

**An interview with Anita White Carter and Viola Spells about  
ASCORE by Jamal Mullen, Klanesha Thomas and Deborah Miles at  
the Delta House in February, 2005**

D: So you did ya'll ever hear anything about desegregation?

V: well I was on the committee, ASCORE, where black students met with uhm , Mr. Roland who was our sponsor, he owned a jewelry store and that's where we would meet and we would plan our desegregation activities, we marched when they had the Ingles Yellow Man paper boy, or bag boy, they fired him or something like that. Well they weren't hiring then.

A: They were the first.

V: and then we met to desegregate the lunch counters and I was on the committee to desegregate the library.

D: So tell me, if you have, how that went, what happened.

V: we would meet and we would map out our strategy, our president at that time was James Ferguson, we called him BoBo, his is now a really big lawyer in Charlotte and he also was on the, one of the lawyers for the Wilmington 10 case, so we were very fortunate to have James, I'll call him James, I was about to call him BoBo, (laughter). We were very fortunate to have him as our president because he was very inspiring and he had great leadership capabilities and he gathered up, and especially with the support of Mr. Roland. So we would map out our strategies and what we were gonna do and what we want to attack and we also made lists of key places that we were gonna target for desegregation. And the library of course was one of them and we discussed why we were going to approach the library and what were the reasons behind the fact that we pay taxes and yet we were not allowed to use the library, that fact that the library received private funds from Mr. Pack, Pack and that in it, it stipulated that it could not serve black people. So we went and we had a committee and we visited the man who was the Director of the library at the time. And he listened to our concerns and he said that as far as he was concerned that it shouldn't be a problem, but he would have to take it before the board. And so we made an appointment for the next meeting and we went back and he said that the board had agreed that that black people should be using the library, or could use the library and he gave us a tour of the library and showed us the records that the library owned, that they kept in a vault and that was very, it was very inspiring and it made a great impact on my life because, as he toured us, showed us around the library, he also talked about how they had programs at the library. And I thought that was very interesting. In fact, I later became a librarian (laughter) and did lots of programs. So the fact that we weren't able to have that experience as children, as teenagers, as adults, to go to the library to read books and to have programs and to learn about other information, we just didn't, we weren't exposed to any of those things. And I just thought that was wonderful. And then after it became known, and we

announced that we would have people with the various churches, and went and announced the things that were open or what we were about, what the next activity was or what we, how the people in the community to support us, that's how we got the information out. Then people weren't going to the library. I mean, I think they were in such a habit of not going, it just wasn't part of their lives, so it was really something we had to work on and encourage people to go the library. And when we went to the library, they had to feel comfortable in the library because they weren't used to be able; even though we had a library, it was very small, but I think by that time it was closed.

A: oh yeah, I think it was, I remember ah, I did use the library, I used it a lot. It was ah, it was up where Pack Place is now and I was so fascinated with how large it was compared to the one that I had used down on ah,

V: Eagle Street

A.: Eagle Street, yeah, I remember the first book I checked out was Great Expectations at the public library.

D: Do you remember what it was like to go into that library the first time.

A: Ahh, yes. I was very uncomfortable, ah, the building was old and cold to begin with. And then it was ah, it was un, and uncomfortable feeling. But it was necessary and Viola's right we didn't get very many people in.

V: It wasn't a very welcoming place, I think, that I know about libraries now,

D: It wasn't, it wasn't.

V: It was a very cold place, it wasn't a warm place, and of course the people, the people on staff there, they didn't really make you feel welcome and then the patrons who visited the library, they would look at you like, you don't belong here, ( cough) and so you didn't feel comfortable and although I do remember librarian came back and she asked me if she could help me so that made me feel a little more welcome, that's just the way it was at that time.

D: Who else was involved in A S C O R E?

V: Ask Anita , can you remember the initials? I feel I can't, I can't remember all of the initials stand for, I remember Community, uhm Organization for the Races

A: At Allen, and we had it at our uhm small library, but ah no, I don't remember there being

V: You have to remember, I know you can't relate, because you world is quite different from ours, but these were things that we were never, ever going to. So if

it's not a part of your life, would you think to go to it? To use, how would you use it because you weren't using it before. We probably would use it more because we were in school and even though we had a library at Allen, I went because they told me I couldn't go. And I helped to get it open and I wanted to go in there and I loved books and I wanted to read books that weren't available to me. But it just took time and I don't, when I go to the library now, I don't really see a lot of black people there now.

