AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN LEADERS IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

JANET DEWART BELL

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Janet Dewart Bell

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Leadership and Change.

Approved by:

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Alan E. Guskin, Ph.D., Chair date

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Laurien Alexandre, Ph.D., Committee Member date

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Elaine Gale, Ph.D., Committee Member date

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Joseph Jordan, Ph.D., External Reader date

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thank these remarkable women for their time, insights, and trust that I could help tell at least some small part of their stories. They made the road by walking and have devoted their lifetimes to leading change. We are all in their debt.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to give recognition to and lift up the voices of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. African American women were active leaders at all levels of the Civil Rights Movement, though the larger society, the civil rights establishment, and sometimes even the women themselves failed to acknowledge their significant leadership contributions. The recent and growing body of popular and nonacademic work on African American women leaders, which includes some leaders' writings about their own experiences, often employs the terms "advocate" or "activist" rather than "leader." In the academic literature, particularly on leadership and change, there is little attention devoted to African American women and their leadership legacy. Using a methodology of narrative inquiry, this study begins to remedy this gap in the leadership literature by incorporating history, sociology, and biography to describe the key characteristics of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. In acting to dismantle entrenched and often brutal segregation, they had no roadmaps, but persisted with authenticity, purpose, and courage. Few had position power; they led primarily as servant leaders. They widely engaged in adaptive leadership, which was often transformational. This study's interviews with nine women leaders who represent a range of leadership experiences and contributions reveal leadership lessons from which we can learn and which lay the groundwork for future research. The electronic version of this Dissertation will be available at Ohiolink ETD Center (http://etd.ohiolink.edu) and AURA (http://aura.antioch.edu).

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Introduction

The Civil Rights Movement—for the purposes of this study, the period in America from the 1950s to the 1970s—was one of the most dramatic times in American history, marked by rapid and profound change. During this short span of time, African Americans led the fight to free this country from the vestiges of slavery and Jim Crow. African American women played significant roles at all levels of the Civil Rights Movement, yet they remain mostly invisible to the larger public. Beyond Rosa Parks, Coretta Scott King, and Dorothy Height, most Americans, black and white alike, would be hard-pressed to name other leaders—though there were many—at the community, local, and national levels.

Other women who have broken the barrier of anonymity in varying degrees, include Myrlie Evers-Williams (Evers-Williams & Blau, 1999), Winson Hudson (Hudson & Curry, 2002), Fannie Lou Hamer (Hamlet, 1996), Ella Baker (Elliott, 1996), Charlayne Hunter-Gault (Hunter-Gault, 1992), and Constance Baker Motley (Motley, 1998). Even less well-known are black women leaders active in groups that were generally regarded as bastions of male leadership, such as the Black Panther Party, where Kathleen Cleaver and Elaine Brown played significant roles (Brown, 1992). The anonymity of women in society in general and social movements in particular has been a persistent problem (Barker, Johnson, & Lavalette, 2001; Barnett, 1993).

Peter Northouse (2007) asserts that "When a person is engaged in leadership, that person is a leader, whether he or she was assigned to be the leader or emerged as the leader" (p. 6). His distinction between "position power" and "person power" as "the influence capacity a leader derives from being seen by followers as likable and knowledgeable" (p. 7) is a concept pertinent

to my research, although I place less emphasis on likeability. The leadership of black women is expressed mostly as person power or the use of person power to gain or create position power.

Laurien Alexandre (2007) writes of the "curious invisibility" (p. 95) of women in J. M. Burns' (1978) landmark book on leadership and the general exclusion of women in leadership studies. For African American women, marginalization is particularly acute. Sumru Erkut (2001) writes that "many of the traditional ways of talking and thinking about leadership can continue to mask the strengths women bring to their successful lives as leaders" (p. 5). Although her research focuses on a racially diverse group of prominent, upper class women, Erkut's finding on marginalization can be applied to African American women at all levels, and her observations about tenacity and optimism as keys to survival can also be adapted to African American women.

African American political scientist Ronald Walters (2007) questions the "'irony' of the concept of 'leadership' by relatively less powerful groups . . . because of the vast differences in both the absolute and proportional dimensions of power in American society between blacks and whites" (p. 156). His analysis of leadership does include black women, but only in a cursory fashion. However, Walters's rebuke of the dominant literature's narrow exploration of leadership opens a space to question prior criteria and methodologies, while providing tools to develop analyses of African American women leaders.

Walters (2007) asserts that "the task will be to let the real experience of blacks determine the shape of the models . . . serve as a critique of the existing leadership literature and add a certain richness to it from the perspective of a cultural community" (p. 161). My doctoral studies have provided an intellectual and inspiring "journey to the East" (Hesse, 2003). Like Leo, the protagonist in this fictional journey, which is often referred to in leadership studies (e.g.,

Greenleaf, 2002; Wren, 1995), I have analyzed the concepts of leadership with an emphasis on what it means to be a servant leader. As part of my personal journey, I have chosen to include those leaders who by their sex or ethnicity have been marginalized.

Black women in general are marginalized in the traditional leadership literature through omission and a restriction of "voice"; that is, being able to tell our own stories in our own authentic way. Voice restriction results from the suppression of expression through discriminatory treatment and the internalizing of that oppression by not valuing our own personal worth and history. A major goal of my research is to amplify the authentic voices of African American women, while recognizing them also as leaders.

For this research, I chose a group of African American women with diverse leadership characteristics, who represent specific types of leaders. They include, as Marian Wright Edelman (1992) would remind us, some who were by "no means limited to visible public roles" (p. 68). In studying African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, certain themes emerge, including servant leadership, transformational leadership, the role of faith, and the authenticity of local and state leaders.

African American women led a wide range of efforts to desegregate public accommodations and to secure voting rights (Lawson, 1999), which required actions across a range of fields, including law, education, and journalism (Stewart, Settles, & Winter, 1998; Sullivan, 2009; Terborg-Penn, 1998; Williams, 1997; Zinn, 1980).

African American women leaders also spoke out on issues including lynching and violence—specifically, identifying rape as a crime perpetuated by the dominant white male society, as well as within the black community (Harris, 2011). Women leaders such as the crusading anti-lynching journalist Ida B. Wells-Barnett (Baker, 1996) and Rosa Parks were also

anti-rape activists (McGuire, 2010). Black women leaders also had issues of identification with the women's movement and conflicts with the white feminist movement, as well as intra-racial conflicts associated with class, color, and political philosophy (Breines, 2002; J. M. Burns, 1978; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003; Collins, 2000; Crenshaw, 1994; Davis, 1995; Dawson, 1994; Dumas, 1980; Gilkes, 1994; Harley, 2001; Hine, Hine, & Harrold, 2008; Lerner, 1992; Lewis, 1977; Nasstrom, 1999; Payne, 1989; Ransby, 2003; Schultz, 2001; Springer, 2005; D. G. White, 1999).

My dissertation considers the experiences of some well-known and lesser-known black women. I incorporate concepts and themes within leadership scholarship that help explain how people lead from a variety of positions—some from positions of great authority and others of relative powerlessness, or more accurately, less obvious power.

The Disproportionate Involvement of African American Women in Civil Rights Activities

Through their activities in churches, schools, organizations, non-profits, and the black women's club movement, African American women were wholly integral to their communities' survival and advancement. In particular, the black women's club movement (Scott, 1990) developed organizational and leadership skills by placing women in high and visible positions of influence and in charge of developing programs for groups and communities. This tradition laid an aspirational and practical foundation for leadership.

Hine and Thompson (1998) quote historian Charles M. Payne and others in noting the greater numbers of women in the Civil Rights Movement and the dominance of men as the faces of that movement:

> The answer to the question of why black women were disproportionately involved in the day-to-day activities of the early civil rights struggle appears to lie, first, in the participation of black women in religious and community activities and, second, in their cultural preparation for resistance. (p. 267)

There are a number of books by and about black women specifically on or including the Civil Rights Movement (e.g., Z. Allen, 1996; Bambara, 1970; Collier-Thomas & Franklin, 2001; Giddings, 1984; Hedgeman, 1964; Holsaert et al., 2010). The rich history of women involved in the Civil Rights Movement indicates that there are many stories that remain to be told and to be told from different perspectives. In fact, black women's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement is often more implied that stated. Considering black women's actions and impact in the context of the leadership literature highlights their roles as leaders. Among the biographies and memoirs of individual women that have enriched the scholarly study in the area of black women's leadership are Elaine Brown's *A Taste of Power* (1992), Dorothy I. Height's *Open Wide the Freedom Gates: A Memoir* (2003), Charlayne Hunter-Gault's *In My Place* (1992), and Winson Hudson's and Constance Curry's *Mississippi Harmony: Memoirs of a Freedom Fighter* (2002). In addition to the stories of individuals, there are books about groups of activists, such as those about Spelman (Lefever, 2005) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (Holsaert et al., 2010) and those of community engagement (e.g., Morris, 2000).

The Civil Rights Movement was not a singular united campaign with top down authority, although organizations with top-down structures emerged. "The Movement" consisted of accumulated actions and ideas of many different people in many different places (Killian, 1984). Historians, social scientists, and others have proposed a range of timeframes for the Movement. Most generally include the early 1950s to the late 60s—marking actions preceding the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of May 17, 1954, through the Poor People's Campaign of 1968.

Activities occurred in locations ranging from the urban cities of Montgomery and Atlanta to the villages and backwoods of Mississippi and Virginia and beyond. People who were on the

line—that is, involved in direct action, such as sit-ins, freedom rides, and legal challenges—were the primary catalysts for transformative change. Other people raised funds or supported civil rights activities—providing housing and food to civil rights workers, putting their own lives and livelihood in jeopardy. The people who lived and worked in the heat of the civil rights cauldron were without question the heart and soul of the Movement, including lawyers like Constance Baker Motley, Frankie Freeman, and Dovie Johnson Roundtree, as well as restaurant owners like Leah Chase who provided more than food, also contributing critical safe havens. Some other participants' contributions were not as dramatic or fraught with danger. For example, my mother, who lived in the North, sacrificed to donate money and a car for my use in civil rights work in Virginia, Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi.

Positioning of the Researcher

I was involved in what I call the third wave of the Civil Rights Movement. The first wave was from the late 1940s to the 1954 Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*. The second wave took place 1954–1966, and the third wave occurred 1966–1970s. Often people limit the Civil Rights Movement to either the 1960s or the period from *Brown* through the 60s. The expanded timeframe I use allows a more comprehensive analysis of African American women leaders who laid the groundwork for change and then, after the most active period of the fabled 60s, continued to contribute to society.

The daughter of a household worker, I grew up impressed by the ability of my mother and the other African American women I knew to lead in various ways, similar to Patricia Collins' (1998) description of the women she knew growing up in her "African-American, working-class Philadelphia neighborhood" (p. 187). Similarly, Carole Marks (1993) writes of the "heroic sacrifice" of black women household workers (p. 165). Whether household workers or

field workers, for example, sharecroppers like Fannie Lou Hamer, or professionals like Jo Ann Robinson, black women have borne burdens, have been committed activists, and have dreamed worlds so that others might have opportunities they themselves might not enjoy.

My mother, an extraordinarily intelligent, talented, and beautiful woman, spent much of her life working as a maid in households or motels in the 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s. Her migration to Erie, Pennsylvania in the mid-1940s—where I was born in 1946—had taken a circuitous path from a small town in Arkansas, after her formal education was cut short because the closest high school blacks could attend was in Little Rock, 100 miles away. Outside of her work life, Mom—like many other black women of her era—was an elegant, refined person of great vision who was viewed as a leader in the community. She was the personification of a "servant leader." She was active in supporting neighbors in need and in our schools—which our family essentially integrated. As a community leader, my mother created an informal network to assist our neighbors in obtaining food and other basic necessities, purchasing or bartering for food and then giving it to those in greater need than her immediate family. She was not a part of any formal organization. Partly because we were poor, Mom was not invited to be part of women's social clubs. She was not active in church either, although this was her choice and not because of rejection due to social status. Mom deemed church hypocritical and—as she said—"standing too much on ceremony." She also knew that there was something wrong with an institution that elevated men, while the women did much of the work. Society was not yet using words like patriarchal or sexist, but she clearly understood power dynamics among the sexes and did her best to change those dynamics, or to work around them when change was not yet possible.

I withdrew from Howard University in my sophomore year and became involved in the Civil Rights Movement in 1966, working primarily in Virginia and Tennessee, with some

activities in Mississippi, Georgia, Alabama, and Arkansas. My mother bought me a car to use, stretching far beyond her means to give me a better car than she had ever owned. She had to take on additional work to pay for that extraordinary gift. Her generosity was such that although she disagreed with my decision to withdraw from Howard University—a monumental choice, given that I attended on a full academic scholarship and we both believed in the power of education to transform lives—she was still determined to help me and the Movement in any way she could. She was committed to change and sacrificed to make it happen. While working in Washington, DC, I enrolled in Antioch College to complete my undergraduate degree. Earning that degree was the fulfillment of the unspoken sacred oath I made to my mother.

Purpose of the Study

My purpose in this study is to honor the lives of other African American women leaders as I have honored my mother, to paint portraits that are evocative, truthful, complex, and compelling. Examining the contributions of African American women as leaders will help fill the gap in the study of leaders and leadership, which has been male-dominated and even more narrowly focused on Great Men, to the exclusion of others not in business, politics, or the business of war.

As stated above, Walters (2007) highlights the "'irony' of the concept of 'leadership' by relatively less powerful groups . . . because of the vast differences in both the absolute and proportional dimensions of power in American society between blacks and whites" (p. 156). Walters asserts that "the task (of defining leadership) will be to let the real experience of blacks determine the shape of the models," which may "serve as a critique of the existing leadership literature and add . . . richness to it from the perspective of a cultural community" (p. 161).

Hine and Thompson's book (1998) illustrates the dominant themes in the literature about African American women leaders: invisibility, a deep commitment to the safety and improvement of the race, and the necessity of balancing the yearning for freedom as women with freedom as African Americans.

The writings of Walters (2007) and Hine and Thompson (1998) have both defined the challenges of this area of research and inspired my passion for researching the leadership of African American women.

The Research Questions

I have conducted research on women leaders and interviewed nine women leaders who were active in the Civil Rights Movement. Because the Civil Rights Movement occurred so many years ago, many of those women I would have wanted to interview have died. In order to get a full picture and analysis, my study includes a literature review that encompasses women living and deceased.

The heart of my inquiry—what McMillan and Wergin (2006) refer to as a "foreshadowed problem" (p. 8)—is to determine the triggers that led African American women in a diversity of circumstances to manifest leadership, understand how they look at their lives in the context of the Civil Rights Movement, and reveal how they might think of themselves as leaders. It is this third point that is largely missing from the Civil Rights Movement literature and from the prominent leadership literature. It is my hope that this study will lift up the leadership legacy of African American women leaders and expand our definitions of leaders and leadership to the benefit of all. Doing so will break through stereotypes that limit recognition of the rich legacy and involvement of African American women.

I wanted to explore what factors motivated these individuals to become change agents and, thereby, leaders—and if they recognized themselves as leaders either at the time of their actions or upon later reflection. I sought to explore if they have advice or guidance to share for those aspiring to continue to build upon the work that they accomplished or in which they are presently engaged. My specific research questions address the following issues: What are the essential moments that shaped their lives? If faced with a choice, how did they choose their ultimate direction? What are the fundamental characteristics that they have carried throughout their lives?

Notes on Chapters

The second chapter of this study consists of a review of scholarly literature as well as firsthand accounts written by participants in the Civil Rights Movement.

The third chapter explores the methodology and research procedures used in this study. The nature of this research lends itself to qualitative analysis and a phenomenological approach, most specifically, to narrative inquiry.

The fourth chapter presents the results of interviews with the nine leaders and explores the leadership themes that emerged from those interviews. Selecting participants both representative and unique enough to provide a range of leadership traits to compare and contrast was both challenging and richly rewarding.

The fifth chapter offers a discussion of my research findings and the implications for further research.

The sixth chapter consists of personal reflections on the research of this dissertation and my growth from practitioner-scholar to scholar-practitioner.

Literature Review

The growing field of leadership studies requires an assessment and analysis of the current state of the leadership literature: whether it properly serves the discipline of leadership and change, and if not, then what should be done to make sure that it does. Among the undertakings necessary to perform this evaluation is a comprehensive and rigorous examination of diversity not only of race, but also of leadership experience.

A major deficit in the scholarship is a lack of attention to African American leaders and leadership, male and female. Black women are almost nonexistent in the current leadership literature. For example, the entry on "African-American Leadership" in the comprehensive *Encyclopedia of Leadership* is limited to a cursory survey of civil rights leaders, listing only five men and just one woman: "See Civil Rights Act of 1964; Civil Rights Movement: Du Bois, W.E.B.; King, Martin Luther, Jr.; Malcolm X; Robinson, Jackie; Russell, Bill; Wells-Barnett, Ida B." (Goethals, Sorenson, & Burns, 2004, p. 1802). This volume is male-dominated and even more narrowly focused on Great Men to the exclusion of others not in business, politics, or the business of war.

This chapter surveys the leadership literature and its gaps concerning African American women. The chapter focuses on published information and stories of African American women leaders. Some of these women are well known; others remain largely unknown to the public at large, though they were critically important to the struggles and successes of the Civil Rights Movement. Even within the Movement, these women were not universally acknowledged as leaders. This literature review explores what is known about black women's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement then presents profiles of African American women leaders in the context of the leadership literature. The profiles include women who are no longer living as well as

women still alive. My review includes exemplary women who led civil rights efforts not only in the Deep South, but also in other parts of the country. Including these other leaders paints a fuller picture of how the Movement developed. The stories of the African American women leaders presented in this chapter, along with the findings of my interviews with nine remarkable women presented in the fourth chapter, help fill the current gap in the study of leaders and leadership. I acknowledge with respect and admiration the singular bravery of those women leaders in the Deep South. Andrew Young has said that "it was women going door to door, speaking with their neighbors, meeting in voter-registration classes together, organizing through their churches that gave the vital momentum and energy to the movement, that made it a mass movement" (Payne, 2007, p. 265).

This literature review reflects the interdisciplinary approach of my research, including history, sociology, and biography, as well as the breadth of leadership literature encountered throughout the Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change program. It is critical to go beyond the generally considered leadership literature to capture the stories of African American women leaders, of which there were and are many. Noted scholar-practitioner Anna Arnold Hedgeman's (1964) book, *The Trumpet Sounds: A Memoir of Negro Leadership*, was an early chronicle of leadership. Other noted scholars whose work has contributed to our history and understanding of African American leadership include Clayborne Carson, Charles E. Cobb Jr., Johnnetta B. Cole, Patricia Hill Collins, Richard Couto, Henry Louis Gates, Paula Giddings, Beverly Guy-Sheftall, Darlene Clark Hine, Aldon D. Morris, Lynn Olson, Charles M. Payne; Barbara Ransby, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Yvette Richards, and Cornel West. Henry Hampton's Blackside production company and its signature production, the Public Broadcasting Service series *Eyes on the Prize* (Else & Vecchione, 1987), has also inspired civil rights scholarship.

I have conducted extensive research in consultation with the doctoral program's Research Librarian, searching academic databases for connections between African American women, the Civil Rights Movement, and the women's identification and association with leadership, as shown in the Venn diagram below.

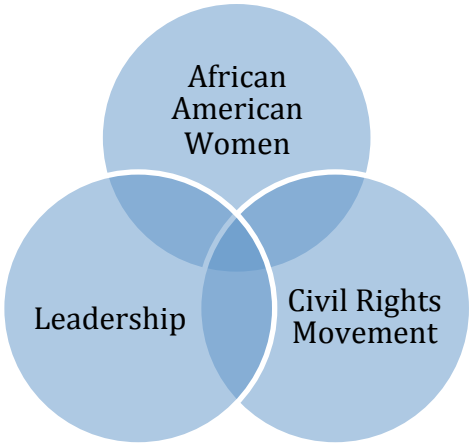

Figure 1.1. The leadership of African American women in the Civil Rights Movement.

I reviewed books, articles, and online sources about African American women, leadership, and the Civil Rights Movement. Few academic studies consider the three characteristics with a focus on leadership—which is the reason for my research.

J. M. Burns (2003) proposes learning about leadership from the "life and times" (p. 9) of individual leaders, especially the heroic ones, and constructing a general theory of leadership in order to grasp the roles of individual leaders and their traits. While respecting J. M. Burns, my research goes beyond his focus on individual, heroic leaders to those who lead "from the middle of the pack" and whose leadership may be obscured by a focus on group, rather than individual, achievement.

Additionally, to advance leadership studies it is necessary to confront our mental models of who is a leader and what characteristics define leadership. Peter Senge (1994) describes mental models as "deeply ingrained assumptions, generalizations, or even pictures or images that

influence how we understand the world and how we take action" (p. 8). He elaborates that approaches that challenge mental models "focus on the openness needed to unearth shortcomings in our present ways of seeing the world" (p. 12).

In developing theories of leadership, Gardner and Laskin (1996) assert, "it is stories of identity—narratives that help individuals think about and feel who they are, where they come from, and where they are headed—that constitute the single most powerful weapon in the leader's literary arsenal" (p. 43). I incorporate stories and voices from a range of sources, including biographies, memoirs, and other books, particularly Hampton, Fayer, and Flynn's *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement From the 1950s Through the 1980s* (1990).

My definition of leadership includes relationships between leaders and followers, the transactional nature of leadership, the transformative power of leaders, and a moral commitment to positive change, particularly for subjugated people. My analysis focuses on *person power* rather than *position power*, with the distinction being that one does not need to have a formal position to exert influence and power. With Sorenson (2007), I agree that "leadership is a process between the leaders and the led and put[s] motivation at the core of the leadership process" (p. 25).

In *The Measure of Our Success*, Marian Wright Edelman (1992) writes that "leadership and service are by no means limited to visible public roles," urging her reader to "be a quiet servant-leader and example in your home, school, workplace, and community" (p. 68). According to Richard Couto (2007), Ronald Walters (2007) adds a moral dimension and "examines leadership in social movements and in the actions of ordinary people to lift restrictions on human dignity and civil and human rights" (p. 118).

Barnett (1993), DeCesare (2013), Irons (1998), and Robnett (1996) present persuasive evidence to support the expansion of the definition of leadership to include African American women leaders and the lessons that can be learned from them.

Organization of the Literature Review

In this chapter, I first identify major leadership concepts that are relevant to my study and analyze the systematic omission from the literature of women and women of color, particularly those in the Civil Rights Movement. I then highlight essential themes in the leadership literature and evaluate them in relationship to African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. I conclude by profiling a number of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

African American Women as Seen Through the Lens of Leadership Theory

Black women are marginalized in the traditional leadership literature through omission and a restriction of "voice;" that is, few of us have been able to tell our own stories in our own authentic way. Voice restriction results from the suppression of expression through discriminatory treatment, as well as the internalization of that oppression through an under-valuing of our own personal worth and history. A major goal of my research is to amplify the authentic voices of African American women, while also recognizing them as leaders.

To expand and challenge the concept of leadership, I chose to focus on a diverse group of women with diverse leadership characteristics, representing a variety of specific types of leaders. In studying African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, certain themes emerge, including servant leadership and transformational leadership, as well as the authenticity of local and state leaders.

Couto has captured some of the essence of women's leadership through his studies of struggles for emancipation (1993a) and social movements (1993b)—both fields in which women have played significant roles. His work has informed my thinking on the subject of leadership.

The Unique Leadership Contributions of African American Women

Black women have a distinct history and must be studied as such, rather than subsumed as part of black history or women's history. Likewise, black women's leadership, while manifesting traits that can be identified in the leadership literature, also exhibits adaptations of those traits developed from particular experiences of oppression based on race and sex.

One such experience unique to African Americans is that of lynching. The lynching of African Americans was the most dramatic example of the remnants of slavery and Jim Crow, but only one example of brutal oppression and terrorist acts perpetuated upon black Americans. African American women leaders were born in the crucible of this racist history, which informed their leadership traits and style. Anna Arnold Hedgeman (1964) wrote a memorandum to the organizer of the 1963 March on Washington, A. Philip Randolph, urging inclusion of women as speakers:

> In light of the role of Negro women in the struggle for freedom and especially in light of the extra burden they have carried because of the castration of our Negro man in this culture, it is incredible that no woman should appear as a speaker at the historic March on Washington. (p. 179)

Dr. Hedgeman not only raised her concern, she suggested how to remedy the situation. Ultimately though, her advice was ignored. African American women leaders are excluded from prominence in coverage of the Civil Rights Movement and in the leadership literature. These omissions rob all of us of a rich history.

