote to fear. It was their collective antidote to deal, to give to, embolden them to deal with what they knew were armed racists, Klan's people would want to kill them in their first instance. So, remember the man whose legacy, the man whose leadership we're going to commemorate for the fiftieth anniversary of his assassination in two thousand eighteen, remember who this man was. He was just not a leader, another leader, he was a minister of the Gospel, he was the reverend Doctor Martin Luther King, Jr., he was president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, a confederation of black Baptist churches steeped in the religion, the liturgy, the bible teaching, the bible preaching and the hymns and the spirituals that went along with it. I mean, it was our self-administered antidote to fear and anxiety when we could all come together and say, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, this little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine."

02:45:52:00 Now, you cannot sing that song if you were with Martin Luther King, Jr. without thinking of one person's name, and that's Fannie Lou Hamer. Now, you talk about, you talk about, one of the baddest human beings that walked the earth is Fannie Lou Hamer. Ooh, baby, baby, baby! She said to me one day, we were together, she says, "You know," she says, "You know, Lawyer Jones? I sure wish I could talk like you sometimes." And I looked at her and I put my hand on one of her arms and her arms were all swoll- were frequently swollen because she'd been beaten with billy clubs, and I pulled myself close to her and I looked at her and I said, "You know, Fannie Lou, I sure wish I had one tenth of the courage that you have and you exhibit all the time." She said- I said, "Fancy speaking well, so-called fancy words that you called them, that means nothing. Those words don't have one tenth of the power of your courage."

02:47:28:17 END OF INTERVIEW