V: We had the little library that was down on Eagle Street, and they gave us, I think the librarians from Pack Memorial came down to that the library gift stores, my mother took all the little black children that were there and they told a story, well by James Brothers and I really loved it and I thought it was wonderful and I wanted to hear more stories like that, so I went up to the librarian and asked her, well I heard you say you give these story hours. Well \_\_\_\_\_ when is the next one? And she told me the next story hour. So I said well I would like to come, can I come. Oh yeah, you can come. So I went home and I announced to my mother that I was going to the next story hour. She says really, how, ahh, who said you were going to the next story hour. I said I asked the lady if I could come and she said I can, so I'm going to the next story hour. But I didn't know at that time anything about we couldn't go up to the big library. (laughter) But my mother took me, so I went, but I didn't go back because they had told a very boring story that time (laughter) so I didn't feel like going back any more. But

D: Did they let you in?

V: Oh yes, (laughter) they had told me I could come, and I went, so.

D: What an amazing thing that your mother, instead of telling you that you couldn't go

A: You had to know her mother, she was a remarkable woman, (laughter) very remarkable.

D: Who else besides James Ferguson was in the ASCORE.

V: Bernie Freeman, uhm, it's difficult to remember....

A:, Frank.....

V: Yeah, Frank did come. Frank, I first met Frank, he came, my friend Zaporra Nicholas, and Viola was there, uhmm it's probably a lot of other, it's just that I've forgotten. When haven't been around those people in a long time, forget who all was there, but those I do remember, Will McGowan and his sister Vernell was there

A: Most of these were Stephen's Lee students, most of them were Stephen's Lee

V: Not well Allen, well Vernell was an Allen, we were there

A: Why was I not there?

V: Probably because you lived in Shiloh maybe, and it was quite difficult for you to come in to meetings.

A: That may be part of it, but I remember my father was, had a very different attitude towards integration, and he was very much afraid for his children. So that may have been part of it, and he was quite domineering, but I did live in Shiloh and my friends were different. At the time it was Shiloh and town and I was in Shiloh.

D: I was wondering if there was not a lot of adult support for the students?

V: Ah, ah, ah, it may be and I would say that there was fear, because when I was ready to go off to college, my mother made it very clear that she did not want me going down there marching, going and getting thrown in jail. And she didn't want me, to have to come down there (laughter) and so when I went to college, I didn't. And at that time James Ferguson was the president of the student government and he asked me, because I was always hanging around he since he was my neighbor and I knew him. So he said Viola are you going to come down and hear my address and I said my mother told me not to come down here marching, cus she was \_\_\_\_\_ (laughter). And so I didn't. And it's not that at did everything that my mother told me to, because I didn't, there were a lot of things that I had a mind of my own and I chose what things I wanted to do by myself. I had enough trying to do college and get my lessons and I also I really didn't want to worry my parents and they were making a big sacrifice for me to go to college and so I figured they had enough to take care of that (laughter) that was my whole thing right there. And I had done my thing in to help Asheville, so I learned to really focus in college.

D: And where did you go?

V: I went to NC Central, in Durham

D: And where did you go?.

A: I went to college in Greensboro and I was very anxious to get involved. But the Greensboro activity had passed, I missed it. I went down in '64

V: they initiated it

A: Yeah, they initiated it, and a friend of mine, Viola, who was in the group, I'm pretty sure \_\_\_\_\_, had gotten arrested down in Bennet \_\_\_\_\_, in Greensboro. She was ahead of us, and I was really anxious to get down there, but the activity had moved on by the time I got there.

D: .....did ya'll have these conversations a lot, what was happening in Greensboro?