Research about African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement is beset by a double conundrum. Larger American society failed to acknowledge them as leaders, and

they were reluctant to claim that title for themselves—not having concepts available, for example, for legitimate forms of leadership apart from positional leadership. The relatively new concept of servant leadership was, as attested to by the women I have interviewed in the course of this dissertation, a novel interpretation of their work. (For example, one leader would only allow that she was a "tactician," while her actions and accomplishments were those of a visionary.)

There is a temptation to view African American women leaders through the dominant white male leadership lens and simply substitute "Great Women" for "Great Men." While these women leaders can be considered great, their greatness cannot be adequately judged by the indicators of traditional leadership literature. Similarly, it would be a distortion to consider black women leaders through the lens of feminist theory alone. To learn about lives of African American women is to recognize that their leadership was manifested in ways particular to them and their communities.

Black leaders developed from rich cultural traditions—preserved even during the most treacherous of times. Black survival in America has depended on vision, creativity, hard work, and self-sacrifice. By their actions, African American women leaders could be designated as feminists, but that label was not necessarily part of their self-identity. (Of the women I interviewed, only one readily employed the phrase.) In contrast to white women, African American women had to protect themselves and their communities not only from discrimination on the basis of gender, but also the brutality of slavery, Jim Crow, and the resulting entrenched social and economic inequalities. While "black feminist" is a term increasingly applied to African American women who embrace the intersectionalities between racism, sexism, and classism, the term was not widely used during the Civil Rights Movement. Accordingly, I did not

pursue either a feminist or black feminist nexus. My conversations with African American women leaders suggested that while they might not eschew the term, feminism was not a dominant theme for any of the women except for Aileen Hernandez, whose post-Civil Rights experience included chairing the National Organization for Women.[1]

The Civil Rights Movement manifested black female leadership on many levels, which is instructive for recognizing and fostering new leaders and developing new dimensions of leadership by overcoming restrictive mental models of who is a leader and what characteristics define leadership.

Themes in the Literature and African American Women as Leadership Models

Peter Northouse (2007) asserts that "when a person is engaged in leadership, that person is a leader, whether he or she was assigned to be the leader or emerged as the leader" (p. 6). His distinction between "position power" and "person power" as "the influence capacity a leader derives from being seen by followers as likable and knowledgeable" (p. 7) is a concept pertinent to my research, although I place less emphasis on likeability. The leadership of black women entails mostly person power or the use of person power to gain or create position power. In many ways, black women leaders represent a good example of servant leaders who lead from mostly person power.

[1] Duchess Harris (2001) charts the evolution of black feminism in her landmark essay "From the Kennedy Commission to the Combahee Collective: Black Feminist Organizing, 1960–1980." Although the National Black Feminist Organization and Combahee River Collective were active after the time period considered in this dissertation, some of the women involved participated in civil rights activities and helped raise awareness of the systemic realities of the intersections of race and gender. The Combahee River Collective's analysis expanded this intersectional focus to issues of class and sexuality. It is difficult to determine precisely their influence on the Civil Rights Movement or what impact the Movement had on them, but Harris writes that many of the young women she discusses "had worked in the South for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)" (p. 283). She also notes that "Some of these black feminists had been members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and other radical student organizations in the North" (p. 283).

Servant leadership: An overarching theme. Servant leadership is an overarching theme in the literature, closely associated with informal authority and person power. Most African American women leaders have been servant leaders (Greenleaf, 2002, pp. 21–22), providing service in the interest of a greater good (Couto, 2005). They have been without portfolio or titles commensurate with their efforts. Black churches, for example, would not have survived without the black women who organized and led fundraising dinners, Sunday School programs, usher boards, choirs, Willing Worker Societies, tribute luncheons, and holiday celebrations, yet the heads of black churches were and continue to be predominantly men. Black women did not necessarily hold titles that properly reflected their influence and contributions, but they did much—if not most—of the work and held moral authority.

Servant leadership is a term with which I only became acquainted during my doctoral studies. The term was coined by Robert Greenleaf (2002), who asserted that servant leadership "begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead" (p. 27). The Greenleaf Center for Servant Leadership describes the servant-leader as one who

> focuses primarily on the growth and well-being of people and the communities to which they belong. While traditional leadership generally involves the accumulation and exercise of power by one at the 'top of the pyramid,' servant leadership is different. The servant-leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. (n.d., para. 5)

In the Civil Rights Movement, servant leadership was manifested across class lines. The aspirations of low-income black women and others who consider themselves middle- or upper-income have historically shared much in common, though these commonalities may have gone unacknowledged. Although there are class distinctions within the black community, racism means that all blacks are subject to racial discrimination and most to economic inequality. Blacks

of all classes seek freedom and social justice. Most blacks, even those in the middle class, have recognized that their lot is no better than the majority of black people when compared to whites.

Transactional and transformational leadership. Transactional leadership is a top-down philosophy that clearly differentiates leaders from followers. The transactional leadership style relies on "reinforcement and exchanges" (Aarons, 2006, p. 1162). In distinguishing transactional and transformational leadership, Northouse (2007) asserts that "the transactional leader does not individualize the needs of subordinates or focus on their development" (p. 185). In contrast, referring to J. M. Burns (1978) and Bass (1985, 1996), Northouse observes that "transformational leadership is the process whereby a person engages with others and creates a connection that raises the level of motivation and morality in both the leader and the follower" (2007, p. 176). Gary Yukl (2002) writes of the inspirational and motivational aspects of transformative leadership. However, Yukl does cite Bass's contention that "transformational and transactional leadership are distinct but not mutually exclusive processes," and that "effective leaders use a combination of both types of leadership" (p. 254). African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement were transformational leaders, reflecting Avolio's (2004) characterization of J. M. Burns's thinking:

> transformational leaders engage followers not only to get them to achieve something of significance . . . but also to "morally uplift" them to be leaders themselves . . . being more concerned with the collective interests of the group, organization, and society as opposed to their own self-interests. (p. 1558)

Philosopher and educator Paulo Freire, in discussing power relationships and the participation of the oppressed, is adamant that the participation of the oppressed is necessary for cultural formation and transformation (Christians, 2005, p. 156). Because African American women were not in positions of traditional power, their leadership was of necessity bottom-up in the larger society, and mostly bottom-up within the black community.

Whatever their levels of leadership, these women exhibited the "quality leadership" that Cornel West (2001) champions in *Race Matters*. Although I do not fully agree with West's searing critique of black leadership, I appreciate his deep passion and his call for high standards for African American leaders. West argues that quality leaders must come from "deeply bred traditions and communities that shape and mold talented and gifted persons from a vibrant tradition of resistance, bonded by its ethical ideals, and from a credible sense of political struggle" (2001, p. 37). This ethos is the foundation of the leadership of African American women leaders.

Couto (as cited in J. M. Burns, 2003) furthers the discussion of desirable leadership qualities. He contrasts "'psycho-political empowerment' that boosts people's self-esteem and mastery of their own lives and promotes democratic participation in actions for a common benefit" (J. M. Burns, 2003, p. 184) with "'psycho-symbolic empowerment' that may gratify people's self-esteem but leaves them otherwise as they were—politically powerless and unmotivated to change their circumstances" (J. M. Burns, 2003, p. 184). Couto sees the need for leaders to help bring about positive change. The black women leaders profiled here aimed for psycho-political empowerment, although they may have used symbols to achieve their goals. One of my research goals in lifting up the leadership of African American women is not to engender hero (or "she-ro") worship, but to lift the veil on lessons learned through their trials and triumphs. As Hine and Thompson (1998) conclude,

> it is tempting to think that black women are somehow "naturally" stronger and wiser than the rest of the population, that they are born with more courage and resourcefulness and perhaps, compassion. But that's no truer than any other stereotype. The values that have helped black women survive are *entirely communicable* [emphasis added]. And at a time when the problems of our society seem insoluble and the obstacles to peace and freedom insurmountable, all Americans have a great deal to learn from the history of black women in America. (p. 308)

Nontraditional leaders such as household workers and community organizers stood in contrast to people holding leadership positions in organizations and institutions. Without clearly defined roles or positions, many led efforts for civil rights in their neighborhoods and communities. My mother was one of these "free agents," and both my mother and godmother were household workers. While my mother was a community leader, my godmother became a national organizer who operated with person power and position power (Hulett & Dewart, 1973). In "The Bone and Sinew of the Race: Black Women, Domestic Service and Labor Migration," Marks (1993) writes that "the hardship endured by the black woman as household worker is rarely judged as a heroic sacrifice for her family" (p. 165). Household workers sacrificed their own comfort and ambitions to help others—their families, other individuals, and their communities. Women such as these, who are less visible—leading from the margins—also deserve recognition as leaders, among them Georgia Gilmore, a cook, who raised much needed funds to support the Montgomery bus boycott (Hampton et al., 1990, pp. 29–30).

In the broader American society, African American women leaders contribute to American society by both embracing it and defying it. They are at once "adapters" and "resistors" (Erkut, 2001), who embraced the concept of change and prepared themselves to negotiate "permanent white water" (Vaill, 1996), or constant change.

Marginalization and invisibility. The terms marginalization and invisibility were not invoked in the discourse of the Civil Rights Movement or the general public during the time period of this study. These largely academic terms gained currency in the decades following. Few sources directly discuss the marginalization and invisibility of African American women. Black women themselves generally did not focus on those issues during the Civil Rights

Movement, but some have reflected on them later. Mostly, however, we must infer the manifestation of these forms of inequality on their lives.

The reality was that black women were largely invisible and generally marginalized—their levels of participation in the Movement and in leadership roles were not adequately acknowledged. However, the irony is that black women participated in the Movement at higher levels than men, a finding that has led Charles Payne (2007) to call the Civil Rights Movement "a woman's war" (pp. 265–283).

Many black women leaders demonstrate "invisible leadership," which "emerges when people become advocates and embodiments of the common purpose" (Hickman, 2004, p. 750). Their leadership is so intertwined with their work that their traits as leaders may not be easily distinguished from their act of getting the job done.

Hickman (2004) defines invisible leadership as "a process in which major organizers and change leaders often are unknown to those outside the endeavor; as a result, their source of motivation, valuable contributions, and personal agency also go unnoticed by outside observers" (p. 750). Some invisible leaders are even unknown to others in the same movement or locale. Even if known, racism and sexism diminish the importance of their roles. Although they could be called "outsiders-within" (Collins, 1998, p. 5), this term applied to African American women suggests their adaptive use of power rather than a capitulation to what could have been considered helplessness.

At a later time when men tried to take more leadership roles, Ella Baker reportedly advised that one should "never make the mistake of substituting men in quantity for women of quality" (Payne, 2007, p. 271).

Barnett (1993) writes that "although seldom recognized as leaders, . . . women were often the ones who initiated protest, formulated strategies and tactics, and mobilized other resources (especially money, personnel and communication networks) necessary for successful collective action" (p. 163), adding that "embedded within a structural context of three interlocking systems of oppression—racism, sexism, and classism—modern black women activists in communities throughout the South . . . performed roles that . . . merit their being considered 'heroes' and 'leaders' of the movement" (p. 163). Among the constraints that Barnett cites as responsible for the non-recognition of black women's leadership roles are "traditional gender-role differences" (p. 175) and the "patriarchy that historically has constrained all women in American society" (p. 175).

Neither the male movement hierarchy nor the larger society acknowledged African American women as leaders equal to African American men—neither of whom were considered equal to white men or white women. Women were considered bridge builders between the male movement hierarchy and the various communities and groups needed to support movement activities. DeCesare (2013) quotes Belinda Robnett, who used the hybrid term of "bridge leaders" (pp. 244–245) to refer to these women.

Comparing position power and person power. Ronald Heifetz (2007) cites J. M. Burns in arguing that leadership should be measured by "the quality of one's impact on the lives of people and politics—the transformative effect" (p. 33). Heifetz (1994) champions the idea of leadership without authority as "critical to the adaptive successes of a polity" (p. 183).

Building on this concept of leadership without authority, Northouse (2007) distinguishes between person power and position power. The former "comes from followers and includes referent and expert power. It is given to leaders because followers believe leaders have

something of value" (p. 13). Position power, however, "derives from having an office in a formal organizational system. It includes legitimate reward, and coercive power" (p. 13). Black women leaders have led mostly by person power—although there have been notable exceptions such as Mary McLeod Bethune, the founding director of the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), and her successor Dorothy Height, who led by both position power and person power. Rounding out these distinctions, Couto (1993a) adds the concept of citizen leaders: those who do not seek leadership roles but accept responsibility and a "higher sense of authority" (p.13).

Because of race and sex discrimination, very few African American women leaders had formal or position power. In *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America*, Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson (1998) illustrate dominant themes in the literature of African American women leaders: invisibility, servant leadership, deep commitment to the safety and improvement of the race, and balancing the yearning for freedom as women with freedom as African Americans. The authors take a sweeping and insightful approach to their research, examining the historical events and trends that influenced black women leaders and forged leadership styles. They write, "The cultural expressions of black women . . . have long been ways of affirming the identity of the individual and of the community . . . [as well as] other forms of expression . . . specifically created to avow and to protest the oppression of black people (pp. 268–269). For example, they recount the influences of Angelina Weld Grimké, a cultural leader, who wrote "the first protest play to be produced in the modern era, *Rachel"* (p. 269), about lynching and its devastating consequences on the psyche of a young woman who "descends into madness, and decides to forswear motherhood rather than rear a child who might be lynched" (p. 267).

Hine and Thompson (1998) contrast the fictional *Rachel,* which they call "one last horrifying, courageous piece of theater" (pp. 269–271), with the public grieving and courage of Mamie Bradley, the mother of Emmett Till. Bradley exhibited leadership traits of boldness and courage when she chose to display her son's mutilated body so the world could see the results of his brutal murder, "plac[ing] her suffering into the collective consciousness of the black community" (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 270). This one act, although born of tragedy, was elegant in its simplicity, inspiring others to act to change their individual lives and break down the societal structure of segregation.

Hine and Thompson (1998) recall that

> many . . . members of the generation that began fighting for justice in the years immediately following the murder of Emmett Till remember vividly seeing the photographs [of Emmett] or hearing Mamie Bradley talk. . . . By publicly expressing her rage and sorrow, Mamie Bradley made her son's death an impetus for rebellion. (p. 271)

She ripped open the code of silence, which others followed as they engaged in public protest. Her actions helped set the stage to rally support for the actions of the women of the Montgomery Bus Boycott some months later.

The role of faith. Faith is an almost universal theme of African American women leaders, past and present. Whether making a way out of no way or taking a path to achieving a position of "traditional" success, African American women take solace in a faith that sustains them.

African American theologian Howard Thurman has written extensively about the search for deep meaning (Thurman, 1951, 1984, 1999). In *Deep is the Hunger*, Thurman (1951) writes that "faith is a way of knowing, a form of knowledge" (p. 145). Religious belief and the black church were central influences in the black community. Black people forced to observe the slave master's religion accepted it and made it sacred. Faith, whether or not tied to religious

orthodoxy, is a deeply held cultural heritage in African American communities. The Hebrews verse resonates: “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

Black women’s faith has existed as a philosophical approach independent of the often male-dominated church. Fannie Lou Hamer’s singing and speaking manifested a faith that allowed her to live openly in the midst of danger. Rosa Parks, Jean Fairfax, Winson Hudson and many others took leaps of faith that were grounded in their search for meaning and purpose. They left the comfort of their homes to venture into dangerous territory and persevere in the face of segregation and violence, all the while giving aid and solace to others.

According to Payne (2007),

> Those who joined the movement in its early days could not have known that things would work out as they did. What they knew for certain was that those who joined were going to suffer for it. From the viewpoint of most rural black southerners in 1962 or 1963, the overwhelming preponderance of evidence must have suggested that the movement was going to fail. Joining a movement under such circumstances may literally require an act of faith. (pp. 272–273)

Mamie Till Bradley, the mother of Emmett Till, referred to the “spiritual heritage” (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 270) that allowed her to forgive and not be consumed by hatred. This heritage is echoed by a saying in the black church: “to stretch out on your faith,” to believe in a God of grace, justice, and mercy.

A number of the women I interviewed described their grounding in faith as key to overcoming the odds they faced. They manifested faith in many ways. The will to survive was itself a manifestation of faith, as echoed in the saying in the black community: “Don’t give up, give out, or give in.” Black women believe as in *Esther 4:14*: “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” This biblical passage recognizes uncertainty, while holding out the possibility of an opportunity that one must be prepared for in order to save

oneself and others. Black women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement dreamed worlds unknown and unseen, creating systems of survival and growth such as the women's club movement, which was the training ground for so many women leaders.

Faith provides the basis for attempting to impose purpose when circumstances might suggest otherwise. The faith of African American women leaders is not unlike that of Victor Frankl reported by Remen (2006) in *Kitchen Table Wisdom*. Remen summarizes Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*, his story of surviving the Nazi concentration camps, as follows: "those who were able to maintain a sense of meaning and purpose in their suffering were more able to survive the deprivation and atrocities of their daily lives than others for whom their suffering was meaningless" (pp. 160–161). As with Frankl, the African American women leaders who have emerged during my doctoral studies had unshakable faith and an unwavering sense of purpose in their lives.

Gender related patterns of participation. Historian Charles Payne (2007) analyzes what he calls "gender-related pattern[s] of participation" (p. 266) to explain the predominance of women in the Civil Rights Movement. Among his findings was that this pattern may be age-specific. While, according to Payne, men and women younger or older than typical working age participated in the Movement in roughly equal numbers, women aged "roughly thirty to fifty . . . were three or four times more likely to participate than men" (p. 266). Payne finds that this pattern is clear, yet under-theorized:

> While there was virtually no disagreement . . . about the nature of the pattern, there was no consensus at all about what explains it. . . . The gender differences were not something to which people had given a lot of thought, even though they were aware of them. This is not surprising, given that in 1962 or 1963 gender was not as politicized a social category as it became a few years later. (pp. 266–267)

Gendered differences in participation extend to the realm of leadership as well. Comparing the participation of women in the Civil Rights Movement to an analysis of black women in a union

organizing drive in a southern hospital, Payne noted that traditional definitions of leadership did not recognize how "women were responsible for the actual building of the organization, for . . . doing the everyday work." While men served as spokespersons, work traditionally recognized as leadership, women led by "mobilizing already existing social networks around the organizing goals, mediating conflicts, conveying information, coordinating activity, [and] creating and sustaining good relations within the group" (Payne, 2007, p. 275).

The Civil Rights Movement: Profiles of African American Women

The profiles that follow represent a range of leaders and leadership styles. This list is not meant to be exhaustive. There are many more leaders who could rightly be the subject of academic research. The intent of these profiles is to reflect the leadership themes discussed above in the published material about the lives of African American women leaders.

The events and participants of the Civil Rights Movement are often identified by their locale, such as Mississippi, Montgomery, Selma. There were also women leaders not identified primarily with one place and who represented a particular type of leadership. The section opens with profiles of those not necessarily identified by locale and then groups other women leaders based on place.

Most African American woman leaders did not have position power as compared with their male counterparts. A notable exception was Dorothy Height. Black women leaders were often indigenous leaders and place specific, such as Fannie Lou Hamer of Mississippi. Rosa Parks was also an indigenous leader, grounded in a rich, cultural history whose combination of position and personal power situated her at a defining moment in the Civil Rights Movement. The lives of these three women mirror many aspects of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement who are profiled below.

Dorothy I. Height. Dorothy Irene Height was one of the few African American women who had national position power and sustained it throughout the Civil Rights Movement and afterwards. During her long and storied career, she used her positions, along with impressive person power, to forge institutions and systems of change. She strategically developed synergy between the parts of her multifaceted life and career, resulting in such innovations as the Black Family Reunion and her educational work in the United States and abroad, particularly in Africa. For many familiar with the National Council of Negro Women, Height is synonymous with the organization. Almost every woman I interviewed made unprompted mention of Dorothy Height as a singular leader in the Civil Rights Movement. Although she pre-dates the period of this study, Height's mentor and predecessor at NCNW, Mary McLeod Bethune, was also mentioned.

Sandra Edmonds Crewe (2009) extols Height for the leadership role she played in three influential women's organization—the YWCA, Delta Sigma Theta, and the NCNW. What Crewe did not mention was the oft, almost whispered, criticism that Height did not "share the space" or willingly acknowledge new and emerging African American women leaders. Given how she had to fight for her own space in power circles where her participation was restricted because of race and sex discrimination, her reaction is understandable.

The NCNW was founded by Mary McLeod Bethune in 1935. Height became president of the organization in 1957, serving as such until 1998, when she assumed the positions of Chair and President Emerita. As the head of NCNW, Height worked with Freedom Schools in Mississippi and voter registration throughout the South (National Council of Negro Women, Inc., n.d.). Height was involved in Christian youth activities and worked in civil rights. For the latter, she was often the only woman leader, alongside Martin Luther King Jr., Whitney H. Young, A. Philip Randolph, James Farmer, Roy Wilkins and John Lewis—a group of black men

called “the Big Six.” Even with her involvement and stature, she was not allowed to speak at the 1963 March on Washington.

Height continued to be an influential civil rights and women’s rights leader as head of NCNW, and as the chair of the Leadership Conference for Civil Rights until her death in 2010 at age 98. During her long life, she was highly productive and had diverse pursuits, from being a power broker for black people with Presidents in the United States, muscling her way into the men’s club of civil rights leaders; and leading economic development efforts in foreign countries, particularly in Africa. She took delegations of NCNW members and others to the United Nations international conferences for women’s rights. So vast and diverse were her contributions that, in reviewing her 2003 memoir, *Open Wide the Freedom Gates,* The New York Times called it “a poignant short course in a century of African American history.” Upon her death, The New York Times stated she was “considered both the grande dame of the civil rights era and its unsung heroine” (Fox, 2010, para. 1).

> If Ms. Height was less well known than her contemporaries in either the civil rights or women’s movement, it was perhaps because she was doubly marginalized, pushed offstage by women’s groups because of her race and by black groups because of her sex. Throughout her career, she responded quietly but firmly, working with a characteristic mix of limitless energy and steely gentility to ally the two movements in the fight for social justice. (Fox, 2010, para. 6)

Certainly not to diminish her great contributions, Height was one of many “unsung heroines.” Even while giving her rightful praise, *The New York Times* obituary showed a lack of knowledge of the many African American women leaders at all levels in the Movement.

Her lifetime achievement honors include the Presidential Medal of Freedom, The Congressional Medal of Honor, and the NAACP’s Spingarn Award. In conferring the Spingarn Award, the NAACP praised her “half century of leadership in the struggle for equality and human rights for all people” and her “passionate commitment to a just society . . . and for

personification of these goals through individual and organizational achievement" (Dorothy Height: Half a Century of Service, 1993).

In her early years, she had been the assistant executive director of the Harlem branch of the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), in the 1930s, and later a leader in the national Y. She founded and directed the Y's Center for Racial Justice and was instrumental in the YWCA convention adopting the elimination of racism as its "One Imperative."[2]

Quoted in *I Dream a World*, Height stated that "black women are the backbone of every institution, but sometimes they are not recognized as even being there, even in the civil rights movement" (Lanker, 1989, p. 133). Cole and Guy-Sheftall (2003) also note that James Farmer opined that "though the world of civil rights leadership in the sixties was a man's world, Height managed to negotiate this terrain effectively" (p. 86).

Septima Clark. Septima Clark, through her work with Citizenship Schools, gained recognition within the Movement as a visionary and a caring, trustworthy leader. While Clark was not as well-known at the time for her leadership role, Movement poet, SNCC activist, and journalist Charlie Cobb notes that she "had a considerable prominence within the Movement" (Cobb, 2009, "Education & Organizing," para. 2). Cobb made a point that activists and leaders existed at all levels. However, Clark's "ability to link social reform with educational advancement" (McFadden, 1990, p. 88) made her a unique and "great grassroots organizer" (Morris, 1984, p. 98) by working not at the national level, but within local communities instead.

Clark came to her activism as a teacher working on Johns Island, one of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina, going there because she was barred by law from teaching in city schools (Botsch, 2000). Olson (2001) explains, "it was on Johns Island that she developed her

[2] In recent years, the national YWCA embarked on a campaign, which built on the legacy of Height and others. The organization made clear its mission as embodied in its motto "Eliminating racism. Empowering women."

methods for teaching illiterate adults, basing their learning on their life experiences and their own needs, rather than on primers that featured pictures of white children and their pets" (p. 216). Clark's activism extended to working with the NAACP and Thurgood Marshall in a successful effort to equalize pay for black and white teachers, although faced with roadblocks such as the imposition of having to take a national exam. She called her work on equal pay her "first effort in a social action challenging the status quo" (Botsch, 2000, para. 8). She was later fired after 40 years of teaching for defying a state law by having a membership in the NAACP (Olson, 2001, p. 219).

In 1956, Myles Horton hired her at Highlander, where as director of workshops, she began the Citizenship School program. Eventually, "in 1975, she was elected a member of the Charleston school board, the same body that had dismissed her as a teacher nineteen years before" (Olson, 2001, pp. 219–220). A year later, "the governor of South Carolina restored the retirement benefits she had lost when she was fired in 1956 for her civil rights activities" (Olson, 2001, p. 401). Clark's leadership at Highlander and at the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) had a profound impact on the movement: by nurturing people at various levels—leaders, activists, and other community residents—she contributed to building an infrastructure of activism and resistance.

With the encouragement of the Highlander Folk School—the incubator of the Citizenship Schools—Clark became a part of the SCLC in 1961. Morris (1984) notes that "The SCLC used the Citizenship Schools to prepare blacks for the movement" (pp. 237–238). As an illustration, Morris notes that "[a] number of great civil rights leaders, including Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, attended the SCLC's Citizenship Schools" (p. 239).

Although her father had been born into slavery, her mother had not and thus influenced her daughter not to become part of the Southern caste system by working in white households. In *Freedom's Daughters*, Olson (2001), reports that Clark's mother rejected work in white households and forbade her daughters from doing it as well. Clark recounted her mother's admonition that "they might mark your legs" (Olson, 2001, p. 216), a euphemism for sexual assault by the men of the houses and other white men with whom she might come into contact in such closed, intimate settings.

Additionally, LaVerne Gyant and Deborah F. Atwater (1996) have written that Clark's legacy includes her ability to motivate and inspire through public speaking, not only with hostile groups, but also individual men, who did not feel that women should have a voice. They explain:

> Like many women in the civil rights movement, Clark did not see herself as a leader. Rather, she saw herself as doing what needed to be done. To that end, she was forced to speak in public and argue persuasively for her point of view . . . Clark's public presentations were a way to educate the masses. (pp. 589–90)

She had tremendous presence with position and person power.

Ella Baker. Ella Baker helped develop the concept of peaceful nonviolence and—although she was an older, educated woman (a graduate of Shaw University)—was able to motivate young activists and bridge generational and class lines (Grant, 1998). Inspired by student sit-ins, she took the bold step in her late 50's of leaving the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which she helped found, to organize student leaders into what became the foundation for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Her commitment to support youth activists made her beloved by young civil rights workers, among whom she was fondly called "Fundi," loosely translated from Swahili as teacher or mentor. As a collaborative leader, she was able to lead people to create the environment for innovative and revolutionary ideas. Baker explained: "The kind of role that I tried to play was to pick up pieces or put together

pieces out of which I hope organization might come. My theory is, strong people don't need strong leaders" (Mueller, 1990, p. 51). Ironically, she was a strong leader, but not in the traditional top-down manner.

Prior to working with Martin Luther King Jr. and the SCLC, Baker served the NAACP as a field secretary and director of branches. She said **"**the major job was getting people to understand that they had something within their power that they could use, and it could only be used if they understood what was happening and how group action could counter violence" (Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, n.d., sidebar, para. 1).

Baker was a visionary who was focused on the future and not mired in the past or the limitations of her own individual circumstance. Her ability to see beyond what was to what might be was a hallmark of her life's work. Her expansive view of democracy, which she called participatory democracy or "group centered leadership" (Elliott, 1996) allowed for possibilities known and not yet known. She trusted in the wisdom of ordinary people. Her emphasis was on the "grassroots involvement of people throughout society", "the minimization of hierarchy and the associated emphasis on expertise and professionalism as a basis for leadership" and "a call for direct action as an answer to fear, alienation, and intellectual detachment" (Mueller, 1990, pp. 51–52). It is interesting that while she did not call herself a leader, her basis for leadership had characteristics directly associated with her.

Although associated with several of the major civil rights organizations of her time—the NAACP, SCLC, and SNCC—Baker manifested the strategic approaches of a free agent, dedicated to change and willing to take risks to make change happen. As with Septima Clark, she had a rhetorical legacy, while personally preferring to remain behind the scenes, Baker

acknowledged the power of speaking in public as part of an expanded perception of leadership (Elliott, 1996, p. 602).

Jean Fairfax. In their quest for social justice, black women have "given their gifts" in overt and subtle ways (Couto & Eken, 2002). Jean Fairfax and her sister Betty have in the last few decades become known as philanthropists, with a shared focus on education. Although equally committed to social justice, Jean Fairfax was more directly involved in civil rights, having served with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund (LDF), an organization that grew out of the NAACP's legal department, but became an independent entity in 1957 (NAACP Legal Defense, n.d., para. 14). She was the AFSC Director of Southern Programs, working in Prince Edwards County in southern Virginia during the struggle for school integration. When the schools were callously closed for five years to prevent their desegregation, she helped organize an outplacement program for 70 black children so they could continue their education in integrated schools in eight states, and supervised a team of community organizers working to prepare for court-ordered integration. At the LDF, Fairfax worked with a team of lawyers to "shape the guidelines as federal agencies began to administer Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964" (J. Fairfax, personal communication, May 11, 2015). She is symbolic of those who helped build the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement and helped sustain it.

The Fairfax sisters became philanthropists, who have inspired blacks and others to follow their examples. Betty Fairfax, who died in 2010 at the age of 92, was also a lifelong educator.

The Fairfax sisters were beneficiaries of their parents' astute financial investments and frugality. Having been part of the "Exodusters"—blacks who migrated to Kansas from the South—their parents were independent and forward-thinking. They left a sizable inheritance to

their daughters. Honoring their parents' memory and legacy, the sisters used their joint inheritance to invest in inner-city education in Phoenix, Arizona, their adopted hometown of many years, where Betty had originally been recruited to teach. As philanthropists they developed and promoted a philosophy of strategic giving, using relatively limited resources to spur larger-scale change. They adopted an inner-city eighth-grade class in Phoenix, arranging to provide scholarships to 90 students for each year spent in college, and also gave to scholarship programs at their alma maters of Kent State University, Teachers College of Columbia University, and the University of Michigan. Phoenix named a school after Betty Fairfax in 2007. Although not widely known outside philanthropic and civil rights circles, the Fairfax sisters received recognition from the Twenty-First Century Foundation, an organization that promotes "giving for black community change" (Meyerson & Wernick, 2012, p. 103).

Through her work as the director of the Southern Civil Rights Program of the American Friends Service Committee and the Legal Defense Fund, Jean Fairfax made significant contributions to the Civil Rights Movement in the fight for school desegregation. Although Fairfax has not written her own memoir, acknowledgements of her work appear in memoirs of others, such as those of activist Winson Hudson and attorney Constance Curry. Fairfax was Curry's AFSC supervisor when Curry went to Mississippi in May 1964 to work with six white women who organized Mississippians for Public Education in an attempt to assist with peaceful school desegregation (Curry, 2002, p. 27; Hudson & Curry, 2002, p. 10). LDF lawyer Derrick Bell (2004) noted that Fairfax "provided welcome financial and social support to the Harmony community and their leaders" (p. 100). It may not be clear from this reference that Fairfax also put her body on the line. As an example, she and Bell drove Debra Lewis and her mother through

hostile territory as the brave child desegregated Leake County's elementary school (Bell, 2004, p. 101).

Maida Springer. In the early 1990s, I met Maida Springer at the AFL-CIO's George Meany Center in Maryland, when I was there to conduct a communications session at a training conference. At the time I was Director of Public Relations and Communications for District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, in New York City, a council of over 50 local unions. (I was the first woman and I believe the first black person to hold that position). Springer was introduced as the woman who led the American trade union movement to become involved in Africa. That she was able to accomplish so much as a black woman in the white male-dominated American labor movement is no less than remarkable. Her work with the AFL-CIO was also instrumental in providing support for the 1963 March on Washington (Anderson, 2003; Korstad & Lichtenstein, 1988).

Heifetz (1994) writes about "creative deviance" (pp. 183–206) as the ability to push through innovative ideas against a system or individual who might resist it, often accomplished by people without formal authority. He argues that it is "critical to the adaptive successes of a polity that leadership be exercised by people without authority. These people—perceived as entrepreneurs and deviants, organizers and troublemakers—provide the capacity within the system to see through the blind spots of the dominant viewpoint" (p. 183). Springer personified this concept by entering the labor movement as a garment worker without authority, gaining position power of an organizer, then emerging as the educational director for her local union:

> She formally joined the AFL-CIO Department of International Affairs in 1960 and served as an expert in African labor affairs and a confidante of many African labor and political leaders. Springer also dedicated herself to women's advancement both nationally and internationally. (Richards, 2004, p. 1)

Mollie Moon. Mollie Moon was a purposeful leader with a sense of mission. She had a systems approach to her life and activities, intentionally and strategically using herself as an instrument of social change, a concept advanced by Senge (1994). She was a stellar member of New York black society and respected by white society leaders such as the Rockefellers, who attended her functions on behalf of the National Urban League and contributed to the League at her urging. Moon considered her society activities and connections as ways to building bridges between black and white people and supporting the civil rights work of the League. She represented middle class and upper middle class black women and led them in volunteer efforts of benefit to others less fortunate. She and her late husband, Henry Lee Moon, the highly regarded director of public relations for the NAACP, were civil rights royalty. Although she was considered a society woman, her goal was always equality and opportunity between races and within the black race. She believed passionately in education as a social equalizer.

Her actions reflected her sense of purpose. Heifetz (1994) asserts that "[A] sense of purpose is not the same as a clearly defined purpose . . . but even more precious" (p. 274), allowing someone to grow and adapt as circumstances dictate. Moon's systems approach allowed her to see her individual actions in the context of specific organizations, such as the Urban League, and the Civil Rights Movement as a whole, for which she raised significant funds.

Moon was the founder in 1942 and remained president of the National Urban League Guild until her death in 1990. For decades she organized and ran the Beaux Arts balls which brought together black and white people across race and class lines. When she began these social events, it was considered daring and revolutionary to have blacks and whites of any class socializing as equals. Moon skillfully used this annual event, as well as other activities she

organized, as ways to give platforms to black people she deemed promising—particularly in politics, journalism, and the arts.

She enjoyed and modeled an elegant and comfortable life. Her lifestyle was mostly due to her ingenuity and ability to attract supporters, rather than personal wealth, which was modest by New York standards and certainly by those of the society people with whom she associated, such as the Rockefellers or the black lawyers, corporate officials, and media moguls she promoted.

She was on the search committee to hire the National Urban League chief executive and was influential in its recommendation and subsequent board confirmation of Whitney M. Young. Later in the mid and late 1980s she weighed in on one of the volatile issues percolating at the League—self-identification of black people: What should we call ourselves? Black, African American, people of color, colored people? Mollie Moon was enthusiastic about using the term "African American." She considered it both specific and inclusive—a way to "advance a healthy racial identity and a positive sense of self as a racial being" (Connerley & Pedersen, 2005, p. 59). Moon's influence was subtle yet powerful. She helped diffuse the dissension within the board and the League's staff, many of whom were from Caribbean backgrounds, with some opposed to using the term African American (as were some native black Americans). Different groups held different narratives and were trying to preserve what Couto (1993b) called their own "community of memory" (p. 60); that is, a common past of those within their particular group, which they perceived to be different from the history of black people born and raised in the United States.

Although it was not her responsibility to be a leader on this issue, she chose to become one. Playing against a perceived limitation as one more interested in privileged high society than social issues for those less fortunate, Moon used her gentle influence to exert informal authority

of her person power to help the League through very turbulent periods of change. Resolving the self-identification issue was particularly important for the NUL's communications and research purposes. As with most individuals and institutions during that period, officials at the League decided to use the terms black and African American interchangeably. Although over 80 years old at the time, Mrs. Moon was adaptive. She met criteria offered by Couto and Eken (2002) in being able to make "intrapersonal and interpersonal change, by providing inspiration and support for others to change individually; helping people work together to reach places they had not imagined; and delegating any recognition attached to the process" (p. 193). Undoubtedly, she knew how to get things done and handled well "the common challenges of leadership—change, conflict, and collaboration" (Couto & Eken, 2002, p. 193) as exemplified by her efforts to bring consensus or at least achieve common ground at the League on the self-definition of African Americans. She was as dedicated to the future of the League as she was to raising money to support the League's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement.

Eleanor Holmes Norton. Norton is now the Congressional Delegate from the District of Columbia. Prior to being elected Delegate in 1991, she had a distinguished career as a civil rights activist and leader. She is a 1960 graduate of Antioch College and earned her master's and law degrees from Yale.

In the 1960s, she worked as an organizer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee with Medgar Evers and Fannie Lou Hamer. She served on the national staff of the March on Washington and was on the frontlines during the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 (Nelson, 1993, pp. 886–887).

As an attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), she fought for the right of former Alabama Governor George Wallace to have a rally at New York City's Shea Stadium.

New York City Mayor John Lindsay appointed her to head the city's Commission on Human Rights in 1970 (Nelson, 1993, p. 886). President Jimmy Carter appointed her the first female chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1977.

Norton became a law professor at Georgetown University in 1982, where she taught full time until her election as Delegate from the District of Columbia. Her Congressional biography states that she "came to Congress as a national figure who had been a civil rights and feminist leader" (Full Biography: Congresswoman, n.d., para. 2).

She has continued to be a powerful voice on issues of social justice.

Fannie Lou Hamer. Mississippi native and sharecropper Fannie Lou Hamer was an indigenous leader. Only two generations removed from slavery, she was the youngest of 20 children. When she tried to register to vote in 1962, Hamer was arrested and beaten, resulting in partial blindness and kidney damage. However, even eviction from her home could not extinguish her fire to fight for freedom (Hamlet, 1996). She became the Mississippi field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee at the age of 44.

Hamer testified before the Credentials Committee at the 1964 Democratic National Convention as vice chair of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party—the alternative protest party to the all-white, segregationist official delegation. She proclaimed, "if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, 'I question America'" (Perlstein, 2002, p. 256). Her other oft-cited quote, the title of her speech delivered with Malcolm X at the Williams Institutional CME Church in Harlem in 1964, is, "I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired" (Hamer, Brooks, & Houck, 2011, p. 57). Hers were not words of resignation; they were fighting words, a commitment to struggle.

Because of the way Fannie Lou Hamer used her powerful singing voice to inspire, Bernice Johnson Reagon (1990) of the SNCC Freedom Singers calls her a "culture carrier" (p. 204). Reagon describes Hamer's influence as follows:

> Fannie Lou Hamer was an activist and a cultural leader who assumed major responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the environment within which those who struggle for freedom lived and worked. She positioned herself so that she was constantly in great danger; she operated in the open, aboveground, confronting an entire system that was organized to keep her and all black people subjugated . . . She called and urged others to join in battling racism, poverty, and injustice. A natural and fearless community leader, master orator, and song leader, she used her stories and songs to nurture the air we breathed as fighters. (p. 204)

I attended a rally in 1966 or 1967 when Mrs. Hamer—which is all I ever called her—was chastising Stokely Carmichael of SNCC for using profanity. He immediately cleaned up his language, and then responded by hugging Mrs. Hamer with great respect and affection. That gesture indicated how powerful she was, gender notwithstanding. However, in *Black Power* by Carmichael (Kwame Ture) and Charles V. Hamilton (1992), it is disappointing that black women, including Mrs. Hamer and Ella Baker, are notably absent. In contrast to Carmichael and Hamilton—who it must be acknowledged were writing in a different time—Cornel West's (2001) *Race Matters* includes references to Fannie Lou Hamer, Sojourner Truth, Ella Baker, and Anna Julia Cooper on equal basis with Frederick Douglass, Martin Luther King Jr., W.E.B. Du Bois, E. Franklin Frazier and other notable black men. These women and men are part of what Professor West would call "quality leadership" (p. 37). There are reports that Mrs. Hamer died sick and poor—a fate that has befallen other black women leaders away from the spotlight. Those whom they helped did not return their grace.

Other Mississippi leaders: Winson and Dovie Hudson, Myrlie Evers. Mississippi has been a land unto itself. Quite recently, Haley Barbour, then the governor of Mississippi and the former chairman of the Republican National Committee proclaimed his admiration for the White

Citizens' Councils, which shares the dubious distinction of being a domestic terrorist group along with the Ku Klux Klan. Uproar over his comments of praise for the Councils forced him to try to reinterpret earlier remarks (People for the American Way, 2010).

In her essay "Beyond the Human Self: Grassroots Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement," Crawford (1990) paraphrases James Silver in *Mississippi: The Closed Society,* labeling the state the "most violent, dreadful pocket of resistance in the South" (p. 14). That there would emerge a large number of African American women leaders from this state is remarkable. Anne Moody (2004) poignantly captured the challenge of living in Mississippi during the Civil Rights Movement as blacks sought their freedom from segregation and Jim Crow laws in her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*. As a young college student during the Movement, she wanted to go to an NAACP convention in Jackson and told her mother:

> Three days later I got a letter from Mama with dried-up tears on it, forbidding me to go to the convention. It went on for more than six pages. She said if I didn't stop that shit she would come to Tougaloo and kill me herself. She told me about the time I last visited her, on Thanksgiving, and she had picked me up at the bus station. She said she picked me up because she was scared some white in my hometown would try to do something to me. She said the sheriff had been by, telling her I was messing around with that NAACP group. She said he told her if I didn't stop it, I could not come back there any more. (Moody, 2004, p. 285)

Winson and Dovie Hudson. Sisters Winson and Dovie Hudson embraced the fight for freedom as family business. Although both had active roles in desegregation efforts, Winson had a more visible position as the president of the local branch of the NAACP, which she helped found in 1961 and led for 38 years.

Winson—by establishing and leading the local NAACP branch—also led by *position power*, leading the fight to desegregate the schools of Leake County. Her lawsuit was considered the first for rural school desegregation (Hudson & Curry, 2002).

Born in Harmony, Mississippi (Leake County) in 1916, Anger Winson Hudson exemplifies the courageous local civil rights leader—"invisible" to the larger Movement, not afforded the recognition and praise of other, more well-known leaders. Her memoir*, Mississippi Harmony: Memoirs of a Freedom Fighter* (2002) gave voice to the experiences she had, along with her sister, family, and community. They acknowledge the insight and efforts of Jean Fairfax—for whom my dissertation has an individual entry—for having "recognized . . . the incredible story that lay in the Harmony Community, who spent so much time interviewing Winson and Dovie, and whose transcripts of those interviews served as the primary basis for Winson's voice in the book" (Hudson & Curry, 2002, p. xvii).

Myrlie Evers.[3] Myrlie Evers has captured part of her extraordinary life in her memoir *Watch Me Fly* (Evers-Williams & Blau, 1999) In the book, she discusses her experiences and insights as the wife and partner of the legendary civil rights leader Medgar Evers, the first NAACP Field Secretary in the State of Mississippi. A Mississippi native, she knew the dangers of activism for racial equality and how her husband's prominence would bring unwanted attention and pressure to their lives. Despite her misgivings, she supported her husband's decision to take what they both knew to be a dangerous job and held steadfast even after their home was firebombed. In June 1963, her husband was assassinated in their driveway. Then a widow with three small children, she remained in Jackson until the summer of 1964. In June of 1964, she addressed the NAACP Convention in Washington, D.C. at the time when civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were missing and not yet discovered murdered. She left Mississippi so that she and her children could have a more normal

[3] I interviewed Myrlie Evers for this dissertation. The fourth and fifth chapters include findings from that interview.

life. However, for 30 years she sought to bring to justice her husband's murderer, resulting in the long-overdue conviction of white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith.

She became the director of consumer affairs for Atlantic Richfield and the first African American woman to serve as commissioner on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works. She was chairman of the NAACP from 1995 to 1998, helping to reinvigorate that organization—then beset by financial and image problems.

Gloria Richardson[4] and the Cambridge Movement. Gloria Richardson was another indigenous leader. She brought a different demeanor to the struggle for civil rights. Unlike the gentle persona of Rosa Parks or the constrained anger of other women leaders who concealed their rage, Richardson was determined to show her anger and impatience. She intentionally refused a disguise of gentility and acquiescence (Foeman, 1996). Called "The Lady General of Civil Rights," by *Ebony* magazine, her leadership was considered "militant" and "uncompromising" (Harley, 2001, p. 187). She was noted for "her refusal in 1963 and 1964 to accept nonviolence as the primary strategy in civil rights protests" (Harley, 2001, p. 174). Under her leadership, the Cambridge Movement became known as "the first grass roots movement outside of the deep South" and "one of the first campaigns to focus on economic conditions rather than just civil rights" as well as "the first major movement of which a woman was the leader" (Brock 1990; Giddings, 1984). Richardson led street protests and an economic boycott (Brock, 1990). There were several aspects of her life and her work that helped garner her the designation of "radical;" among them, being a woman to lead a major movement, eschewing her middle class background to work on issues affecting black people at all economic levels, and her refusal to accept nonviolence as a strategy.

[4] I interviewed Gloria Richardson for this dissertation. The fourth and fifth chapters include findings from that interview.

Since blacks in Maryland already had the right to vote and the Richardson family was considered middle class—at least for black people—Richardson's militant leadership was often cited as unexpected and she was considered an "unlikely rebel." In fact, during one trial about the demonstrations she led, the judge excoriated her for allegedly disgracing her family name (Brock, 1990, p. 128). What the judge failed to acknowledge was that under the surface, her lot was not much different than that of other blacks. She, like most African Americans, was subject to racial discrimination and relentless assaults on human dignity. She refused to be bought off with the specious argument that she was different from and therefore superior to other black people. Richardson understood the black middle class was still considered by the white majority as less than first class and therefore treated as such:

> Regardless of my background, I experienced the same kinds of things that all other Blacks did in Cambridge. My father died because he could not go to the hospital most of the time. Most people had to travel to John Hopkins [sic] segregated clinic. I was not able to get a job of any kind since I didn't want to teach. I could not go into the restaurants if I wanted to. So I was a victim as well as the rest of the Blacks in Cambridge. (Brock, 1990, p. 122)

While Richardson used nonviolence as a tactic, she questioned its ultimate success in obtaining full economic and human rights. Harley (2001) analyzes Richardson in the black radical activist tradition of self-defense and uncompromising positions on equality, and recounts her words of 1964: "The choice that Cambridge and the rest of the nation finally face is between progress and anarchy, between witnessing change and experiencing destruction" (p. 191). At the 1963 Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference—itself a response to a conference of civil rights moderates that excluded militants like Richardson—she "announced publicly her support for strategies other than nonviolent protests to obtain social justice and political advancement for African Americans" (Harley, 2001, p. 190).

Her questioning of nonviolence inspired the later efforts of Black Panthers and others that took more militant responses to social injustices. Her militancy was her primary leadership contribution. Harley (2001) notes that "Former Black Panther Angela D. LeBlanc-Ernest declared that 'women who later became members of the Black Panther Party followed the legacy of radical African American female activities of the early 1960s, such as Gloria Richardson'" (p. 191).

Rosa Parks. The story of Rosa Parks is far more complex than the iconic picture of this dignified woman refusing to give up her seat because she grew tired one day (Stroud, 1997). "No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in" (Gates & West, 2002, p. 223).

As she herself reported, she had been removed from a bus years earlier and in other instances told not to ride if she thought she was "too important" because she would not go through the back door (Hampton et al., 1990, p. 19). She was an active member of the local NAACP, serving as Secretary and Youth Council adviser. As NAACP Secretary, her responsibilities were wide-ranging, from investigating racial incidents to signing letters, such as the letter appointing Martin Luther King Jr. to the chapter's Executive Council. She also "had been present at meetings when it was decided not to mobilize around Colvin (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 274).

Rosa Parks was the right woman at the right time. Taylor Branch (1988), in *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years 1954–63*, writes of Parks' background:

> A seamstress at a downtown department store, Parks made extra money by taking in sewing work on the side. . . . Her background and character put her firmly astride the class fault that divided the politically active Negroes of Montgomery. Had the professionals and the upper strata from Alabama State taken over the organization—as they were threatening to do now that the *Brown* case had brought fresh excitement to the NAACP—Parks might well have been replaced by one of the college-trained members of the Women's Political Council. As it was, she remained the woman of Nixon's circle most congenial to the Council members. She wore rimless spectacles, spoke quietly,

> wrote and typed faultless letters on her own, and had never been known to lower herself to factionalism. A tireless worker and church-goer, of working-class station and middle-class demeanor, Rosa Parks was one of those rare people of whom everyone agreed that she gave more than she got. (pp. 124–125)

In an interview, Parks explained her actions:

> I was arrested on December 1st, 1955 for refusing to stand up on the orders of the bus driver, after the white seats had been occupied in the front. And of course, I was not in the front of the bus as many people have written and spoken that I was—that I got on the bus and took the front seat, but I did not. I took a seat that was just back of where the white people were sitting, in fact, the last seat. . . . We went on undisturbed until about the second or third stop when some white people boarded the bus and left one man standing. And when the driver noticed him standing, he told us to stand up and let him have those seats. He referred to them as front seats. And when the other three people—after some hesitancy—stood up, he wanted to know if I was going to stand up, and I was not. And he told me he would have me arrested. And I told him he may do that. And of course, he did. (Parks, 1995a, para. 2)

In response to the interviewer's question, "What personal characteristics do you think are most important to accomplish something?" she said—not in the language of the leadership literature, but certainly with the insight of the leader she was:

> I think it's important to believe in yourself and when you feel like you have the right idea, to stay with it. And of course, it all depends upon the cooperation of the people around. People were very cooperative in getting off the buses. (Parks, 1995b, para. 4)

It is important to note that Parks had shown her leadership and courage much earlier—in 1944—when she stood up for Recy Taylor, a 24-year-old African American mother who had been abducted and then raped by a group of six white men (McGuire, 2010, p. xvii.). Parks, according to McGuire (2010) "was a militant race woman, a sharp detective, and an anti-rape activist long before she became the patron saint of the bus boycott" (p. xvii). She also helped found The Committee for Equal Justice, which was the forerunner of the Montgomery Improvement Association.