A: Yes, at school we did,

V: at Allen we did, because there was a girl, named ....., heck, it came to me the other day. It was, since you mention it.....it was like a

A: (laughter)

V: Nitty, twitty,

A: Maxine Twitty

V: Maxine Twitty, she had this thing, she had met E\_\_\_ Blair. I saw pictures recently; that's what brought it to my mind. She had met E \_\_\_\_\_ Blair was one of those students that initiated the sit-ins while he was A & T College at the lunch counters. And she would have this writing correspondence and we were girls, we would all talk about it because he was so cute. And we thought well how fine, she's writing to him. (laughter) Wow. And so we found out what was happening at Greensboro and you know how the sit-ins started with the activities they were doing there and of course we talked about it when we would meet, have a ASCORE meeting.

A: And I think the faculty, the teachers at Allen were very much aware and involved us in the conversations. Do you remember when we couldn't go to the movies downtown.

V: I remember when we couldn't, yeah

A: I mean, no Allen, because we were Allen students, we weren't allowed to go sit in the balcony, do you remember that, they told us do not go sit in the balcony (laughter).....

V: Maybe you didn't but I went (laughter)

A: It was sort of a, a, early kind of boycott for the movies. Do you remember that?

V: It may have been, and I just don't remember, because I decided that that was one of the things .....

Later in the tape

A: The lunch counters were very difficult, because even after it was approved that we could go to the lunch counters, they still would not serve you.

D: .....

A: They just wouldn't serve you, you would just sit and sit and sit and they still wouldn't serve you.

V: And you would just, .... Then you got tired and you left and you never got served. And the waitress was very rude and they would uhm, you know, stare at you or ig .....and no body would say anything to you.

D: At which lunch counter

V: Cress'

D: That's the one on Haywood..

V: No. That's the one on a Patton

A: Uh huh

?: It that near the bank where the Heart Center is now?

V: Well both of them at times. Woolworth's and Kress', both of them, but seems like to me Kress' more so than Woolworths.

D: So you went to the Kress's and would sit.

V: Well I would go with someone. At least we would be in pairs, at least pairs and we would go and we would sit. Because once things opened up, you had to go in to test them. And we uhm, so which ever ones we'd targeted we'd definitely would test and encourage other people to go and test also. The community.

Later on the tape

D: you mentioned a deal about, ah they wouldn't hire bag boys at the

A: That was at the first Ingles.

D: So what do you remember about that?

V: They used to spit at you, patrons coming in and walking by, that was like the only real mean thing, expect for having things saying to you or, but after that there wasn't anything really, you weren't jostled or pushed....

A: Your talking about at the lunch counters right?

V: No, when we marched, ah, because of wanting Ingles to hire bag boys, black bag boys. Right.

D: And where was this at one particular .....

V: I remember, ah, ah, I might be wrong, but it seems like it was the Ingles on College Street. Seems like it was down that way.

A: I thought it was A & P,

V: Maybe it was A & P, I just ..... a grocery store. (laughter)

D: .....groceries in it, may it was .....

V: I think it was A & P

D: .....across from the Court house.

V: Yes, that's, that's College Street isn't it.

D: uhm hum .....

V: .....the Tribunal, it was down there yeah.

D: So it was an A & P, .....

A: Well I don't know, I don't remember what ..... you know out in my area it was A & P, I remember there was one ah.....

V: Whatever grocery store was there, that was the one we.....

D: .....

V: marched at.

D: ..... did you have signs?

V: Yes we had signs,

D: And did you make.....

V: Yes we made all of our signs,

D: Do you remember.....

V: We didn't have money to buy anything so it was definitely made. (laugh)

D: And how many students were there?

V: We had a . . . ., I don't remember how many students were there, but we had a sizeable number of students.

D: and were there any adults?

V: I can't really remember

A: It probably was just students

D: And what did you parents think about you doing this, did they ever say anything to you?

V: Well they encouraged me, I mean, I wouldn't have been involved if my parents disagreed, I'd been home. (laughter) But my my parents supported me in going to the meetings and uhm my activites things, cus I did whatever my parents told me to do and I definitely, they must have supported me and agreed to it.

A: My parents were not supportive, my mother was, but my father wasn't.

D: What was his .....

A: He was just afraid for us. He was ah, my father was considerably older than my mother and ah, he was ....., he was considerably older so he was more of my grandfather's age than my father would have been and he was just frightened for me and really..... that's why I was so anxious to go to Greensboro. (laughter)