While rightfully credited with having "provided the catalyst for the Montgomery bus boycott" (Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003, p. 89), Parks' prior activism in the NAACP led her in early

1955 to attend a workshop on desegregation at the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee (Horton, 1990, pp.148–149). Founded by Myles Horton, workshop participants "must know that they have problems which can't be solved on a personal level, and that their problems are social, collective ones which take an organized group to work on . . . people have to be selected by their organizations and report back to the organizations that sent them" (Horton, 1990, pp.148–149). Thus, Parks' protest represented not only her desires, but stood also for those of the community.

Other women of Montgomery, Alabama: A microcosm of African American women leaders and their diverse leadership roles—Jo Ann Robinson, Claudette Colvin, and Georgia Gilmore. The story of the Montgomery Bus Boycott is inspirational, educational, and motivational. Women's leadership was manifested at many levels—including young people, college professors and cooks. The successful boycott shows how a caring community can bring together various elements to combat oppression (S. Burns, 1990, 1997).

Jo Ann Robinson: College professor; Women's Political Council president. Robinson embodies many of the traits of another subset of black women leaders: the professionals, most of whom were teachers. She not only was an originator of the idea of a bus boycott, but helped mobilize support and develop an alternate transportation system. Robinson was an associate professor at the historically black Alabama State College, and held position power as the president of the Women's Political Council, which was founded in 1946 by Mary Fair Burks, after the all-white League of Women Voters had refused to allow black women to participate in its activities. (Hine et al., 2008, p. 579).

Robinson also represents the effectiveness of the black women's club movement as a training ground for women's leadership. Black women had joined forces in the National Federation of Afro-American Women and the National League of Colored Women to form the

National Association of Colored Women in 1896, a "watershed" in that it was "led and directed by women" (Giddings, 1984, pp. 93–95).

The WPC, along with other groups, had been preparing for a possible boycott. In 1954, immediately after the Brown decision and "one and a half years *before* the actual boycott" (Robinson & Garrow, 1987, p. x), Jo Ann Robinson, representing the Women's Political Council wrote a letter "threatening a boycott if city and bus company officials did not offer significant improvements" (Robinson & Garrow, 1987, p. x). Although they declined to use the Colvin arrest as their test case, they were ready for the person who ultimately would be deemed the appropriate symbol for the boycott: on December 1, 1955, Rosa Parks became that person. Upon hearing of Parks' arrest, Robinson wrote a flyer, then supervised the duplication and distribution of tens of thousands of copies, having "planned distribution routes months earlier" (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 275). Robinson was leader with both position power from the WPC and person power. She was also transformative, combining vision with planning ability and execution skills that were critical to the success of the boycott.

Robinson, Parks, and several other black women later served on the executive committee of the Montgomery Improvement Association, formed to support the boycott: "As the boycott continued, leadership passed more and more to King and other male leaders. The women who had originally planned and declared the boycott remained behind the scene" (Hine & Thompson, 1998, p. 275).

Mary Fair Burks (1990) explains:

> Whether the boycott was solely Jo Ann's idea, as she claimed, is debatable. What is important is that the boycott occurred. And once it was underway, nobody worked more diligently than she did as a member of the board of the Montgomery Improvement Association and as a representative of the Women's Political Council. Although others had contemplated a boycott, it was due in large part to Jo Ann's unswerving belief that it

> *could* be accomplished, and her never-failing optimism that it *would* be accomplished, and her selflessness and unbounded energy that it *was* accomplished. (p. 75)

Claudette Colvin: Teenage protester and plaintiff in suit that successfully ended the boycott. Claudette Colvin was, in many ways, the forerunner of the thousands of young people who fought for civil rights in the 1960s and 70s. Her action became part of the cultural DNA of a new generation of activists. She remained relatively unknown and unheralded until Phillip Hoose (2009) wrote a book about her life and her courageous one-person protest. As recounted by Hoose, Colvin had acted spontaneously and took an independent stand in March 1955. With this defiance of Montgomery's Jim Crow bus laws, she was expelled from school because of her "criminal record."

Colvin later became one of four named plaintiffs in the *Browder v. Gayle* (1956) case that went to the Supreme Court. The *Browder* case legally ended bus segregation and consequently the bus boycott (Hoose, 2009).

Although Parks became the symbol, the boycott ended because of the courageous efforts of a number of people, including teenager Claudette Colvin, Aurelia Browder and two other women, who agreed to be named as plaintiffs in the *Browder v. Gayle* case—Browder being the first named plaintiff and Gayle being the mayor of Montgomery. When Colvin testified in federal court, plaintiff counsel Charles Langford remarked, "If there was a star witness in the boycott case, it had to be Claudette Colvin" (Hoose, 2009, pp. 99–100).

The federal court's 1956 decision in favor of the plaintiffs was rendered in June and the U.S. Supreme Court affirmed *Browder* in November, but Gayle refused to abide by the ruling until it was delivered in person by federal marshals on December 20, 1956. Montgomery's black leaders celebrated the successful conclusion of the boycott without including any of the *Browder* plaintiffs—not necessarily an intentional act, but certainly an historical oversight that helped

obscure the role of Colvin and other brave women who had been integral to the legal victory (Hoose, 2009, pp. 108–109). The exclusion of the *Browder* plaintiffs from the celebration of the victory in which they were integral is illustrative of how women leaders have been ignored and left out of the literature.

Hunter-Gault (2012) tells of an additional case that went to the Supreme Court, this time with few major legal consequences, involving army Private Sarah Keys. The *Keys* case extended the 1954 *Brown* decision outlawing 'separate but equal' segregation in public education to include interstate transport when the Court affirmed Pvt. Keys' right to equal treatment in public accommodations—six days before the start of the Montgomery bus boycott.

Georgia Gilmore: A cook who raised money and inspired others. Many boycott supporters had to walk long distances to work and other activities. Already sacrificing, some like Georgia Gilmore, who was a cook, raised much needed funds and inspired others to follow suit:

> You know, you can take things, and take things, and take things. . . . The maids, the cooks, they were the ones that really and truly kept the bus running. And after the maids and the cooks stopped riding the bus, well, the bus didn't have any need to run. . . . In order to make the mass meeting and boycott be a success and keep the car pool running, we decided that the peoples on the south side would get a club and the peoples on the east side would get a club, and so we decided that we wouldn't name the club anything, we'd just say it was the Club from Nowhere. (Hampton et al., 1990, pp. 29–30)

Gilmore and others like her took great risks. Already on the economic margins, most black people depended on whites for their livelihood either directly or indirectly as in the case of teachers at state and other public schools. Additionally, there were threats not only from those upholding Jim Crow laws—including authorities from the police to judges—but from vigilantes and Ku Klux Klan members and their sympathizers. The bus boycott demonstrated the extraordinary courage of ordinary people without authority, only the power of their actions.

Professionals such as Jo Ann Robinson were also threatened with job loss, constant harassment, and physical violence—including a brick being thrown in her window to acid being poured on her car while it was parked in her carport. (Hampton et al., 1990, p. 31)

According to Lynne Olson (2001) in *Freedom's Daughters*,

> For a while after the boycott, Jo Ann Robinson and Mary Fair Burks seemed to have escaped unscathed from the repercussions. But in the late 1950s, word spread on the Alabama State campus that a special state legislative committee was investigating professors thought to have been boycott leaders. Suddenly, state "evaluators" began appearing in the professors' classes, listening and taking notes, in a clear attempt at intimidation. Then in February 1960, an investigation of a student sit-in at the state capitol—in which Robinson and Burks had *not* been involved—cost the two women their jobs. "Everybody who had been involved in either protest paid for it," Robinson later said. (p. 131)

Robinson, citing "political pressures on the college," resigned the year of the investigation (Robinson & Garrow, 1987, p. 168).

Women leaders of Montgomery demonstrated a multiplicity of leadership. Taken together, the actions of Colvin, Robinson, Parks, and Gilmore indicate the diversity among African American Women Leaders who ranged from those with and without letters, or positions, or organizational support. In my opinion, this diversity has been and is our strength; encouraging action and creativity from all who would contribute. Mary Fair Burks (1990) distinguishes the women's roles as *trailblazers* or pioneers from what she calls the *torchbearer* role of Martin Luther King Jr. (p. 71). These trailblazers set the stage for liberation activism beyond civil rights. Guy-Sheftall (1995) writes, "the civil rights activism of women in the 1950s such as Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Ella Baker, Septima Clark, Jo Ann Robinson, Modjeska Simkins, and Daisy Bates generated a climate of discontent which anticipated the full-blown and transformative black liberation struggle of the 1960s, out of which emerged the 'second wave' women's movement" (p. 78).

Likewise, Claudette Colvin made a courageous choice, and showed the grace of understanding the demands of the time:

> When I look back now, I think Rosa Parks was the right person to represent that movement at that time. She was a good and strong person, accepted by more people than were ready to accept me. But I made a personal statement, too, one that she didn't make and probably couldn't have made. Mine was the first cry for justice, and a loud one. I made it so that our own adult leaders couldn't just be nice anymore. (Hoose, 2009, p. 116)

While *Browder* is missing from the writing of many civil rights lawyers—overshadowed by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision—it had a critical place in civil rights history.

Michael Klarman (2004) suggests that had the Supreme Court decisions been reversed—with *Browder* preceding *Brown*—white resistance might not have been so galvanized (p. 392). However, he acknowledges the speculative nature of that theory and credits the direct action of the boycott with having

> demonstrated black agency, resolve, courage, resourcefulness, and leadership. The boycott revealed the power of nonviolent protest, deprived southern whites of their illusions that blacks were satisfied with the racial status quo, challenged other southern blacks to match the efforts of those in Montgomery, and enlightened millions of whites around the nation and the world about Jim Crow. (p. 372)

Other local movement leaders with national impact.

Dorothy Cotton and Birmingham, Alabama, Montgomery's sister city. Although "the largest of several mass protest movements during the spring and summer of 1963" (Carson, 2003, p. 223) the Birmingham campaign was very active, but not as well known as Montgomery. The story of Birmingham is included to demonstrate how a larger effort could inspire "Movement" activity elsewhere. One of the contributions that Birmingham made to the Movement was bringing "the influx of schoolchildren" (Hampton et al., 1990, p. 132) an idea advanced by James Bevel, a staff member of the SCLC.

Working to make this children's crusade effective was Dorothy Cotton, known for her work with the Citizenship Schools and the SCLC. She was a "great singer who used her musical skills to train Citizenship School teachers" (Morris, 1984, p. 237) and organize community support. Her singing served as an educational tool, to help largely illiterate people learn through repetition and inspiration. She used what Wyatt Tee Walker has referred to as her "leading skills" (Hampton et al., 1990, p. 132) to influence the Birmingham Movement.

The Birmingham Movement showed how intentional the police were in using intimidation and excessive force against black people, even children—and that people were willing to fight for their rights under such brutal circumstances. The human rights violations of the police, including the use of high pressure hoses, billy clubs, and attack dogs—captured by photographers and chronicled in the national and world news—added to the pressure on President John F. Kennedy to intercede. The Birmingham campaign added to the momentum for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28 of 1963 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Dorothy Cotton, along with James Bevel, Andrew Young, and Martin Luther King Jr. played a pivotal role.

Daisy Bates and Little Rock, Arkansas. As the Civil Rights Movement was going through a transition from a more legal and restrained approach fought mostly in the courts to an activist approach fought also in the streets, Daisy Bates became a pivotal figure in the struggle for civil rights as she led efforts in one of the first major and publicly recognized efforts to desegregate public schools. The work she led in Little Rock, Arkansas was in many ways navigating through unchartered waters.

Bates' personal background of tragedy and triumph were solid grounding to forge her into the seminal historical figure she became. She was committed to challenging segregation and was uniquely prepared.

Born Daisy Lee Gatson in rural Arkansas in 1914, she was raised by friends of her family when "her mother was killed resisting the sexual advances of three local white men and her father left shortly thereafter" (Calloway-Thomas & Garner, 1996, p. 619; Gordon, 1988). In her memoir, Bates cited that learning of her mother's death and the awful circumstances of it, along with finding out that her parents were not the couple who raised her, was a key incident in her young life. She cited another incident of being called "nigger" when she was about seven and went to the butcher to buy meat for her sick mother. After being ignored while the butcher served white customers who came in after she did, she was intentionally sold inferior meat that she had to accept or risk racial retaliation. It was her adoptive father's deathbed exhortation to overcome hate and "do something about it" that became her "priceless heritage" (Calloway-Thomas & Garner, 1996, p. 620). That urging became the philosophical undergirding of her leadership.

She moved to Little Rock in 1942 upon her marriage to L.C. Bates, an insurance agent and publisher of the *Arkansas State Press,* which started in 1941. Their newspaper "became a leading voice in the Civil Rights Movement . . . attack[ing] police brutality, segregation and the inequities of the criminal justice system" (Gordon, 1988, para. 2).

An active member of the NAACP, Daisy Bates became president of the Arkansas State Conference of NAACP branches in 1952 and subsequently, the advisor to the group of black students who integrated the Little Rock's public high schools. That group of six girls and three boys came to be collectively known as the Little Rock Nine.

Bates was a transformative leader. She had position power and personal power, manifested through her vision for change and her courage to take on a powerful system opposed to her efforts. What I describe as the Daisy Bates Model, in which local African American leaders also have communication networks independent of white mainstream media, is becoming increasingly obsolete. The black press, which was a lifeline of the Civil Rights Movement, is celebrated today more as a historical phenomenon than a powerful community voice or vehicle for substantive community information. Bates, like others of her generation and calling, had the courage necessary to withstand threats of violence and harassment in spite of doubts that her efforts would achieve success (Z. Allen, 1996, p. 10).

Conclusion

Black women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement engaged in adaptive work, changing environments and systems that were not established to accommodate them. Indeed many of these systems were specifically established to thwart them. Because African American women are mostly missing from the leadership literature, to recognize their leadership requires that we adjust our leadership lens "in an iterative process of data collection, interpretation, and analysis" (Rost, 1993, p. 183).

Larraine Matusak (2007) champions a "collaborative transforming-leadership model" in which "leaders become learners, and learners must assume the responsibility for leadership whenever their talents are required" (p. 137). This model encourages people to engage in leadership at all levels, to be generous and creative in using their gifts in any way they can. African American Women Leaders have been exemplary at taking responsibility not only for themselves but for their families and communities.

Patricia Hill Collins (1998) urges building on a "tradition of visionary pragmatism," citing Sojourner Truth's "fusion of visionary ideas about freedom, a vision informed by race, class, and gender intersectionality, as well as pragmatic actions taken in search of freedom (legal action, individual protest, speeches, etc.)" (p. 240). Attorney Dovey Johnson Roundtree of Washington, DC took such actions (McCabe & Roundtree, 2009). As a visionary pragmatist, she sued the Interstate Commerce Commission to desegregate interstate commerce. Taking the action itself showed vision and courage. As with many African American women leaders, Roundtree saw something wrong, analyzed how to address the problem, then made a commitment to fix it. Collins (1998) writes that "arriving at some predetermined destination remains less important than struggling for some ethical end" (p. 189). Collins further notes that black women's actions "remain unrecognized as political activism, even by many Black women themselves . . . [thereby] remain[ing] unconnected to more universal freedom struggles" (e.g., those for human rights) (p. 241). My review of the literature reveals several main themes: servant leadership, formal and informal power, the role of place, and the diversity of women's leadership.

Servant leadership is the overarching theme of the women leaders I have researched. Throughout the diversity of leadership, their commitment to serving others than themselves was so ingrained in the way they approached change that they often did not recognize their contributions as exhibiting leadership.

Even those who exercised formal power used their informal power to motivate and bring together disparate individuals and groups. For example, Dorothy Cotton, Fannie Lou Hamer, and others complemented their relatively more formal positions by lifting their voices in song to rally and inspire their followers.

It is my hope that examining the experiences of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement will advance the field of leadership scholarship and, in so doing, lead to greater understanding of leadership skills that are replicable not only by the black community, but also the nation.

Methodology

This research study seeks to capture the characteristics and character of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement, using a methodology of narrative inquiry to gather data through interviews. My overall research question is: What motivated these women to become leaders—to take actions to try to dismantle entrenched and often brutal segregation? They had no roadmaps and often very little support. But they persevered, "making a way out of no way." The methodology of narrative inquiry encourages self-reflection from participants, while eliciting details of their lives that highlight both unique and universal characteristics.

In contrast to quantitative analysis, narrative inquiry allows for voice and nuance—the approach is both disciplined and adaptable. Narrative inquiry provides "a point of reference, a life and a ground to stand on for imagining what experience is and for imagining how it might be studied and represented" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). Narrative inquiry takes as its object the human knowledge revealed through stories, imposes discipline on the study of that knowledge, and allows researchers to build on their findings. Thus, narrative inquiry offers a dynamic tool for studying leaders and extrapolating insights and analyses from their experiences.

The growth of narrative inquiry as a research methodology has not been without controversy, as indicated in Fisher's defense of the paradigm. In an article, "Clarifying the Narrative Paradigm" (1989), and as an afterword upon publication of the paperback edition of *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action* (1987), Fisher offers additional thoughts on the narrative paradigm. The paradigm, according to Fisher (1989), is

> a philosophical statement that is meant to offer an approach to interpretation and assessment of human communication—assuming that all forms of human communication

> can be seen fundamentally as stories, as interpretations of aspects of the world occurring in time and shaped by history, culture, and character. (p. xii)

Fisher (1989) also lists seven characteristics that narrative paradigm is not: rhetoric; rhetorical criticism; narration as an "individuated form" or as a "genre in and of itself"; a denial of "the utility of traditional genres"; an "assert[ion] that some communication cannot be seen as serving other than rhetorical functions"; a rejection of the tradition of argumentation; nor, finally, a denial "that power, ideology, distortion or totalitarian forces are or can be significant features of communicative practices" (pp. xi-xii).

Challenges and Strengths of Narrative Inquiry

The strength of qualitative research, its grounding in human experience, is considered a weakness by those who counter that the data collected in qualitative research is, by its nature, not as rigorous as data collected in quantitative research. In addition, my focus on the experiences of African American women, mostly treated as "the Other," (Essed, 1996) may raise issues of credibility and reliability that may be difficult to overcome. With regard to racist ideology, Essed has written that "discourse about the 'Other' [has] become more sophisticated" over time, noting that "the focus on attributed biological inferiority is being replaced by a concern with culture and ethnicity" (p. 7). This change in terminology only provides a partial mask for the white racial superiority it perpetuates. To study African American women is to confront the suspicion that they are unworthy of study or that as an emic researcher I cannot be an unbiased observer.

Kvale (1996) notes that "the qualitative research interview has sometimes been dismissed as not being scientific," (p. 59) elaborating that critics claim that "it may perhaps provide interesting results and serve as preparation to scientific investigations, but the interview as such is not a scientific method" (p. 59). He counters this argument by invoking a definition of science as "*the methodological production of new, systematic knowledge"* (p. 60).

Sonia Ospina (2004) highlights the need for qualitative research "to answer questions about culture and meaning" (p. 1279). Referring to the work of other scholars, Ospina cites reasons to use qualitative research: "flexibility to follow unexpected ideas," "sensitivity to contextual factors," "ability to study symbolic dimensions and social meaning," and "increased opportunities to develop empirically supported new ideas and theories" (p. 1279). My "general statement . . . that communicates the broad purpose of the study" (McMillan & Wergin, 2006, p. 95) is to explore African American women's voices from the Civil Rights Era.

Narrative inquiry allows insights into the significant life experiences of leaders by searching for the deep meaning of those experiences. By examining leaders' lives as told in their own words through guided reflections, I reveal how leaders have effected change, and extrapolate from their experiences lessons with broader applications. Since it originated as a distinct or named educational research method, narrative inquiry has been evolving and expanding in influence and respect (Riessman, 2002). Rooted in stories gathered from lived experience, the narrative inquiry approach focuses on an interpretation of human experiences rather than attempting to constrain those experiences to traditional measurements and evaluations. Narrative inquiry supporters argue that interpreting lived experience through narratives is not only valid but essential to meaning-making; humans have always made sense of our existence through stories (see e.g., Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; R. W. White, 1966).

Bruner (1991) refers to narrative as a "form so familiar and ubiquitous that it is likely to be overlooked, in much the same way we suppose that the fish will be the last to discover water" (p. 4). He presents 10 distinguishing features of narrative: narrative diachronicity, particularity, intentional state entailment, hermeneutic composability, canonicity and breach, referentiality,

genericness, normativeness, context sensitivity and negotiability, and narrative accrual (1991, pp. 6–20).

In addition, Pinnegar and Daynes (2007) discuss a number of themes prominent in the narrative approach: "the attention to relationships among participants, the move to words as data, the focus on the particular, and the recognition of blurred genres of knowing" (p. 3).

Josselson and Lieblich, the editors of the series *The Narrative Study of Lives*, sound a note of caution in advocating the narrative inquiry approach. In their overview of the series upon its conclusion, Josselson and Lieblich (2009) write that "doing good narrative research is not easy, both internally—because it requires much training, talent and maturity on the side of the researchers, and externally—since the cultural-political climate for it in academia is far from ideal" (p. 197). Though narrative is championed by feminist and African American writers as a way to give voice to marginalized people, this focus may also impede the wider reception of the approach due to prejudice.

The narrative inquiry methodology that I follow focuses on individual, first-person reflections, in which, as Riesman (2002) puts it "individuals become the autobiographical narratives by which they tell about their lives" (p. 218). As Labov (2006) notes, such "oral narratives of personal experience . . . are fundamental to the human faculty for story-telling" (p. 37).

However, narrative inquiry entails more than collecting stories; reflective, critical analysis is required as well. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), "the narrative inquirer may note stories but more often records actions, doings, and happenings, all of which are narrative expressions" (p. 79). However, it is through the stories that human experiences are shared.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) assert that "narratives are socially constrained forms of action, socially situated performances, ways of acting in and making sense of the world" (p. 641). They further note that "telling stories can help to create a public space" (p. 642) for marginalized people. In *Lives in Progress*, R. W. White (1966) asserts that "Man's understanding of himself is one of the central problems of our time" (p. 3).

In describing hermeneutic phenomenological research, Van Manen (1990) writes that "human science is interested in the human world *as we find it* . . . [with] its point of departure in the *situation*, which for purpose of analysis, description, and interpretation functions as an exemplary nodal point of meanings" (p. 18). Van Manen provides a six-part structure to guide narrative research: determining the phenomenon we commit to study, "investigating experience as we live it," "reflecting on the essential themes," "describing the phenomenon through the art of writing," "maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon," and "balancing the research context by considering parts and whole" (pp. 30–31).

Gomez (1997) acknowledges that the "roots of narrative inquiry lie in various disciplines, . . . hold[ing] in common . . . a view that the narratives or stories that people tell are frameworks through which they impose order on and make sense of their own and others' experiences" (p. 195). To choose narrative inquiry as a methodology is to accept that humanity is both described by and understood through the self-reflection of personal stories.

Particularity and Universality: A Delicate Balance

Narrative inquiry allows the particularities of personal experience to unfold, laying bare the character of the person being interviewed and the connections to other people sparked by the facts and dynamics of the story that is told. For example, these remarks by Buckley (2007) on the difference between being broke and being poor resonate as familiar to my experience, reflecting

what my neighbors said when I was growing up: “when you’re broke, you’re broke; but when you’re poor that’s a state of mind” (p. 13).

Listening closely to the details in the stories that people tell encourages insightful reflections on particulars and invites observations on the relative values of large and small stories (Bamberg, 2006). In turn, these considerations of particular aspects also demonstrate human connections across seeming differences, connections or themes that one might consider to be expressions of universality.

Buckley’s (2007) work offers another instance of a particular experience that resonates more widely: a woman born in Japan who came of age during World War II relates words that her father spoke that were reminiscent of an opinion that my mother—who was born in the segregated South—held: “education is the best gift any parents can give to children because they can’t take that away from you” (p. 37). This quote is both universal and particular, a duality that S. L. White (2009) seems to recognize through “looking for connections, like experiences, divergences and/or commonalities” (p. 14). This inductive approach to the universal is a feature of my methodology in this study.

In looking at the “context of . . . [a] particular time and space,” (S. L. White, 2009, p. 14) S. L. White calls qualitative research “an inductive approach” that aims “to gain a deeper understanding of a person’s or group’s experience” by relying on methods such as “observations, interviews, and interpretations of findings” (p. 14). S. L. White further suggests that “qualitative inquiry involves immersing oneself in the culture one is exploring, basically becoming a part of that environment while still maintaining an unbiased stance” (p. 14). S. L. White’s study deals with the experience of African American women students; its relevance lies in its approach (p. 14).

The empathetic but unbiased approach of narrative inquiry allows the voices of the participants to shape the substance and tone of the inquiry. Thus, the method is especially useful when recording and analyzing the experiences of those who have been marginalized. I have undertaken my study in a spirit of mindful inquiry (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998). The mindful inquiry approach, in contrast with research that asserts its ideological neutrality, asserts that the researcher's own life experiences have validity and that awareness of them is a positive value in itself and should inform the research process without distorting it (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998, pp. 6–7). Mindful inquiry also takes the moral position that research should be used in a spirit of compassion to illuminate ideas that fight oppression.

Narrative Inquiry and the Central Role of the Interview

The interview serves as the major way in which the narrative inquiry researcher collects data. In *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, Seidman (2006) states that "interviewing . . . is a basic mode of inquiry. Recounting narratives of experience has been the major way throughout recorded history that humans have made some sense of their experience" (p. 14). This "making meaning through language . . . affirms the importance of the individual without denigrating the possibility of community and collaboration" (Seidman, 2006, p. 14).

Mandelbaum (1990), in discussing ethnographers' and conversation analysts' perspectives on the interview process, notes that "context provides fundamental building blocks in both participants' and researchers' understanding" (p. 334) Contextualization reveals the relevance of the stories told through narrative, and is a concept that feminist theory has championed (e.g., Barbre & Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005; and others). Labov's (2006) term, orientation, refers to a similar concept of providing details of the narrative interview. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) further

explains that the "identity, character, and history of the researcher are obviously critical to how he or she listens, selects, interprets, and composes the story" (p. 11).

I was keenly aware of the challenge posed by my prior knowledge. It is important to keep in mind the need to listen for the unexpected. It was my intent to be what Kvale (1996) would call a "traveler" (p. 5), engaging in conversation as research. I was guided by Lawrence-Lightfoot (2005) in "developing a narrative that is both convincing and authentic," trying "to capture the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description . . . a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns" (p. 14). Narrative inquiry imposes an obligation on the interviewer to be fully present in the process, but always aware that the participant's life and story remain in focus.

On the construction of the actual interview, Seidman (2006) writes that the use of open-ended questions allows for greater depth in probing the interviewee's lived experience and reflections upon it. This approach contrasts with those approaches whose rigidity allows little flexibility and may miss the often subtle changes that come about during the interview process.

Seidman (2006) recommends a "three-interview series" to achieve "in-depth interviewing" (pp. 16–19). While conducting three interviews is a valid—and probably desirable—approach in some circumstances, I think it is also valid to have one or two interviews of substance. Seidman acknowledges that "there are no absolutes in the world of interviewing" (p. 22), noting that "the governing principle in designing interviewing projects might well be to strive for a rational process that is both repeatable and documentable" (p. 22). Seidman also urges "piloting" the work to "try out . . . interviewing design . . . and learn whether . . . [the] interview structure is appropriate" for the intended research (pp. 38–39).

I originally planned to conduct at least two interviews with each participant, but quickly found that I needed to adjust that expectation because most of the participants could commit to only one session. I chose to adjust the process rather than eliminate participants who could only commit to one interview. I selected participants who represent different aspects of leadership, holding position power and personal power.

It became clear from my initial efforts that arranging interviews with very busy and, possibly, reluctant participants is time consuming (although it is time well spent). Participants were hesitant largely due to time constraints and considerations of how best to spend that time. Once committed, participants were comfortable with the process and generously forthcoming. My preference was for in-person, on-camera interviews in the homes of the participants, but I conducted the interviews wherever they decided—in their homes or offices, or by telephone. The participants' comfort with the process was of primary importance. I wound up traveling to five cities. I wanted to record video of all the conversations, but was only able to record video of four of them for various reasons. All agreed to audio recordings of our conversations, except for one—due to scheduling and technical problems. I conducted seven of the nine interviews in person and two by telephone.

Participants were selected based on their activism in the Civil Rights Movement, with an aim towards picking a variety of women who embodied different aspects of leadership. We discussed some of their later accomplishments to give additional context to the leadership skills they acquired or honed during the Civil Rights Movement, allowing lessons on leadership and change to be extrapolated from their experiences. The fourth, fifth, and sixth chapters present respectively the findings from the interviews; discussion of those findings and implications for future research; and my personal reflections.

I posed questions that reflected on the Civil Rights Movement and the women's leadership roles. Sample questions included the following items:

- Were you influenced by the Civil Rights Movement? If so, how?
- Did the Civil Rights Movement inform your life choices? If so, how?
- Was there a pivotal incident in your early life which led you to the Civil Rights Movement?
- How would you define the Civil Rights Movement?
- Are there lessons from the Civil Rights Movement that resonate with you today? Are there any that you would advocate for contemporary America?
- Do you feel that there were unique Civil Rights Movement experiences for African American women that exhibited leadership skills? If so, please define.
- How did African American Women Leaders embrace and develop leadership skills while dealing with race and sex discrimination?
- How would you define your contribution to society?
- How would you like to be remembered?
- Is there anything to this interview you would like to add that has not been discussed?
- Is there something that surprised you about the Civil Rights Movement?
- Is there any lasting impact with implications for leadership and change?

I included a series of open-ended questions designed to elicit specific information about each woman's own experience—to tell her story.

- Given the work you did in the Civil Rights Movement, would you think it legitimate to say you were a leader?
- Did your leader identity change over time?

- What were your early leadership lessons?
- What were your sources of motivation?
- What were the obstacles to women's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement? How did you address these?
- What sustained you over time?
- In what ways did the nature of the struggle of the Civil Rights Movement influence your leadership choices?

The Use of Transcriptions

Establishing the purpose for transcriptions informs the way in which they are made. Some researchers use transcription to collect background information, relying on transcriptions to verify facts rather than create verbatim records. Transcriptions are more central to other forms of research, such as conversational analysis, where each pause or verbal tic is considered integral to the interpretation of the interview. Other researchers use transcriptions for discursive analysis (Gale, 2006). I have chosen to use the transcripts to check my understanding, to verify specific quotes and references, and to establish thematic continuities across the interviews. The use of transcriptions helps to capture elusive nuances and meanings of stories by recording the details—cited and omitted—that form part of the story.

Making meaning in coding the data. Accumulating data through interviews is a major step in acquiring knowledge; however, a means of interpretation is necessary as well. Coding provides a theoretical framework and a systematic approach to make meaning of the accumulated data in narrative inquiry. Charmaz (2005) describes coding as "the analytic scaffolding on which to build" (p. 517). Sánchez-Algarra and Anguera (2013) emphasize

"methodological control" (pp. 1238–1239) when moving from raw to clean data or systematizing the information.

Coding can be facilitated through careful record and data collection, such as electronic recordings, transcripts, field notes, and other documents. I sought permission from participants to record our conversations, from which I made verbatim transcripts. In return, I provided participants with copies for their review to see if there were any misstatements they wanted to correct or delete. I also offered participants copies of the recording and the transcript to use for their own purposes. Of the nine participants, I was able to record all but one due to technical difficulties.

Making meaning of the data by coding is a thoughtful, planned process, and one in which the data reveals themes, which may lead to unexpected discoveries as the researcher listens and reflects in an ongoing iterative analysis. DeLyser et al. (2013) report that their students expressed frustration with the time-consuming and meticulous nature of coding, although "most nevertheless found [coding] a valuable process, one worth their invested effort" (p. 24). Saldaña (2009) describes a code in qualitative inquiry as "most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (p. 3). Turner, Kim, and Andersen (2013) note that "the details of data collection and coding methods need to be sensitive to the specific context and purpose of a given research project," recommending that researchers follow "good cross-cutting coding practices," which include using "high quality purposive text data," "whenever possible, using dis-confirmatory interviews," and "documenting explicitly" the research process in order "to leave retraceable footprints . . . to enhance qualitative modeling practice" (p. 261).

I took notes during the interviews to help me remember what was being discussed in real time so that I could better facilitate the conversation, with the intention of prompting a deeper, more robust conversation. However, the verbatim transcripts are the "official" record of the conversation. Having the transcripts facilitated coding.

The Pilot Interview

As part of my doctoral studies in preparation for this dissertation, I conducted a pilot interview with Dr. June Jackson Christmas, an African American psychiatrist who is considered a leader in her field. The pilot interview focused on the life story of Dr. Christmas, following Polkinghorne's (1995) methodology of "narrative analysis . . . [with] emplotment and narrative configuration as its primary analytic tool" (p. 6). Christmas is the kind of servant leader (Greenleaf, 2002) who figures prominently in my dissertation.

Conducting the pilot interview with Dr. June Jackson Christmas was a remarkable experience. She is an excellent interview participant and an inspirational role model. She and the context of her life and experiences are representative of the complexities of African American women's leadership.

I knew Dr. Christmas by reputation before meeting her over 20 years ago. When I moved to New York at that time, her prominence and stature were evident. Our social and work lives crossed paths somewhat while I worked at the National Urban League and then at District Council 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO. I was involved in occasional discussions of her community-focused mental health work and her pioneering role as one of the first African American female psychiatrists.

Dr. Christmas and I became friends primarily because of her association with my husband Derrick Bell—both obviously shared the experience of being prominent pioneers in

their respective fields. I say "obviously" because I was also a pioneer in the field of communications, particularly television production, but that accomplishment has been dwarfed by the relatively ephemeral nature of my field and the fact that I was mostly behind the scenes. As a black woman growing up in the 50s and 60s, I was conditioned not to brag about my own accomplishments, but to let them speak for themselves. What I did not understand then (the women I interviewed shared this experience) is that racism and sexism prevent the accomplishments from speaking for themselves. We must lift them up. If not we, then who?

Biographical information on Dr. Christmas. Dr. Christmas specializes in community mental health care, especially for low-income African Americans. In addition to meeting the criterion of having participated in the Civil Rights Movement, Dr. Christmas is sensitive, self-reflective, thoughtful, open, honest, generous, and articulate. At the time of our interviews, she was 87. She was eager to tell her story.

Dr. Christmas is self-aware without being self-centered and has a distinct sense of who she is and the impact of her life's work. Interviewing her was both informative and inspirational because of her thoughtfulness, her articulateness, and her generous spirit. She is authentic and has an air of quiet authority, although she is not authoritative.

Pilot: Respect for and awareness of power dynamics. Because she is a psychiatrist, I assumed that Dr. Christmas had the experience and skills to unduly influence the flow and substance of the interview. She seemed to be aware of that potential and—without the two of us having addressed the issue—guarded against doing anything that would privilege her or compromise my relatively inexperienced role as a narrative interviewer. At the beginning of the interview, she stated with precision that she was known professionally as Dr. June Jackson Christmas, with the emphasis on her hard-earned title of Doctor! It was clear that she understood

how her title implied power, but she did not seek to establish a power imbalance or class distinction. She was at ease with herself and her impressive accomplishments. She knew, of course, that the interview was a pilot of my methodology for my dissertation and that I had limited experience in putting the methodology into practice. She clearly chose to treat me as an equal.

During the interview, the conversation flowed with appropriate give and take and responsiveness. I could not have asked for a better participant.

Similarly, I was aware that my personal experience as an African American woman in the Civil Rights Movement had the potential to distort the results of my research through overreliance on prior information. I tried to guard against the influence of my prior knowledge. My intention was to avoid predetermining the information that the research would reveal, by respecting both the research process and the unique information that Dr. Christmas presented. I took great care not to leapfrog over what she was saying, working to suppress any assumptions that her experience matched mine.

The pilot interview process. I initially intended to limit my conversation with Dr. Christmas to two interviews, anticipating that two would be sufficient and would likely be closer to the model that I could use effectively and efficiently for my dissertation. However, by the time of our second interview, it became evident to me and to Dr. Christmas that this particular process would require three interviews, in line with Seidman's (2006) suggestion.

I engaged in deep listening, staying alert for the unexpected, all the while trying to capture "the specifics, the nuance, the detailed description . . . a gesture, a voice, an attitude as a way of illuminating more universal patterns" (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2005, p. 14). Piloting the methodology also allowed me to reflect upon the goals and process of interviewing. The goal of

eliciting information in an ethical and fair manner is clear. Achieving that goal in all instances requires making adjustments to the individual circumstances of the participants. Carrying out several interviews with Dr. Christmas was a luxury that was possible because of our prior relationship, our physical proximity to one another, and her willingness to engage in an extended conversation. My challenge in performing the interviews that formed the basis of my research was to achieve robust and insightful interviews under very different time and space constraints—in most cases, one major interview and a few shorter conversations leading up to it. I have learned to consider these briefer contacts part of the whole and to keep notes on each conversation.

As stated by Maxwell (2002), the interview is a "social situation" that requires sensitivity to the "nature of that situation and relationship" (p. 54). While Maxwell may be correct that the "informant's actions and views could differ in other situations" (p. 54) to a degree that affects the reliability of the information gathered during the interview, I suspect that this was not a major issue for the group of women who agreed to interviews with me. These women have been transparent in their dealings with me, exhibiting thoughtfulness and insight—indicating that they have spent considerable time over the years reflecting upon their activities and the events that shaped their lives. A couple of participants specifically said to me that they did not plan to edit their tapes or transcripts—although they understood that they had the opportunity to do so. They emphasized that they only said what they meant and "stood by their word." Even with their assurances and their confidence in my fairness and accuracy as an interviewer, I remained cognizant of my duty as an ethical researcher—guided by Antioch's ethical standards—to excise any comments that were clearly misstatements or that would likely be negatively misconstrued if taken out of context.

Limitations

There are two basic limitations to this study: the size of the sample for the interviews—a common limitation in narrative inquiry—and limited access to women leaders who were active in the Civil Rights Movement. Because of the passage of time, some women who might have been interviewed were either deceased or too elderly and frail to participate. Others were reluctant to participate for a variety of reasons, including wariness about being exploited or marginalized as they or others had been in the past, not wanting to devote their limited time to a research project, or thinking that that they had little or nothing to contribute to a study on leadership.

Findings

The purpose of my research is to give voice and recognition to African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. Although I had significant personal experiences in the Civil Rights Movement and know others more deeply involved, I conducted extensive scholarly research on the topic. I determined from experience and research that African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement employed a wide range of leadership styles. They were diverse in that they held positional and personal power and represented women of varied backgrounds. The interviews I conducted were my key source of data, particularly in regard to leadership. Additional data came from books, articles, online resources, and personal conversations with historians, sociologists, and civil rights activists and advocates.

Selecting participants both representative and unique enough to provide a range of leadership traits to compare and contrast was challenging. My supposition was they had characteristics in common, although each had singular experiences. The age of the participants meant that there was an urgency to begin and conclude the interviews.

The timing of my interviews and the impact of various activities commemorating the Civil Rights Movement made it particularly challenging to schedule participants.

In preparation for each interview, I sent each participant an information package consisting of a cover letter, sample questions, and the Antioch IRB form. I also sent my biography so that they would know more about me. I did not take for granted any prior relationship. Although I had met most of the participants over the years, we had not sustained contact.

Time involved in securing interviews was significant. Additionally, I traveled out of town to conduct five interviews and hired a videographer for four of the interviews. I wanted to video

tape all the conversations, but was only able to video four of them due to the reluctance of the other participants to be on camera for various reasons—some cited too much recent exposure due to the commemorative activities, or simply felt that video would not enhance the interview process. I respected everyone's rationale and decisions in this regard.

All agreed to audio recordings of our conversations. However, due to scheduling and technical problems, I was unable to tape the interview and relied instead on taking notes. I conducted seven of the interviews in person and two by telephone.

Each conversation began in a similar fashion—with me intentionally repeating background information that had been sent to the participant earlier as a reminder. Several participants volunteered that they appreciated the review. I discussed my methodology of narrative inquiry and explained that we were partners in the interview, which I viewed as a guided conversation. I further noted that I would strive to respect their sensitivity and anything they wished to remain private. I shared with them the Antioch institutional ethos, which was both comforting and enlightening for the participants. I sought to reinforce or earn their trust and to encourage their candor.

Several people asked me for more substantive information and inquired what I might have heard from others I had interviewed. I explained that I did not want to give too much information because I did not want to influence their responses and wanted to hear what they had to say—in their own words. I did not want to intentionally or unintentionally infringe upon the purpose of my research, which is to give voice and recognition to African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. I was also careful not to divulge any confidential information.

I also advised participants that they could stop at any time or expound on any point. I told them that at the very end of the interview I would ask if there was anything they wanted to say that had not been asked or said. This simple gesture was rewarded with unexpected revelations.

The Participants

I interviewed nine participants. They ranged in age from late sixties to early nineties. They were

- Leah Chase: Proprietor of Dooky Chase restaurant in New Orleans, a meeting place and safe haven for civil rights workers, including Martin Luther King Jr. and others.
- Kathleen Cleaver: SNCC Campus Program Secretary; Black Panther Communications Secretary; co-founded international wing of BPP.
- Myrlie Evers: Worked in partnership with her husband Medgar Evers, the first NAACP Mississippi Field Secretary. Planned meetings and rallies. Medgar Evers was assassinated by a white supremacist in 1964.
- Jean Fairfax: Worked for several organizations, including the American Friends Service Committee and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, where she was Community Services Director.
- Aileen Hernandez: Student leader; first women and first African American appointee to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.
- Gay McDougall: First black student to integrate Agnes Scott College in Georgia.
- Diane Nash: First woman to lead the Nashville Student Movement; a founder of SNCC.
- Gloria Richardson (Dandridge): Led the Cambridge Movement, often cited as the first modern era civil rights protest movement not in the Deep South.

- Judy Richardson: SNCC; co-founded Drum and Spear bookstore in Washington, DC; later an Associate Producer of *Eyes on the Prize*.

Leah Chase. Leah Chase is one of the most unforgettable people I have ever met. Even if one did not know her personal story, one would be captivated by her graciousness, hospitality, and vibrant beauty. Born in 1923, she has seen many societal changes in her lifetime and played her part in helping to bring about change, simply by doing what she does best: bringing people together over good food and providing an atmosphere of warmth and caring. In the Civil Rights Movement, she hosted civil rights figures such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall, members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and many others of all races and backgrounds. She does not think what she did was extraordinary, but others would differ. Her interracial gatherings were by their very nature in defiance of the South's segregation laws. Remarkably, her family's restaurant, Dooky Chase, was not raided or shut down for her then illegal activities. I speculate that this was because she and her family were held in such high regard by their community. And she was in New Orleans, which has an independent spirit. "Laissez les bons temps rouler" defines part of the New Orleans spirit and sometimes obscures the racism and class consciousness that simmers beneath the surface.

Mrs. Chase did not start off wanting to be the celebrated chef and community leader she became. She simply started working in what was then her husband's parents' restaurant. She started as hostess and worked her way up to chef. She is now known as the Queen of Creole Cuisine. She achieved that appellation through hard work and a dedication to providing for black people the same elegance and service given by the finest white-owned, white tablecloth restaurants that rejected black people as customers, but eagerly hired them as waiters and for other service positions.

When Hurricane Katrina almost destroyed her business, she made the decision to stay and rebuild in her community. Eight-two years old then, she lived for a while in a trailer provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). When the floods came in 2005, her son was able to save the valuable African American art collection that she had amassed over the years, not in the spirit of a collector, but to give the gift of art to the community. Once the restaurant was restored, that art once again took its place on the walls, where it is today.

I flew to New Orleans to interview her and met my videographer for the first time at her restaurant. In an act of serendipity, the videographer and I were born and raised in the same small town, Erie, Pennsylvania. We discovered that I went to junior and senior high school with one of his older cousins.

Mrs. Chase and I conducted the interview in her restaurant, where—at age 90—she was still cooking in the kitchen. We had an unexpected but memorable additional experience, because she was receiving a special commendation from Pope Benedict XVI for her dedicated Christian service. Her daughter asked if we minded videotaping the presentation. Of course, we did not mind. In fact, we considered it an honor. Due to a scheduling issue, the gift, with a handwritten note from Pope Benedict XVI, was unable to be presented during her birthday celebration earlier in the year, but it had to be given to her prior to the installation of the new Pope, scheduled for the next day. Further complicating the matter, the Cardinal for New Orleans was in Vatican City, so the Catholic Church designated that the commendation be delivered by a local priest, who was a bit taken aback by all this last-minute activity, while excited to be a part of it. Mrs. Chase is indefatigable and sat for an extended interview without taking offered breaks. I asked her daughter if she was always like that. It seemed to me that her faith fuels her energy,

and she always "answers to a higher authority." She is the inspiration for the character Princess Tiana in Disney's film *The Princess and the Frog* (Vecho et al., 2009).

The following is the beginning of my interview with Leah Chase, who was the first of the nine women I interviewed. This excerpt exemplifies how I began each interview: with a self-introduction, along with some background on my dissertation research and philosophy.

Bell: Thank you. First of all I wanted to thank you for giving me this time. You didn't have to do it. I'm very appreciative of it.

Chase: Well, I'm grateful to you. I'm grateful.

Bell: You're very, very sweet with that. Um, so my name is Janet Dewart Bell and this—this interview—this particular interview came about because I'm doing a doctoral dissertation on African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

But the—my—my idea about my dissertation is that there are a lot of people who were really leaders but who were not considered that. They—they may have achieved or they are stellar in their particular fields, but what I'm doing is really looking at what I call the leadership characteristics because I think that that would be helpful for, particularly, our young people . . . and what they learn.

Chase: That's important to me.

Bell: So my questions are going to be a little bit different than the questions you normally get. They're going to really focus on—I want you to—I'm going to probe you a little bit as to what I call leadership ideas or characteristics. And I want you to push back if you—if you disagree. It's not about me. It's about—it's about you and what you think.

Chase: Okay. . . . I got problems with people who say things and apologize for what they say . . . because my father always told us, "Always put your brains in gear before you open your mouth" so you won't say the wrong things. . . . I'm sincere about what I say. And, you know, sometimes it pleases people, sometimes it doesn't. But that's it. You said it. There's no taking it back.

Kathleen Cleaver. At the time of our conversation, both Kathleen Cleaver and I are what she called "Dellionaires"—people still using Dell laptops. I've since succumbed to enticement

from Apple following multiple crashes on my Dell and bought a Mac Pro. However, the exchange that Kathleen Cleaver and I had about out laptops revealed both her sense of humor and her basic grounding. Her recognition that she wanted a "sturdy" computer seemed to signal a personal grounding. One of the first and only African American women to achieve prominence in the radical Black Panthers, she later changed the direction of her life, went to law school at Yale, clerked for a federal judge, and became a law professor. She has a fierce intelligence, a strong sense of self-worth, and a willingness to challenge life head on. When I mentioned to another woman leader that I had interviewed Kathleen Cleaver, she asked me if Kathleen was still radiantly beautiful. I can report that she is.

I interviewed Cleaver at her home in Atlanta, where she was caring for her teenage grandchildren, who were visiting from the Sudan. She showed a special kind of tenderness and graciousness that I had not seen in our several previous encounters over the years. I did not expect that she would remember me from long ago, because I was very much in the background for most of my early civil rights involvement. I was right: She did not remember when our paths first crossed, but I do. It was in the mid '60s in Nashville, Tennessee. She was at the time married to Eldridge Cleaver, the Minister of Information of the Black Panther Party. Kathleen Cleaver struck me as someone with deep conviction and great passion whose presence could elevate any situation of which she was a part. I did not know her personal history, but connected with her commitment, intensity, and fierce intelligence.

She was inspired by her parents and their circle of friends and colleagues, growing up in what was the relatively sheltered environment of the Tuskegee, Alabama black college community, where service and fighting for one's rights were normative.

Myrlie Evers. Myrlie Evers has captured part of her extraordinary life in her memoir *Watch Me Fly,* which she calls an "instructive autobiography." In the book, she discusses her experiences and insights as the wife and partner of the legendary civil rights leader Medgar Evers, the first NAACP Field Secretary in the State of Mississippi. A Mississippi native, she knew the dangers of activism for racial equality and understood how her husband's prominence would bring unwanted attention and pressure to their lives. Despite her misgivings, she supported her husband's decision to take what they both knew to be a dangerous job and held steadfast even after their home was firebombed. In June 1963, her husband was assassinated in their driveway. Then a widow with three small children, she remained in Jackson until the summer of 1964, addressing the NAACP Convention at the time when civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were missing and not yet discovered murdered. She left Mississippi so that she and her children could have a more normal life. However, for 30 years, she sought to bring to justice her husband's murderer, resulting in the long-overdue conviction of white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith.

Evers became the director of consumer affairs for Atlantic Richfield and the first African American woman to serve as commissioner on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works. She was chairman of the NAACP from 1995 to 1998, helping to reinvigorate that organization—then beset by financial and image problems.

Myrlie Evers told me that she shares a special bond with Coretta Scott King and Betty Shabazz, whose husbands Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X (El Hajj Malik El-Shabazz) were assassinated during the height of the Civil Rights Movement, as was Mrs. Evers' husband Medgar Evers.

Evers and King were assassinated by white racists, while Malcolm X was assassinated by members of the Nation of Islam who were also paid government informants, after he repudiated the Nation for what he considered their racist and divisive policies. Mrs. Evers is the only widow still living. She told me that rather than being rivals as sometimes erroneously portrayed, she, Mrs. King, and Mrs. Shabazz were close sisters who got together out of the glare of the camera to support and encourage each other. She said that no one else could understand what they had endured.

Evers met her husband as a young woman from a small town in Mississippi. Medgar was older, a veteran of World War II.

I interviewed Mrs. Evers at a local hotel in Jackson, Mississippi. I had flown into New Orleans, Louisiana to connect with my videographer—luckily, the same person who was with me for the earlier interview with Leah Chase. He is a consummate professional, whose sensitivity and competence helps to put people at ease. Prior to the interview, we took a tour of sites that we felt Mrs. Evers might mention such as the Evers home, which is now a museum. The home's location on a quiet, unassuming residential street brings in sharp focus how terror during the Civil Rights Movement was such a part of the lives of African American leaders. The Evers home, as with many, did not have a front door. One enters through the carport—a simple, but meaningful, accommodation to try to thwart attackers. However, even with that precaution, Medgar Evers was shot in their driveway.

In full disclosure, I should mention that Derrick Bell, whom I later married, had stayed in the Evers home a week prior to the assassination of Medgar Evers. He was the attorney for the Evers' oldest son. Derrick slept in the living room with volunteer armed guards, African

American residents who knew that while the Movement was nonviolent in philosophy and practice that others were not, so they also believed in self-defense.

Jean Fairfax. Jean Fairfax and her sister Betty have in the last few decades become known as philanthropists, with a shared focus on education. Although the sisters were equally committed to social justice, Jean Fairfax was more directly involved in civil rights, having served with the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. She was the AFSC Director of Southern Programs, working in Prince Edwards County in southern Virginia during the struggle for school integration. When the schools were callously closed for five years to prevent their desegregation, she helped organize an outplacement program for 70 black children so they could continue their education in integrated schools in eight states, and supervised a team of community organizers working to prepare for court-ordered integration. She raised money and rallied support for this and other efforts.

Fairfax is representative of those who helped build the foundation of the Civil Rights Movement and helped sustain it. She directs attention away from herself to the accomplishments of others. While I was trying to arrange an interview with her, she consistently mentioned others who she felt were more integral to the Movement.

The Fairfax sisters were devoted to each other and to preserving their parents' legacy of giving. Of modest means, their parents parlayed astute financial investments and frugality into a sizable inheritance, which the sisters used to advance the education and social betterment of others. Betty Fairfax, who died in 2010 at the age of 92, was also a lifelong educator.

As philanthropists, they developed and promoted a philosophy of strategic giving, using relatively limited resources to spur larger-scale change. They adopted an inner-city eighth-grade

class in Phoenix, arranging to provide scholarships to 90 students for each year spent in college. Although Fairfax has not written her own memoir, acknowledgements of her work appear in others' memoirs, such as those of local Mississippi leader Winson Hudson and attorney Constance Curry (2002). Fairfax was Curry's AFSC supervisor when Curry went to Mississippi in May 1964 to work with six white women who organized Mississippians for Public Education in an attempt to assist with peaceful school desegregation (Curry, 2002, p. 27; Hudson & Curry, 2002, p. 10).

At Fairfax's preference, we conducted the interview by telephone. Due to a technical difficulty, I was unable to record the interview and had to rely on taking notes. After a quick exchange of pleasantries, we started a very intense and informative conversation. It was clear that she had read the materials I had sent and was prepared to answer them thoroughly but succinctly during the brief time allocated for the call.

Fairfax put her life's work in the context of the "prophetic tradition" of the Congregational Church in which one was exhorted to "do justice and walk humbly." She noted, "I studied with Reinhold Niebuhr and was motivated by his scholarship and sense of justice."

Aileen Hernandez. Aileen Hernandez began her activism as a student leader. She attended Howard University in then legally segregated Washington, DC, experiencing firsthand the impact of racism. Her high school and college years coincided with World War II, so she also witnessed the impact of war on both her educational opportunities and opportunities to take on greater roles in the larger society. She became the first woman and first black to be appointed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the first African American head of the National Organization for Women.

Hernandez recounted her experiences of being taking care of by educated and responsible African American sleeping car porters as she came to Washington to enroll in Howard University. In her mid 80s, she is still socially active. At the time of our interview, she was on the board of the San Francisco Human Rights Commission. I flew to San Francisco to interview her. She chose to be interviewed in the Commission's offices. A young intern asked to observe the interview. She later expressed her appreciation at having the opportunity to learn more about Ms. Hernandez and the battles that she had fought for civil and women's rights.

Gay McDougall. Gay McDougall has forged a storied and singular career in international human rights. When Nelson Mandela died, there were many videos showing McDougall at his side as he cast his first vote as a free South African in April 1994. She was appointed to South Africa's Independent Electoral Commission and participated in that historic multi-racial election.

Then, as now, a woman whose delicate physical appearance belies a steely will and fierce dedication to the liberation of all oppressed peoples, McDougall was instrumental in the Free South African protests against apartheid, organizing demonstrations and support groups for this cause. She worked on human rights issues for many years before meeting and marrying John Payton, another famed civil and human rights attorney.

Born in 1947, McDougall's lifelong commitment to civil and human rights began in her teen years when she was selected to become the first African American to integrate Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia. During her two years there, she was the only black student at this all-girls college. She transferred to Bennington College where she earned her undergraduate degree. She is a graduate of Yale Law School and the London School of Economics. In 1999, she was recognized with a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship, often cited as a "genius award," for

her human rights work. In the previous year, she had become the first American to be elected to oversee the United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. She was the Executive Director of Global Rights: Partners for Justice and became the first United Nations Expert on Minority Issues. Her career includes teaching at law schools, most recently as a Distinguished Visiting Professor at Fordham Law School's Leitner Center for International Law and Justice.

I interviewed McDougall in her office at Fordham. She began by wanting to specifically talk about the origins of the fight for civil rights in America and to frame the boundaries of my study.

Diane Nash. The influence of Diane Nash was such that several people with whom I sought interviews insisted that I talk to Diane Nash, as they felt she was integral to the story of women's leadership in the Civil Rights Movement—the story would be incomplete without her. They, of course, were right.

Born in 1938 in Chicago, Diane Nash became one of the recognized student leaders of the Civil Rights Movement after leaving Howard University in Washington, DC and transferring to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. She had enrolled in Howard after leaving her middle-class Catholic home in Chicago. Her early years in Chicago were such that she had once applied to attend a charm school—as did many girls and young women at that time. Beautiful and well-spoken, she was rejected because of her race. That negative experience proved relatively mild when she encountered segregation as a Howard student in our nation's capital, and later witnessed and protested the brutal segregation of Nashville. Unassuming, she earned a reputation as reliable and relentlessly diligent, a reputation that led to her election as head of the Nashville Student Movement in 1961. In 1960, she had helped found SNCC and led the

Nashville Student Movement. Her tactical and unwavering support of the Freedom Riders was critical to their success: she coordinated the Birmingham, Alabama to Jackson, Mississippi Freedom Ride. So integral was her work that in April, 1962 Martin Luther King Jr. nominated her for an award from the NAACP's New York branch, acknowledging her as the "driving spirit in the nonviolent assault on segregation at lunch counters" (Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, n.d., para. 1). Although pregnant, she chose to adhere to the protest policy of "jail without bail" when arrested for supporting the Rock Hill, South Carolina students' lunch counter protest. Her resolve gained support from the community as well as the press coverage needed to shine a light on the reason for the student protests.

In the PBS documentary F*reedom Riders*, Nash told of her firm stance against succumbing to the violence that greeted civil rights protesters:

> It was clear to me that if we allowed the Freedom Ride to stop . . . after so much violence had been inflicted, the message would have been sent that all you have to do to stop a nonviolent campaign is inflict massive violence. (American Experience Films & Nelson, 2010)

On February 17, 1961, in a letter to Diane Nash, Charles Sherrod, and the protesters Nash was supporting in Rock Hill, South Carolina, King shared his admiration:

> You have inspired all of us by such demonstrative courage and faith. It is good to know that there still remains a creative minority who would rather lose in a cause that will ultimately win than to win in a cause that will ultimately lose. (Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute, n.d., para. 4)

She returned to her home of Chicago and became an advocate for fair housing.

We held our discussion by telephone.

Gloria Richardson (Dandridge). Gloria Richardson brought a different demeanor to the struggle for civil rights. Unlike the gentle persona of Rosa Parks or the constrained anger of other women leaders who concealed their rage, Richardson was determined to show her anger and impatience. She intentionally refused a disguise of gentility and acquiescence (Foeman,

1996). Called "The Lady General of Civil Rights," by *Ebony* magazine, her leadership was considered "militant" and "uncompromising" (Harley, 2001, p. 187). She was noted for "her refusal in 1963 and 1964 to accept nonviolence as the primary strategy in civil rights protests" (Harley, 2001, p. 174). Under her leadership, the Cambridge Movement became known as "the first grass roots movement outside of the deep South" and "one of the first campaigns to focus on economic conditions rather than just civil rights," as well as "the first major movement of which a woman was the leader" (Brock 1990; Giddings, 1984). Richardson led street protests and an economic boycott (Brock, 1990). Several aspects of her life and her work helped garner her the designation of "radical": among them, being a woman leader of a major movement, eschewing her middle class background to work on issues affecting black people at all economic levels, and refusing to accept nonviolence as a strategy.

Since blacks in Maryland already had the right to vote and the Richardson family was considered middle class—at least for black people—Richardson's militant leadership was often cited as unexpected and she was considered an unlikely rebel. In fact, during one trial about the demonstrations she led, the judge excoriated her for allegedly disgracing her family name (Brock, 1990, p. 128). What the judge failed to acknowledge was that under the surface, her lot was not much different than that of other blacks. She, like most African Americans, was subject to racial discrimination and relentless assaults on human dignity. She refused to be bought off with the specious argument that she was different from and therefore superior to other black people. Richardson understood that the black middle class was still considered less than first class by the white majority and therefore treated as such:

> Regardless of my background, I experienced the same kinds of things that all other Blacks did in Cambridge. My father died because he could not go to the hospital most of the time. Most people had to travel to John Hopkins [*sic*] segregated clinic. I was not able to get a job of any kind since I didn't want to teach. I could not go into the restaurants if I

> wanted to. So I was a victim as well as the rest of the Blacks in Cambridge. (Brock, 1990, p. 122)

While Richardson used nonviolence as a tactic, she questioned its ultimate success in obtaining full economic and human rights. Harley (2001) places Richardson in the black radical activist tradition of self-defense and uncompromising positions on equality, and shares her words of 1964: "The choice that Cambridge and the rest of the nation finally faces is between progress and anarchy, between witnessing change and experiencing destruction" (p. 191). At the 1963 Northern Negro Grass Roots Leadership Conference—itself a response to a conference of civil rights moderates that excluded militants like Richardson—she "announced publicly her support for strategies other than nonviolent protests to obtain social justice and political advancement for African Americans" (Harley, 2001, p. 190).

Richardson's questioning of nonviolence inspired the later efforts of Black Panthers and others who adopted more militant responses to social injustices. Her militancy was her primary leadership contribution. Harley (2001) highlights this contribution, noting that "Former Black Panther Angela D. Leblanc-Ernest declared that 'women who later became members of the Black Panther Party followed the legacy of radical African American female activists of the early 1960s, such as Gloria Richardson'" (p. 191).

Judy Richardson. Judy Richardson was an activist in SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and later cofounder of the Drum and Spear bookstore and publisher in Washington, DC. She was instrumental in finding and promoting black literature. She was the first to publish a major children's author, Eloise Greenfield, whose manuscript had been rejected by numerous publishers. Also, while working in Washington in the '70s, she originated a character called Bibi Amina for a local radio station to introduce children to African folk tales. She also performed the character in public readings for children in schools and community

settings. She has always been keenly aware of her desire to communicate, even when she was taking shorthand at movement meetings or operating the telephone system, which was a lifeline to movement activists and activities. Later, she was the Associate Producer of *Eyes on the Prize* (Else & Vecchione, 1987), the acclaimed PBS series, and an editor of *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Holsaert et al., 2010).

I interviewed her at her home in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Common Threads

In talking with the participants, a number of common threads emerged, some of which I had anticipated. A review of the transcripts revealed other threads, which became part of the coding process and led to the development of themes and subthemes. My original selection consisted of seven main themes and numerous subthemes, which I incorporated in my first draft of this chapter. However, during the review and editing process, I realized that the data suggested that there are three main themes and that some of my original themes were subthemes. Having made this adjustment, I think that the final structure better serves the research and findings.

In summary, the coding process consisted of three steps: open coding to discover emerging themes; axial coding to compare and contrast emerging themes by developing categories and subcategories; and finally, selective coding to identify main themes (Saldaña, 2009).

In my initial open coding pass, I attempted to read the transcripts without taking notes. However, I quickly realized that taking notes was a better approach because it aided my retention of ideas. I began by noting repeated words and phrases and then broadened my focus to thematic analysis, in which ideas rather than exact words and phrasing were paramount. Elaine Gale introduced me to the use of "visual sorting," and I adopted her suggestion of using colored flags

and highlighters to treat coding as an adventure of discovery. Associating each idea with a color became a game with many rewards. The growing list of ideas was disconcerting at first, but eventually a pattern started to emerge. Not wanting to lose any valuable data from the interviews, I captured as many concepts as I thought reasonable. Because the interviews had occurred over an extended period of time, reading all of them at once was key to the coding process.

I next performed an axial coding, comparing and contrasting the emerging themes by developing categories and subcategories. My initial reading of the transcripts revealed what seemed to me to be seven themes. I packed under those themes as many subthemes as I could infer. However, my second reading suggested that many of the subthemes were really parts of greater wholes, allowing me to reduce what could have become an unmanageable number of ideas.

I finally narrowed the number of subthemes, selecting among them and consolidating concepts to arrive at my final designation of three main themes. What began as a meticulously slow process became an exhilarating quest for knowledge, guided by disciplined review and analysis. The main themes informed my selection of the quotes and transcript excerpts that are recorded in these findings.

Three Main Themes

Theme one: Authenticity. Authenticity has been defined as "the condition or quality of being . . . genuine, free from hypocrisy" (K. A. Allen, 2004, p. 64). Varga and Guignon (2014) suggest that "the distinction between authentic and derivative is more complicated when . . . attributed to human beings" (para. 1). In my definition, authenticity refers to the quality of being oneself—transparent and confident and self-aware.

These women are no cookie-cutter heroines. They are real women, whose real lives are a mixture of the ordinary and extraordinary. Whatever their background and class, they were culturally grounded in black culture, that is, the history, hopes, and aspirations of African Americans. No matter how difficult it might have been to secure some of the interviews, once the commitment was made, they generously shared information to inform and inspire others through telling their stories.

Subtheme: Personal development through cultural experiences. Grounded in black culture and the history of struggle, these women remained true to their cultural heritage and expanded upon it. In the process, they developed multidimensional personalities. They are self-sacrificing, honest, sincere, generous, kind, humble, and confident, with a sense of self-worth. Some experienced occasional self-doubt. They developed different coping mechanisms; one said she used "interior dialogues" to anticipate situations that she might be called upon to handle. Another relied on her faith in a higher power to guide her actions.

Subtheme: Defying stereotypes. All have in common the audacity to do and lead nontraditional work in nontraditional ways.

They want to be respected for their work and contributions but do not want to be placed on pedestals so high that the meaning of their lives is out of reach.

Some had strong senses of humor—sometimes, unexpectedly, a bit pointed or, in one case, slightly and hilariously risqué.

Theme two: Courage. Courage is a defining characteristic of each of these women. Several told me that it was not that they were fearless; they knew they had to conquer their fear even if they could not overcome it.

An incident with my mother provided me with a dramatic and startling example of someone overcoming fear. I was in my 30s when I took my mother to a New Year's Eve celebration in my adopted city of Washington, DC. When we entered the grand and crowded space, my mother froze and could neither move nor talk. I was both terrified for her and confused as to what was happening. Luckily, the host realized that she needed a quiet space and allowed my guest and I to whisk her away to a private area where we were planning to call 911. However, as soon as we separated from the crush of people, she returned to normal; her body relaxed, she regained the color that had drained from her face, and she was once again speaking—this time quickly and quietly. She explained that she had always been claustrophobic—a revelation as astounding to me as it was surprising. My mother and I have always been close.

I told her that I have never seen any indication of that in all the years she took me and my siblings to crowded events at school and in the community. She simply said that she had to focus on raising us and could not give in to her fears while she shepherded us to adulthood. I always admired my mother—even without understanding how much she had overcome to be the wonderful and supportive person she was. She demonstrated the essence of courage—to continue when one is apprehensive or scared, especially in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles. Just leaving home and traveling by herself at a young age took an incredible resolve.

My mother and the rest of these remarkable women understood that for them there were few, if any, comfort zones. They kept any self-doubt in control while they concentrated on their commitment to serving their families and communities and bringing about change. They developed psychic protections that sustained them in situations that they could not predict—such as being viciously attacked verbally while also being in constant physical danger.

Theme three: Purpose. African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement had a sense that they existed or survived for a reason—and they had an obligation to fulfill their own personal destiny. They were conscious of living lives that mattered and committed their lives to making a difference. I did not ask about my participants' philosophical underpinnings, and only one, Jean Fairfax, volunteered that she was influenced by one of the great philosophers and ethicists of the twentieth century, Reinhold Niebuhr. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy offers the following discussion of meaningful living:

> Many major historical figures in philosophy have provided an answer to the question of what, if anything, makes life meaningful, although they typically have not put it in these terms. Consider, for instance, Aristotle on the human function, Aquinas on the beatific vision, and Kant on the highest good. While these concepts have some bearing on happiness and morality, they are straightforwardly construed as accounts of which final ends a person ought to realize in order to have a life that matters. (Metz, 2014, para. 1)

The women I interviewed led and lead lives that matter.

Subtheme: Sense of responsibility to others. All of the women were community-focused in a broad sense.

Religious faith was not, as I had anticipated, a universal theme or readily professed, and I did not pursue it—partly guided by my own religious upbringing to respect the beliefs of individuals and to let the works themselves bear witness. While those who did not stress religious faith did not refer to themselves as humanists, humanism seemed evident in their philosophy and actions—they believe human beings possess the goodness and intelligence to solve their problems without direct divine intervention.

Subtheme: Strategic vision. Each woman had a systematic approach to her life's work. These women looked beyond their own circumstances to envision a greater good for their communities, whether local, national, or international—the latter exemplified by Kathleen Cleaver and Gay McDougall.

Subtheme: Diligence. These women emerged as leaders through their persistence and ability to follow through and keep going under difficult circumstances. They are practical, straightforward, and efficient, and exhibit a mixture of patience and impatience.

Subtheme: Teaching others. While not necessarily teachers by position or training, these women adopted the role of teaching; that is, imparting knowledge, ethics, motivation, and inspiration to others. Most also promoted their own educations and those of others. Their dedication to teaching is evidenced in their descriptions of their actions and activities and is illuminated in their strategic vision.

They are passionate about bringing in the next generation of leaders, expressing their feelings that their life's works would not be complete without helping to develop new leaders.

Text From the Interviews: The Data of Narrative Inquiry

The interviews provided a wealth of data. Not only were the participants articulate, they were insightful and thoughtful. They also provided context and background for their opinions and actions. Their comments also reflected their self-perceptions.

The following excerpts illustrate the three themes and some of the subthemes. The themes are representative of all the participants, except where indicated. The subthemes represent at least some but not all the participants. When a theme or subtheme is more particular to one participant, that is noted. My interview process was to keep my comments to a minimum, to ask questions and to interject primarily to seek clarification.

Theme one: Authenticity.

Subtheme: Personal development through cultural experiences.

Kathleen Cleaver. Kathleen Cleaver was born and spent her early years in the sheltered community of Tuskegee, Alabama, an intellectual and social oasis in the South for black people.

She comes from a highly educated and accomplished family, with a father who worked in international development and a mother who earned a master's in mathematics when doing so for a black woman was very unusual. Beyond her sheltered environment in Tuskegee, Cleaver also had the extraordinary childhood experience of living in several foreign countries. She speaks with admiration and pride of the social consciousness of her parents and her community.

Cleaver: These are my parents' friends and colleagues who were organizing the boycott, and my friends and classmates' parents who were participating. It wasn't a question of "Are we going to do it?" This is what we were about. This is what we were doing. They were challenging segregation in a very orderly, consistent, intelligent way with these mass meetings. There were professors, nurses, doctors, and community people.

I left Tuskegee when my father was hired to work in the International Development Agency. Essentially, he became a foreign services officer and moved to India. His field was community development, so what he was incorporated in was an early project. First it was the Ford Foundation. Then it became something called TCM, Technical Cooperation Mission of the Unites States, to provide assistance to India to provide rural community development to Indian farmers.

That sounds like a good thing, but the purpose is anticommunism. I'm 9 years old. My brother is 7.

We go to a country where most of the people are brown, and really brown, not like Alabama. There are color variations, but when you see a crowd of Indians, you see brown people, a sea of brown people. When you see the president, he's brown.

So in New Delhi, Taj Mahal—so I'm in the country of dark people that's amazing, and I'm not quite out of reading fairy tales. It's like a magical place, but all these people are black, and their culture is so elegant and amazing.

Listen. White supremacy evaporated immediately, as if it had a chance with me anyway, not with my parents, but it was gone. There was absolutely no substance whatsoever that could convince me that there was anything superior about whites, or anything superior about white culture, because I'm looking at one of the most ancient cultures, and it's extraordinary, and all the people are brown. Boom. It was over with. White supremacy is done, and I'm 9 years old. It never comes back.

We lived in India for two years. Then we lived in Manila, Philippines for two years, which is another brown country—not as ancient and overwhelmingly sophisticated as India.

We'd go through the Philippines two years later when I was 11. We went to something that was called The American School. It was actually 26 nationalities. As I'm growing up, I'm being exposed to all kinds of different peoples, different cultures, different languages, different religions. That's the norm. They have different religions in India. They have different religions in the Philippines. They have all these different languages. They had different cultures. I'm not being socialized to think white supremacy has any validity, or to think white people are better, or that they're superior or anything like that.

My parents knew I was very smart. I don't know. They probably did know. They probably didn't think it made any difference to tell me. My mother was a prodigy, so my father said he thought I was going to be going to college at 16 like my mother. No. At 16, I was still in high school.

My father was assigned to Liberia, but by the time he got the assignment, I had already started school, so the next year, we went to live in Liberia, one of Tubman's administrations.

This is 1961, I guess, so African independence was beginning. My peers, kids my age in Africa, would be talking about movements and independence, even though Liberia wasn't involved. I'd listen to this, and I'd hear this, and I'd see—I remember we were in Sierra Leone when it became independent.

Bell: Okay. How did you get from that to the Black Panthers?

Cleaver: What I was trying to tell you is that my association with America is Tuskegee. It's Alabama. Every time we'd leave the country, we'd come back to Alabama, our home. The only part of the United States that I'm in touch with is Alabama, and the Civil Rights Movement is already underway. It was underway before I left.

How did I get to be a leader, okay? I was trained is what I'm trying to get at, from the time I was three years old, in a community in which the challenge to segregation was very live and my father was very much a part of it, and my mother was very much a part of it all before I was born, and then he goes to the foreign service, and I go out of the United States.

Cleaver is intellectually challenging. She is always questioning, pushing, thinking. She refuses to have her life misappropriated or inaccurately interpreted. The following exchange was typical.

Cleaver: You're still using that word leadership.

Bell: Pardon?

Cleaver: I said you're still using the concept—

Bell: That's the program I'm in.

Cleaver: No, no, what I meant is the—what I was trying to get you to see is what we were about as revolution and we wanted to be revolutionaries and we weren't worried about who is—in a way the Black Panther Party, because it was already in existence, had "leaders." They were Bobby Seale and Huey Newton.

Cleaver has encyclopedic knowledge of and direct experiences in the social and political movements of the 20th century. When I told her that few of those I'd interviewed had considered or wanted to claim their leadership roles, Cleaver immediately saw another significance.

Cleaver: Because it's not a viable concept in the context of a revolution. What I'm trying to get at is that there're other things that are relevant, in the sense that leadership is a vague concept. . . . Revolutionaries are not interested in the normal operating of society. . . . This notion of revolutionary leaders is somewhat problematic because you have to build up a revolution to the point where it has enough substance to be leaders. We had so-called civil rights leaders, but they were products of a grassroots movement that they didn't lead. But people outside of the movement think oh yes, King was the leader. Well, that's just because the people said he'll be a good figure, that'll work.

When I asked about faith, she immediately challenged my question and wanted further clarification.

Cleaver: About what? What kind of faith, you mean religious faith?

Well, for the people who went into the Black Power movement, most of them were brought up Christians, but by the time they get in that movement they're focused on something else other than faith. They're

> focused on radically altering the relationship between the larger society and then the oppressed people. Focused on—when I got there, it was really focusing on what we call black consciousness. . . . So when we talk about black power we're challenging that whole white European imperial power structure that America came out of and fed back into. Kind of became the dominant imperial power.

Myrlie Evers. In response to my question about her Civil Rights Movements influences, Evers said without hesitation

Evers: I must answer that by saying, I was influenced by Medgar Evers who was definitely a part of the beginning of the modern civil rights movement. It was through his dedication and his willingness to make sacrifices to move his people forward that was the dominant factor in the modern-day civil rights movement.

I was 18 years old when I—I was 17, excuse me—years old when I met him. Eighteen years old when I married him. I came from a family of teachers. People who try to have the best life that they could provide for, we, children; civil rights was not a part of that. You wanted to achieve the highest standards that you could reach without shaking the system at all. Trouble was, when I met Medgar, I was told that I should not reach for the stars. I should reach for the moon and beyond that, and it was all right to challenge the system which was unfair to us. So, my introduction of what you would call the civil rights movement—or the beginning of the civil rights movement, actually, started with him; of helping this young, untrained eye and mind to look at the future, and to be willing to work and to sacrifice so that my people, in particular—people of color, generally—would have the same opportunities that everyone else in America would have.

Medgar was a veteran of World War II, as was my father. But Medgar returned to Mississippi and decided that he could not remain in the state or in the country, for that matter, with prejudice and racism being rampant as it was at that particular time. So, I came along and learned as we moved forward in the work—in the Mississippi Delta, and then later in Jackson, Mississippi. So, that was my initiation into the civil rights movement per se.

Bell: But in the last year, do you feel you've done—I—I should say that my husband, Derrick Bell, always thought that you had a balance between the—the widowhood, the legacy of—of—I mean, the wonderful legacy of your husband's work and with—how do I say it—the rest of your life. And—and actually, you're—you're my role model.

Evers: Oh, dear.

Despite her slight resistance, I continued to tell her how much of an influence she had on my life and that my late husband thought she was the model of how he wished my life would continue should he predecease me. (He died October 5, 2011.)

Bell: For how to—how to live—continue to live—as Derrick would say —a life of meaning and worth—maintaining legacy, but still—still doing—still living, fulfilling your own dreams and skills, and—and I guess, the question I would ask, though—I really want—I want to say that. Probably, I should have said it off-camera, but I want to say that to you because it's—he said, I want you to be like Myrlie Evers.

Jean Fairfax.

Fairfax: My master's thesis was on Religious Movements: A protest against castes in India. My work, starting in 1957 at the American Friends Service Committee, launched my 30-year involvement in the Civil Rights Movement. I quickly realized that I needed to become knowledgeable about issues and key social policies.

I had to find a way to become meaningfully involved to educate people—to tell people what their rights are.

I never saw myself as a leader with a clearly defined constituency, but as someone to create openings for other people.

Bell: How do you define the Civil Rights Movement?

Fairfax: I really talk about the social justice movement. I see the Civil Rights Movement as part of a larger worldwide movement.

How I got involved is not necessarily what people think of when they talk about the Civil Rights Movement. Shortly after 1957, while I was working with the American Friends Service Committee, I became concerned about hunger, especially in children. You can't talk about Civil Rights Movement without addressing hunger.

For example, I early discovered that the school lunch program had a requirement to offer free and reduced price meals. To explore how it was not being implemented, I brought together a group of people that was credited with creating the national school lunch program. We discovered that by not fully implementing the program, needy children were not being given the opportunity that others were. My research led to the publication

Their Daily Bread in 1968. In this we called attention to this major disaster. The school lunch program was not only reorganized, more important it created a national criterion. . . . I have often thought that this was one of the most important programs I was involved in. I was grateful for how I got I involved in that. I also felt that the Civil Rights Movement must include a whole range of issues, absolutely hunger.

Aileen Hernandez.

Hernandez: I really started late in the Civil Rights Movement because where I was living at that time in Brooklyn, because our family was the only African American family in the neighborhood, we didn't think there was a problem in New York. New York was a great city. No problems were going on, there. It was going to Howard University that started me. And that was both good and bad in a lot of ways because I was so struck by the capital of the United States being what it was in Washington, DC with all of the segregation and all the rest of it, that I could not believe that a country that really believed itself to be a democracy was that way.

And we got on the train, and I got hungry somewhere along the line and my father said let's go get a sandwich or something in the car. So I said: car? We have a car that we're going to? He said: no, we're going to go down there and they have a place on the train where you can have it. We went down. And then people came in and asked us what we wanted to eat. And I noticed that everybody who came through the door was somebody who was African American. And they came over and they started to smile when they saw me. And when they asked me where I was going, and I said Howard University, they smiled even bigger. And it turned out that most of the people on the train, who were all black men, had graduated from Howard University.

And they were on the train giving us food when they had gotten all of this great education at Howard. And they talked all the way to Washington to us. And when we got close to Washington, they said: we're going to get organized, now. We're going to get your trunk, and your father should take you out. And there will be a taxi, and that taxi will take you up to Howard University.

Now, we're New Yorkers. We're not aware that there is a total segregation in Washington, DC. My father and I get off the train and we do exactly what the gentlemen told us. And we get out there, and there is a taxi out there. My father goes over to it. They had told him to look for the black taxi.

And my father went over looking for the black taxi, and never saw a black taxi. So he walked to the first taxi that was there. He said to the man, who

was reading a magazine, that we were going up to Howard University, and could we get the taxi? And the man looked up from his paper, and he said to my father, "You'll have to get the black taxi." So we said there isn't any black taxi. And we did not realize that what he was telling us was there were taxis for black people and there were taxis for people who were not black people, and we had to get a taxi that would go up to Washington, DC to Howard University's campus, and that's where I was going to be in school for the next four years.

So we were struck by this. But my father did that. He got us the taxi. We did get up to Howard University. The man who had the taxi explained to us how Washington operated. And I wasn't sure that I wanted to go to Howard University at that point in time. But after I was there for awhile, that was the best thing that ever happened to me, was to go to Howard University.

Gay McDougall.

McDougall: I always swam upstream. That's a lesson from my mother. I don't know how many times she talked to me about Thoreau and his example of not taking the easy path, but to always swim upstream. Do the thing not already done by others, choose what few others have chosen. Instead of taking French for example, why don't you take Russian? So this aspect of my character was very much my mother's influence.

Bell: Well it's interesting that some people don't even have the opportunity to take French, and you made a decision between French and Russian, and your mother was a mathematician who went to Spelman. Was she a first generation college or second generation college?

McDougall: She was not the first generation in her family to attend college. Her Grandfather was an AME minister who graduated from Morris Brown Seminary in Atlanta. Her sisters went to Spelman College. Her brothers went to Morris Brown College.

Diane Nash.

Nash: Okay. So, what led me to the Civil Rights Movement?

Bell: Yes.

Nash: I grew up on the Southside of Chicago, which was segregated. But there were no signs that were white and colored. And when I went to college at Fisk University in Nashville, I did encounter more overt segregation, such as signs in restaurants and libraries and public accommodations that blacks

could not use, or had to use back doors. That kind of thing. And of course the whole purpose of segregation I think was to convince you that you were "less than" and not worthy of, you know, using facilities that the general public could use, convincing black people of their own inferiority.

And when I obeyed segregation rules I felt like I was agreeing to my own inferiority. And, well, there were a lot of things, that was a period of my life where I was really interested in expanding myself, going to new places and learning new things, meeting new people. And segregation was extremely restricting, and I felt that keenly. It was humiliating.

So, I started looking for an organization that was trying to do something to prevent segregation, that was 1959. And was fortunate finally to find the workshop that Reverend James Lawson was conducting in Nashville.

And in those workshops I gained an excellent education in the philosophy and strategies of nonviolence. I think that I answered that first question.

Bell: I wanted to know if—in your own words—how you would define your contribution to society and how you would like to be remembered.

Nash: Well, let me see. I think my—personally, the two things that I think I was able to make a contribution with was in recognizing that the Freedom Ride had to continue. When the CORE—the people from the Congress of Racial Equality, they began the Freedom Ride—when they'd been beaten so repeatedly and severely that they were forced to end the Freedom Ride, I was able to understand that if it had stopped at that point Southern white racists would have believed that a movement project could be stopped by inflicting a great deal of violence on it. And if that message got sent, we would've had so many people killed after that.

And it would've been impossible to have a movement about anything, voting rights, desegregation, or whatever. So, it was really critically important that that message not be sent. And that it be clear that you could not stop a Civil Rights campaign, a nonviolent campaign, by inflicting violence. So, that was one thing. And the second one was in response to the four little girls being murdered in the church, in the 16th Street Church in Birmingham. It was important to me that that murder not go unanswered and unaddressed. And my former husband at the time, James Neville, and I that very afternoon when the little girls were killed formulated a strategy for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to get the right to vote in Alabama.

Because we felt if blacks had the right to vote in Alabama they could better protect their children. And so, we really pushed for that and for what became the Selma Right to Vote. And, incidentally, we made a

conscious choice that Sunday afternoon, because we felt confident that if we tried, we could find out who had—who was responsible for those murders, for that bombing, and make certain that they got killed, and we considered that as one of serious, you know, choice.

Bell: Yes.

Nash: And the second choice was to have a nonviolent movement to get the right to vote, so the blacks in Alabama could better protect their children. And we made a conscious choice to, well, no matter how long it took, to work on getting the right to vote. And so, the right to vote, the Selma Movement, was a direct result of the little girls getting killed. And the only thing I can think of more tragic than their being murdered was if they were murdered and there was not a positive response to it. And so, I think getting the right to vote was the best that we could do.

Bell: We're coming up to our 15 minutes, so I don't want—

Nash: Actually, we're at 18.

Bell: I was cheating a little bit there. So, obviously, you caught me on that. So, let's—so just a couple more questions then. I wanted to know if in your own words how you would define your contribution to society and how you would like to be remembered. All right, so I know that we are way past our time, but if you had to write the one sentence headline on how you would like to be remembered, what would that be? Hah!

Nash: I wish I had kept those questions.

Bell: That's all right. It's good that you didn't in a sense, you know? So, what would your *New York Times*, you know, *The New York Times* is still the paper of record, what do you want the headline to read? "Diane Nash, comma –"

Nash: She was very grateful that—and considered herself very fortunate and blessed that—she had the opportunity to get an education in the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence. It was life-changing for her, and she was—hmm, she really strove to be honest and authentic, and she loved people. I guess that. I'd love to be remembered like that.

Bell: I think that's wonderful. I will take no more of your time now.

Gloria Richardson. Richardson initially joined the demonstrations for civil rights to be supportive of the young people, including her daughter. She recounts how she came to take a leadership role.

Richardson, G: My uncle and cousin provided the bail for [those arrested for demonstrations]. Going down the eastern shore, I think almost all the towns they stopped in at least made some attempt to meet with them and modify their policy, mainly to keep it going to their stores and their restaurants without demonstrations. The power people in town just decided, "We don't want this."

And on their way back, my cousin said to them, "You know, where you all really need to go is through Cambridge—where I lived. And, actually, they had been in town, I think, a couple of weeks. I don't think I went to the first rally. But people . . . just poured out, all ages, into the churches, four and five hundred people at a time. And then they decided . . . they needed younger people. And they wanted somebody local that could take them around the town and show them where to go and stuff.

And when my uncle sent them to my house, my daughter was there, and she—she's there on weekends to make cookies and stuff. And so eight or nine of her high school friends would be back in the kitchen cooking and carrying on. So I said, "Well, go back there and ask them. Maybe they'll agree" and they did. And they went and helped lead those first demonstrations.

And I guess for two or three weeks I really didn't focus on that. There's—oh, that's good that's going on. . . . The white folks were scared to go down in and out of the stores. And so the white community's economic structure started crashing, and then the preachers went down and said, "Okay, we'll have peace for a while, and you all can make your decision for what you want to do." So that happened, and then I think that possibly two weeks passed then. And the parents that had been supporting the kids then got together and said, "Well, it's a student thing. But maybe we all can go down there. And SNCC will give you permission to carry on." So that's what we did.

Richardson, G: And the community gave us money to go down. We went to SNCC in Atlanta, and they said, "Yes." And we came back and started. At the time, my cousin also—the bail bond—was a co-chairman of what later became the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee.

> And then he began to feel that as people got arrested that that was a conflict. And he dropped out.
>
> I noticed after I did the Democracy Now! interview recently people started putting it on their feminists' websites. But actually, it was a black businessman in the second ward who came to me and asked me if I would take his place.
>
> Because they thought I . . . or, my family was economically secure enough.

Richardson emphasized that "the young people had done such a fantastic job." At one point, Richardson tried to trip a white person going by while she and others were demonstrating and was admonished by her daughter, who asked that she leave the line. Richardson proudly called it a "whole switching relationship."

Judy Richardson.

> Richardson, J: Well, my participation in the movement really changed my life. It changed the direction of my life. I grew up in Tarrytown, New York, in the "under the hill" section of Tarrytown where poor—well, basically working class black people and white people lived.
>
> My father was treasurer of the [union] local at the plant, which is what everyone just called it—the plant. It was the Fisher Body plant that made parts for Chevrolet cars. So you could tell time from the shifts at the plant. My father helped organize the union, the UAW Local there. They pulled me out of class when I was seven because he had died on the assembly line. At that point he was treasurer of that Local.
>
> Then my mother became a working single parent. Now, she had an eighth grade education, but she read everything. She read the *New York Post* when it was still a real newspaper. I grew up—she looked at *Meet the Press.* So I was in the world—

Richardson talked about being a student at Swarthmore and being called on by the workers to help protest for a living wage and against unfair and dangerous working conditions—something she was glad to do, given her personal background. She was reminded

that her student status afforded her more protection and credibility than the other workers, although she worked alongside them for her work-study assignment.

Richardson's commitment to uplifting black people and others led her to the Civil Rights Movement and to working in communications media. Among her many accomplishments was to help define one of the most extraordinary televisions series of its time, *Eyes on the Prize* (Else & Vecchione, 1987), as a producer for Blackside, Inc.

Richardson recounted the meaning behind the series title and how it came to be. She modestly asserts that she came to Blackside because the producer Henry Hampton took a chance on her, because her movement experience could "maybe encourage people to talk to us for interviews."

Richardson, J: Yeah, that's true. He has this title that I hated. At some point when we take a break I'll show you the memo, but Henry's title was America We Loved You Madly. Because he had taken that—he loved the play on words. Henry really was a writer. He loved the play on words of "madly." For him there was kind of a love-hate relationship for black people with this country. So, "We loved you madly." And it was what Duke Ellington used to say at the end of concerts, and he would throw his arms wide and say, "I loved you madly."

So Henry loved that, and I hated it as a title. So I kept saying, kind of from jump, "Henry you know, I really hate that title."

The title of the series reflects Richardson's approach to her life's work and her respect for the people who sacrificed so much in the Movement.

Bell: Keeping their eyes on the prize. There was a kind of integrity to the way the movement—the way things were covered. So while you give a lot of credit to—and rightly so, we cannot give too much credit in any case—to Miss Baker, she deserves all that, but it seems to me that your role is one of—that you've had an important role to play in all of these things. Whether you yourself call them leadership roles, connection, or coordinating things.

Connection, coordinating, consistency, things like that. Somewhere behind that—and what I'd like to do is just ask you to think about it for just a second. Where is the wellspring on that?

Richardson, J: Oh, yeah. I mean the strength I get to do whatever I'm doing a lot of times comes from the people around me and other things. Like, in the movement, it also came from the songs. Although I don't come from a religious base, when someone like Mrs. Hamer starts singing—*I'm a Soldier in the Army*, or any of that—it takes you to another place and can't nobody touch you. You can be on a demonstration. You're singing. They can't touch you. And Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon has said that. She's said it's almost like you put up a wall.

It's the music, it's the people around me. When you got tired there were always people who just said, "Okay, we've got to keep going. We've got to get this newsletter out. We've got to get this out." Even when—you know, and I'll say, sometimes it was just because you're mad.

Bell: How would you like to be remembered? How would you write your own introduction. Ladies and gentlemen, we're honoring Judy Richardson today because—why?

Richardson, J: I would have to say, I don't know why. The thing is, I compare myself to all these amazing people around me in the movement. They were young, they were older—some were older activists, and some of them were young. When I compare myself to that—that's why I was so amazed they were giving me an honorary. I mean I'm nothing that's to, say, a Dorie Ladner who gets beaten up.

I don't know. I have a consistency that I think helps, and in terms of contribution it has to do with—well, is it a contribution to my circle of friends, which is one thing? Or is it a contribution to the world at large, which is another thing? I guess if I was doing world at large it would be—there is a body of work that I could probably point to, but a lot of that has to do with all the people around me who provided a foundation and a support that allowed me to do that work.

Subtheme: Defying stereotypes.

Leah Chase. Leah Chase describes how she defiantly refused to work in the sewing factories, a job that was considered something to which Creole women—such as she—would aspire. Not doing the expected started her trajectory into the restaurant business. She added that the job was important because it gave women work.

Chase: Now that was a whole different ballgame because all the so-called *Creoles de couleur*, the Creoles of color, worked in sewing factories. They had any number of sewing factories in New Orleans. They made pants. They made suits. Uh, they made shirts, all kind of sewing factories. And that's where the women worked. I wish we had that today, but we don't. Because that would give women work.

Chase explained why and how she took a different path than what was expected of her.

Chase: So—but when I came, I guess—I guess I was militant, I guess because I wasn't going in a sewing factory. I could sew because we were taught to sew, but I couldn't see myself shootin' out pants pockets all day long, and that's what you did in the sewin' factory. It was what they called "piece work."

So I went to work [*laughs*] in the French Quarter. Oh, God. That was a ridiculous—so they thought. But I liked it. And I liked waiting tables. I liked, uh, people—the people I saw. I liked—it was a mixture of people, but I learned a lot in the French Quarter. I learned to love this business. Now, when I met Dooky, he was only 18 years old.

Chase's life then and now is synonymous with the restaurant. She spoke about how the restaurant came to be and become such a treasured part of the community:

Chase: [People] would come here on the weekend, particularly, because they knew my mother-in-law and they knew my father-in-law, and they would come and sit down and have some drinks. And to accompany those drinks they would have food. So they would have chicken or they would have fried oysters, what they didn't have at home. You see, but most of the time they cooked everything at home. So when I came in here, I said, "Oh no. We're gonna change this." And this was so stupid and naïve.

The restaurant, and Chase's understanding of the role she could play, grew because of her hard work—a combination of trial and error, self-reflection, and a continuing commitment to serve her community.

Chase: Um, they—I said you know, the only difference in people is the color of their skin, our own—we have different cultures, which is good. If you—if you're German, you want good German food. . . . If you're black, you want what you want, and you want your food that you're accustomed to eating.

But here no, I'm gonna start doing with the cream sauces that I saw them do in the Quarter in the white restaurants, you know? Because they ate more French cooking, like they would do Newburg sauces and all kinda cream sauces and those kinda things. You see, here I am. I'm just twenty, what—22, 23 years old. So I—I'm learning. Hey, wait a minute. People like what they like. So I had to back up. And then I had to start makin' things that I knew they liked. Chicken breasts stuffed with oyster dressin', those kinds—veal panéed—what they had all the time. Uh, shrimp Creole, the things that people were accustomed to. And now I find, hey, you come—the whites come here. They know what I serve. They come here for what I serve.

And they will bring their guests. They will say, "Well, we goin' here tonight." Then blacks will tell you—and I like to hear them say that, "Now I'm gonna take you to 'our' restaurant."

And it's here. And that—they never referred to this as Dooky. They would always just say, "We're going' to The Restaurant." That's it. So when you said in the black community, "We're going' to The Restaurant," you knew where you were comin'. You were comin' here. . . . I love service. I think people deserve good service. So no matter what you serve them, I like it done well.

Chase has amassed an impressive and singular collection of African American art. I asked her how she started collecting.

Chase: I had a friend. And I'll never forget her. She's dead now**.** Celestine Cook. And she was the first African American to sit on the Museum Board here in New Orleans.

So when she came to me, I am runnin' this—in this, doin'—workin' my kitchen, doin' that. And she said, "It's my turn to rotate." After three years, you rotate off the board. She said, "And I'm gonna put your name up." I said, "Don't do that."

"Because I don't know one thing about art, Celestine." I don't know anything about it. I have never set foot in the inside of a museum in my life. So, I don't know that. Okay, so she said, "But I'm—you don't know what it's gonna do for your business," that's what she told me. "It's gonna do wonders for your business." So I said, "Okay." That's what I'm all about, trying to make this restaurant grow, trying to make it a name place to go. I said okay. So I said, "Oh, is she gonna put my name up? They're not gonna take me on there. I don't know anything."

> So—I have no college education. I'm just a high school graduate, and I don't have this and I don't have that. So she did. And when she put my name up—and I always thanked this man 'til the day he died. He was a prominent Jewish lawyer in this city. So my name came up tied with a very prominent Jewish man. . . . So, now, to break the tie, that means the chairman of the board has to vote. He has to vote. And Mr. Stieg voted for me. I—I thought—and I always admired him for that because that took vision.
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> That took guts at those times—in the '70s. You know, that took guts to—to vote for me. I had nothing and you're turning down a man with money, a man with knowledge of the arts, a man with everything, and you gonna vote for me as a black woman? That was vision. . . . And I never forgot him for that.

Kathleen Cleaver.

Cleaver: The reason I took a leadership role is because at the beginning of the movement, there were like five people. I came after Eldridge came to a conference that SNCC held. That was in SNCC. Eldridge came as our speaker, but all the speakers we had invited—none of the others came because of a blizzard, so he was the only speaker for the conference.

He and I met in March of 1967.

Huey Newton got shot in October, and he and I were in touch. We talked on the phone and exchanged letters. He said, "I want you to come out here and work with us."

I met Eldridge, and I met the Panthers who I had seen in the summer when I'd been out there. . . . Then, when I came back in the fall, they were all either in jail or unavailable, except for about three. They were all teenagers, the three that were available . . . and Eldridge—who's an ex-convict on parole, and he's not supposed to be associating with any organization that's armed, so he's underground. . . . Everybody else is in jail or hidden.

Bell: What I was trying to get was—

Cleaver: How did I get to be a leader? I was there.

Myrlie Evers. Evers recounted her tumultuous road to becoming chairman of the NAACP in 1995. When her candidacy was questioned, she said,

Evers: Oh, yes. And I recall my response. Not very lady-like, I said, “Get the hell out of my way.” Because I was determined to do what I could to help turn that organization around. My first year as chairman of the board was a year in hell, because the men did not want to give up one ounce of the control that they had. We had board meetings that lasted far too long, where there was—there was so much anger, so much to be done about the organization itself.

And at this one particular board meeting, which lasted about six or seven hours, I held the gavel the entire time. And a couple of men came up to me, and they said, “Tell me, why did you never turn that gavel over to the other person, Chairman?” And I said, “Because had I done that, the entire agenda that we went through, the problems that we solved, would have been undone while I was in the restroom.” They laughed, “Well, how on earth did you not go?” And I said, “Evidently, you've never run for political office, because if you had, you would know that you don't drink anything, not even a sip of water during that time so you can stand firm with that gavel in your hand.”

You know what they told me? They brought another couple of powerful men who said, “You won us over.” I said, “Where is the bathroom**.”** And they laughed, but I was treated like something to be kicked aside all that time. That's my book.

Gay McDougall.

McDougall: I think that choosing the path not chosen is a good rule of thumb to follow at any time. To follow your conscience you have to be ready to “always swim upstream”; that is, to swim against the tide. That is not easy and it can sometimes be scary. When I am afraid that passage comes to mind: “Yea, though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death . . .” and I think of doing what my mother would be proud of.

Bell: I will fear no evil.

McDougall: It works every time.

Bell: So, can I characterize that as a kind of faith? Obviously this is a philosophical approach that you have, this many times, but the “Yea, though I walk” part, is that—even though you did not have a formal role or did not want a formal role in a male-dominated church—was there something about your own personal faith? Did you have it? And is it more of a philosophical faith?

McDougall: I guess you could call it a philosophical framework. I can't call it a religious faith, if you mean religious in the sense of imagining there being somebody in the sky who takes care of us.

When I asked if there was anything we had not discussed that she wanted to discuss, McDougall said poignantly and tenderly, "You didn't ask about John." John Payton was her husband. He, like she, was a human rights lawyer. He served as president and director counsel of the NAACP Legal and Educational Fund from 2008 until his untimely death in 2012.

McDougall: When we met, John was very involved already in the things that I thought were important, and I proceeded to involve him even more. He was really the chief lawyer of the Washington [anti-apartheid] movement, and did that brilliantly. He was my closest advisor and companion on everything that I did.

Theme two: Courage.

Leah Chase.

Bell: Well, how did—were you able to provide a safe haven or a meeting place for people when—when, uh, you—you were going against segregation laws at the time. . . . That's pretty brave.

Chase: You know, and we—I didn't think I was doin' anything brave. I just thought I was doin' what I supposed to do, you know? It was nothing glorious. I just knew I had to feed 'em. And what they had to do, I'd listen in on the meetings. And I said, "Oh my goodness, they gonna get in trouble." They gonna do this, and they gonna do that. But they did it. And it was really—it taught—taught me a lesson, that sometimes you have to just bam those down, you know?

And just take care of it after that. But sometimes we opened doors and we were not ready for what was behind those doors. [*Laughs*] And that is because we didn't know. Now we worked in the NAACP trying to do this, trying to do that, that movement was just too slow. It would've never gotten done.

Now that I look back at it, it would've never gotten done. Sometimes you make progress by offending some people. Sometimes you do that. You're not gonna please everybody. So—but you have to move on. You have to move and—and do things that you have to do. Somebody's gonna get hurt maybe, but that's life. And that's what you have to do. And that's somethin' that's gone on for years, you know, way back in the day—in the

biblical days, they were trying to make changes and do this. You're gonna hurt somebody. Somebody's gonna get hurt. But that's progress.

Bell: Yes, well people who have come to your restaurant over the years—and I have to say that many years ago, I came—it had to be in the '70s or, or '80s or something. It was some—long time ago, but since then, other people have not only written about but talked about how the—the fact that—they talk about your hospitality and your bravery for—for just doing what it is you said that you felt was—was, simply needed to be done.

Chase: Yeah, I—[*laughs*] yeah. I didn't consider myself very brave. I just lived. You know, you just go from day to day. And I—I do things that same way now. For one thing, I'm grateful and . . . I pray—I pray a lot. And you know, we as black people do pray a lot.

Myrlie Evers. In answer to my question on how she would describe her role, Evers explained that her title of secretary did not reflect the scope of her work and related that she and her husband were partners in what was done.

Evers: I did everything, the research, the writing, the printing. I did everything that one would do as a secretary and I had the role of being hostess. I had the responsibilities, of course, of—of our children, and I found it, at times, overwhelming because I ask the question that I think women, certainly, began to ask: what about me? Where—where am I in all of this? And there was the fear factor that one day I might lose my husband and my children as well as myself. I could be maimed or something worse.

So, it was an exciting, but frightening, time because you stared at death every day, and you walked and death walked along with you, but there was always hope. And there were always people who surrounded you to give you a sense of purpose—that they needed you in many different ways, and that in the song that we sang so much, one day, we shall overcome.

So, for a very, very young sheltered wife, there were the thrills, but there was the pain, and there was the fear that, I believed at that time, probably took over my life.

Bell: And how did you develop your—you—you were obviously thrown in a situation for which it's absolutely difficult to prepare. And so, you went from—

Evers: You try to prepare.

Bell: Okay, how do you try to prepare?

Evers: You do a little role playing. I personally would put myself in a position mentally where I had just lost my husband. I knew it was coming. I—I knew it was coming. So, what do you do? How do you conduct your life? How do you take care of your children? What do you do? It—it may seem a little sick, but you—you—you try as best you can to prepare yourself for the moment when it all becomes a reality because you know it's going to.

I recall a conversation with Medgar not too long before his assassination, and I said to him, "I can't live without you. I can't make it without you." And he looked at me and he said, "You're much stronger than you think you are. You will be okay. You must believe it."

I had such faith in, confidence in him. In a sense, he was my hero as well as my husband and father of my children. He believed that and he instilled in me a belief that I, too, could rise to whatever occasion was presented and be successful in dealing with it, in moving forward. We spoke not that often, but we did speak to the fact of location. Where would we move if we ever left Mississippi? Of course, he said, I know I'm going to die, and wherever I die—no, wherever I'm going, to heaven or hell, I'm going from Mississippi. And—and he truly believed all that. I did not always want to live here. I really didn't.

Born, bred, educated in Mississippi, but it was—Mississippi was not a love of mine. It was not a passion as it was for Medgar. So, I knew that I had to find a peaceful place for my children; good schools and a place where we could recover as best as we could.

Evers took bold steps to restructure her life after her husband's assassination, staying true to her husband's wishes and the needs of their three children.

Evers: After his demise, I knew that I had to go back to school. I had two years of college and dropped out a semester after we got married. I had children. My family was still in Mississippi, but Medgar had said, "If we ever leave this state, we're going to California." And during that time, everything I did was based on what I thought he would have wanted.

Today, when I visit my former home, which my children and I gave to—deeded it to—Tougaloo College as a museum, I can still see the blood. We needed to get away from that place. Our oldest son, Darrell Kenyatta, reached a point where he refused to eat. He would not study. He would not talk, and went into this very, very angry withdrawal mode. And I knew we needed to be away from the house. My daughter would go to bed with her dad's picture, holding it every night. The youngest one, Van,

> who was three, would go to bed with this little rifle. I knew that we could no longer live in that house.
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> To this day. When I look back at this Myrlie—it's my Aunt Myrlie that I was named for. I was very fortunate to be surrounded by people who loved me dearly. My grandmother, my aunt who reared me, who told me I could accomplish anything that I set my mind to do as long as I stayed within the boundaries of what society had set for me.
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> Medgar came along and said, "You can do whatever you want to do, but keep those boundaries out of the way." If you're reaching for the stars and—and the—and the moon is higher, you reach for the moon. And if there's something else higher than that, you reach for that. You never stop climbing. You never stop dreaming for something higher and better.

Evers struggled to overcome her hatred of the man who killed her husband and almost got away with it. It took decades of hard work and dedication on her part to bring the killer to justice.

Evers: I was told in my family that to hate someone was a sin. I rejected all of that. I was so angry. I was so filled with hatred. And I survived in the middle of the night dreaming of what I would do to extract my pound of flesh from all of those who had done wrong—"done wrong," in quotes—to my family, to my husband. So, I have a split personality. People would tell me, "Oh, you are so strong. You are so good. You are so forgiving." "Well," I would smile and say, "Thank you."

> And inside? I was boiling, and at night, I fantasized about what I would do. I even reached the point—and this was not a fantasy—but in the first few months after Medgar's death I called the men in our particular neighborhood where we lived. I called them**,** I said, "I need you to do something for me. We know who pulled the trigger. Find him and bring him to me." And I remember how shocked they were: "You don't mean that." I said, "Yes, I do. Find him and bring him to me. Secure him and you leave. I'll take care of the rest."
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> So, in a sense, there I was with this split personality. One, of being the grieving, yet understanding, strong widow; and a person who wanted vengeance like I needed water. A woman who was lonely and afraid, but one who was determined to make it. And somewhere in all of that, I decided that the best thing I could do to make society pay for the loss of my husband was to be successful in whatever it was that I decided to do.

So, this was a turn in my life. I thought I had moved beyond hatred until the last few months, June of this year, and everything came back in a rush, in a flood. And I said to myself, "Shame on you." That's what my grandmother would say. "Shame on you. I thought you had gotten past that." And the other Myrlie said, "That's what you thought, but I'm still here. And what are you gonna do about it?"

And as we speak, at this particular point in time, I have just reached the point where I know what I'm going to do.

Diane Nash. I asked how Nash gained a leadership position in the Nashville Movement.

Nash: Well, the first one is the Nashville. We established a central committee, the Student Central Committee is what we called it, in Nashville, and that was the committee that gave guidance to the sit-ins at restaurants and lunch counters, and that was in 1960. And the Student Central Committee was made of representatives from each of the colleges and universities in the Nashville metropolitan area that were participating in the movement. There were about 30 of us, and I was elected chairperson. I was the third chairperson.

The first two were men. And each missed meetings and missed demonstrations, and when they came back, we asked them where they'd been; both said the same thing, that they had, you know, been studying. And we could not afford to have officers who were not efficient because someone could get killed or injured if we did not carry out the movement efficiently. So, we thanked them for their services and replaced them. And I guess each one lasted probably a couple in office. So—and they elected me chairperson. And I really didn't want to be chairperson. I declined and offered every excuse I could think of really because I was afraid.

Bell: Right.

Nash: And you know, that same evening after I was elected I thought, "My goodness, what will have happened in the next two months? And we will be coming up against, oh, man, white men in their, you know, 40s and 50s and 60s who are businessmen and politicians, and here we are students." You know, 17, 18, maybe, to 21 or 22 years old. And it was daunting.

Bell: How did you overcome your fear?

Nash: I'm not sure I did.

Bell: How did you deal with it then?

Nash: I just, you know, kept doing what had to be done. One, well, the fear was, definitely was, there, but fear was also a great motivator because once again I knew if we were not efficient someone could get killed or injured. And so there was that fear I think it made us extremely efficient.

Judy Richardson.

Richardson, J: When they started kind of shooting at us and I thought it was a backfire and June Johnson said, "No, they're shooting at us. Hurry up." When we go into this hospital in Greenwood, Mississippi in the summer of 1964, we get into the hospital. It was a small white mob. They had just thrown a brick through the picture window.

There are six FBI men at the hospital there. I won't go through why they are there already, but they're there because there were two young activists that had gotten injured. It's summer of 1964 so they go there. The agents go behind the wall, out of the way of the waiting area, and I go too, and then I start screaming at them because they're doing absolutely nothing. Then I go back. I peek around—the mob has gone back into the parking lot and I return to the reception area and start putting my dimes into the telephone because I'm trying to call John Doar at the Justice Department.

I keep trying to call. That's not because I have any great courage. It's because I'm mad as hell. First of all, I just screamed at these FBI agents because they're not doing diddly squat, which is usually what they didn't do—diddly squat. And then I can't get to John Doar. I'm mad at these white racists.

That's one of the other things by the way, that we always understood in SNCC: It isn't about individual white racists. It's about white supremacy. It's about the good members of the Chamber of Commerce, and the mayors and all these good people who are going to these all-white churches and perpetuating the policies of white supremacy. It's the same thing that you've got today.

Richardson tends to underplay her courage—in keeping with her modest demeanor. She discusses her courage contextually, as integral to understanding the white supremacy she was challenging.

Richardson, J: The lessons that I learned then, I've taken to now. Police brutality isn't just because someone didn't have enough sensitivity training. It's because of a racist New York Police Department. We understood that in SNCC. So for me, yeah, I'm mad at these FBI agents, but I'm also mad that you've got this white mob outside that's covertly supported by the white leadership in

the town. And here's this black paratrooper who's come home and is now in the hospital because it's his brother who has just had a rock thrown . . . has glass in his eye because he tried to go to a movie theater in downtown Greenwood. So I'm mad in the same way that I used to get mad at the police brutality stuff [a reference to Richardson's post-SNCC work challenging police brutality in Los Angeles and New York City]. So part of what fuels me is mad—anger. However, what also kept me going in SNCC was all the wonderful people who just made me feel good and always made me feel I was valued.

Theme three: Purpose.

Subtheme: Sense of responsibility to others.

Leah Chase.

Chase: I—I think the movement influenced everybody. People my age, we were—we were a bit frightened about it. Um, we—you know, it was so different than what we were trying to do. For instance, we were working with the NAACP . . . trying to work in the system—

You know, abide by our rules. Don't offend this one. Don't offend that one. And get it done. But then here comes the young people in the movement, and, uh, they said, "No. We gonna do this." And we thought "Oh, God, what are they gonna do?" What are they gonna do? So people my age were kinda frightened. You know, we didn't know what was gonna happen. And sometimes we were not as supportive as what we should've been. I had the—for instance, [over at the restaurant] there's a street named after her now. Her mother—she was big in the Civil Rights Movement here. She was big. She and her sister and a lotta people were big in the movement here.

And they would go out and go to jail. And her mother worked here. Her mother worked here as a bartender for some 40-some years. Wonderful woman. . . . Always admired her for that. You know, she didn't understand the movement just like I didn't understand, 'cause Virgie was a little younger than I. She didn't—but her children were there, and her children were goin' to jail.

So you know, it hurt her badly, but she was very supportive. And I always admired her for that. Even though she may have been afraid, she may have been this, that, the other, but she was very supportive of those children and what they did. And sometimes we'd say, "Oh, Virgie, they goin' to jail. What are we goin' to do?" And all this kind of thing.

What Chase and her husband did was provide a safe haven for others. In violation of Jim Crow laws and customs, they allowed integrated groups of civil rights workers to meet at their restaurant.

Chase: But she was supportive where sometimes we were frightened by it, you know? Even though in here they would come here and we would feed them, and they would plan their meetings. We had a room upstairs at that time. And they would plan all their meetings. And then they would go out. Some would go through Mississippi and got put to jail, got all kinds of things happen to them. And then they would come back. And my job was to feed them all the time to—to feed them and let 'em have this place to meet and all that kind of thing. But I don't think people my age were supportive enough of those young people. Now that's my belief, you know. Because you know after that movement, then we lost a lot of our young people. You know, they were not conforming to society. They were going off. They were doing—going to jail. They were radical people.

Where if—I feel if people my age were more supportive and said, "Look, you do this but we gotta come back now. We have to do this and do that and put 'em on another track." I—I think it would've been better. That's just my feeling. I think we should—we should've been better, uh, you know, than they takin' all the whippin' and do the things they—that they did. And you know, I learned from that that we would've been here 'til today trying to work within the system. Sometimes to get things done, you have to just bam, do it.

And you know, you figure well, I don't know what tomorrow's gonna bring, but I have to do what I have to do today. And tomorrow will take care of tomorrow. So you just go on believin' that and doing that. And you disagree with people along the way, but you're—you support 'em. And that's all I did. My job was to feed them. My job was to—when they would come here for meetings, my job was to feed them. It was always gumbo and fried chicken. Always a bowl of gumbo. Always that. **So I always say, "Over a bowl of gumbo you can really talk it over and change a whole lot of things"** [emphasis added].

I really think a lot can be done over food today. When you're dealing with other countries, I think if we just sat down and talked about it over some dinner—just talk about it, maybe we could do better things. We did that in the Civil Rights Movement.

A servant leader used to helping others, Chase did not look to extract something in return for her efforts. However, after Hurricane Katrina destroyed much of New Orleans as well as her business, she recalled with humility and gratitude how people came to her aid.

Chase: I usually do fundraising. . . . I would go all around [for example] Fort Wayne, Indiana. I would go help them fundraise and start their food bank. You meet people. You meet people. And that's what I tell people, you know? Give a little. Do a little charity work. It's not about you. It's not all about earnin'. My mother always taught us, "Your job on earth is what you do to feed your face, what you do to get paid to take care of you. But your work on earth is what you do for other people." And I never forgot that. So I always try to do whatever I can do to help other people. And then after the storm, Fort Wayne sent me a check for $30,000.00 to buy all those chairs. People came from all over. Starbucks came to the tune of $149,000.00.

To help me get up. But you see, if you work with other people and just work—you know, I never paid attention to money that much. Maybe I should have, um, saving it or putting it on the side for what they call a rainy day. I was not good at that. I would give to people my last dollar.

I tell that to young people. Never mind what your pay is. Do your job. The money will be there. If you gonna wait on these tables, don't think about that tip, think about that service. The tip will be there. See, you put first things first, put the work first, and then don't worry about the money. It's gonna be there. It's gonna come. So it's been a good life for me.

Kathleen Cleaver.

Cleaver: I had wanted to be in SNCC since I was in high school, since I saw the students at Albany in the back of a paddy wagon protesting against being denied the right to vote. I said, "I want to do that." I admired them.

That was it. That was the only thing I had in mind as a goal. I want to be in this movement. I'm in a boarding school in Pennsylvania. How am I going to get to the movement?

This is how I got there. In the summer of '66, I went to a party with my friends and met SNCC people who they knew, because they had been in SNCC. I got included into the SNCC family, and began working there. The rest is history. That's what I meant. Once I was plugged in to the black power movement, immediately at its heart, Ivanhoe was one of Stokely's right-hand men. I met Stokely. I met them all. It wasn't that big of an organization any longer.

Myrlie Evers.

Evers: A very, very interesting time because I was a very, very good typist, IBM punch card operator, all of those things that elevated the woman's role in—in our little society at that time. And I did practically everything that had to be done in that office. It was not only organizing events, or celebrations, or even the sad things to acknowledge people who had been hurt, who had been killed. I was a—what would you call it—a Jack of all trades. I did research for his speeches. I even wrote some of his speeches.

We were, at a time—I call it being behind the iron, the cotton curtain, if you will. Not the iron curtain, I guess, it was, but the cotton curtain because you could not get information out to the wire services through the usual route that you would do here in Mississippi or any other part of the country. It meant being concise with what you reported and sending that information to the NAACP office in New York City, and you did it by telegram.

So, I researched. I wrote. I was a welcome committee to people who came in. I found myself in the role of being hostess with the mostest, but the mostest was nothing because we really had nothing to give but heart—just heartfelt personality and—and welcoming to people. I was his support system. Interestingly enough, we had an understanding that once we entered into that office, I became Mrs. Evers and he became Mr. Evers. And we kept it very formal, kept all outside things outside.

Aileen Hernandez.

Bell: When I read things about you on the public record, as it were, you seem to be more associated with women's rights than civil rights. How do you see that?

Hernandez: I know that that's what it would look like, but you have to recognize that this was the 1940s, and we were at war. While I was going through Howard [University], my older brother was in the military service in a segregated army, where he was in the Pacific area. I was so struck by how good the teachers were, and how much they really related to the students. They took the students into all of these meetings. We sat there and listened to names that are historic at this point in time. And we learned that we had a responsibility to do something about [injustice].

So our class was one of the classes that began picketing in Washington, DC. Mostly right around Howard University, where we could go in and buy something in the little restaurant across the road, but we couldn't sit there and eat it. We'd have to go back to the school and eat it. And if we

went downtown to buy something in the department store, we could buy things, but we couldn't try them on. So we knew that we were living in the very difficult kind of society at that time, and that we did have a responsibility to change it. Because our professors helped us with that.

And they were remarkable not only what they did in the classroom, but they invited you to their houses. Sterling Brown, for example, an incredible poet, was also a jazz lover. And so if you took English from Sterling Brown, he would invite you to come to his house. And he would get out his records. He would play the records and read his poems. And I think a lot of us—particularly the girls—were opening up into areas where they had not gone before. Very few women were going into law at that stage or going into anything except being a teacher, and mostly an elementary school teacher.

So we were at the forefront of changes in our society. The girls could do things that they hadn't done before, and partially because the boys were gone.

Bell: So you had a different kind of trajectory. When you look at what you have done with the labor organizing, and then your involvement with NOW, the National Organization for Women, how did you get there from where you just said you were, from the picketing, from Howard University, from the cultural cauldron, in a sense, to being really a leader in the women's movement? And how can you compare or associate that experience with your civil rights activities?

Hernandez: It's very interesting how they came together. Because I had not planned this. It was not my plan to do all of this. I was in most of the stuff. I was the editor of the school newspaper at Howard University for two years.

After graduating from Howard University, Hernandez returned home to Brooklyn and enrolled in New York University to pursue a Master's. She answered an ad:

Hernandez: And it turned out to be the National Ladies Garment Workers Union, which I knew about because that's what a lot of black women were doing. They were working in the shops that made all the clothing for women.

Hernandez became one of 32 young people selected for a training program, where during her first day, she met Eleanor Roosevelt, who became a key figure in her life as a trade unionist and women's rights advocate.

Hernandez: There were 32 people who were selected to come into this training program. Twenty-eight were men, and four were women. So we knew right away, just because "women" is in the title, doesn't mean that women are really up in the power of the agency.

When I graduated from that training area, let's see, by that time it was probably 1950 and we had finished our program. And when they asked me where I wanted to go to work, I said California. And I went to Los Angeles and started out as an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union.

And over the years—I was with the union for over 11 years—I became the head of the Education Department down there. We trained a lot of people. We had a lot of immigrants that came from the ILGWU. We trained them on how to become citizens.

So this is how I got into the ILGWU. And as a result of getting into the ILGWU, I got very much involved with a lot of the politics of those days. And it opened up a lot of things for me. I got to meet a lot of people that I would never have met before. And I began to have a philosophy about what I thought I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Bell: Which was?

Hernandez: Which was essentially to go out and try to make changes. Because I believed very strongly that this was not a democracy at that point in time. That we had almost no people in Congress who were people of [different] racial backgrounds, for example. Certainly no women were around. And so we had a lot of work to do to get me in because I represented both of those groups. I'm a woman, I'm a woman who is a person of color. So I had to be involved in all of those things. If I was going to satisfy myself that I was doing something useful, then I would have to deal with all of these issues. I'd have to get to know people better who were in all of these things that I was talking about.

Bell: How, though, did you get from 1950, the start of your ILGWU career, to what, about 15 years later, the EEOC appointment?

Hernandez: The interesting thing was that just doing what I mentioned, being involved with the people who were in the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. So I met a lot of people. And we were in California, pushing for some changes in the law.

And the garment industry certainly needed help at that point in time. So they began to pass laws. They did it first in the states. And in the states, you got a Fair Employment Practice Commission. In New York City, the

first one in the country was there. There was a major story, about 100 young women who died in New York because they jumped out of the windows—

The Triangle Waist fire. And that got everybody interested. And the first thing that happened was New York passed the Fair Employment Practice law. And when I came to California, because New York had passed one, California began to move to get one passed.

And again, we brought people from all kinds of areas, not just the unions, but the people who were concerned about health, people who were concerned about education, came together so that they actually pushed the State of California to pass one. And so when I decided that I was going to leave the ILGWU, for about a year I was traveling through seven, eight countries in South America. The State Department had given me an opportunity to come and talk about unions and what was happening in the international areas. So that was the first thing I did. And then after that, I got a call from the governor's office in California asking me if I would be interested in being on the staff of the first Fair Employment Practice Commission in California.

So I came up to San Francisco from Los Angeles to be the second person on the staff of the California Fair Employment Practice Commission. And then when we finally passed the law on the national level in 1964, I was asked to come and work for the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission when the first national law on equal opportunity was passed. I'm there and I've been invited to come now to this conference of these women who came from all over the United States to Mrs. Roosevelt's meeting.

Bell: You took activist positions, for example. And so your position in protesting the NOW slate, for instance, that had no women of color as part of that. Tell me more about that.

Hernandez: Once I left EEOC And I knew that I was gonna have to do some more work in getting women of color. Because I was not about to do something that didn't understand that this was not just women; it was about civil rights across the board for everybody. And I said we've got to do some different things. But then when we got some other people coming in, some of them had never been involved in anything like this, any kind of politics, any kind of civil unrest. They were learning for the first time. And it was the sort of power situation with them so they wanted the groups that they could work with closest. And I didn't think that's what you should do.

And so I said to the NOW people: We are not here just to get our own groups moving forward; we're here to make a change in the society as a

whole. And I said it publicly. I didn't go without saying it publicly, because I knew it had to be said publicly. That women could not think this was somehow just for some women who had the right to get in there and argue this question. This was about a huge issue that had never been addressed before.

Gay McDougall.

McDougall: When I was growing up in Atlanta, our community was, as I have said, only two steps away from slavery. Then, you know, we'd go to our friends' houses in what we called "the country," and they would only have mules rather than cars. They had outhouses rather than indoor toilets, they lived in shacks where the wallpaper was old newspaper, and poverty was everywhere.

And within my family—I had a family in which all of the women were social workers of one sort or the other. Sometimes I would go with them on home visits to see the conditions that their clients lived in. That had great impact on me. I grew up in a family where caring about others and taking steps to address terrible situations was really very important. One of my aunts worked for the YWCA, and was a field organizer for the YWCA in the '40s and '50s, going across the South, trying to form interracial clubs among young women—a precursor, really, of the Civil Rights era. All those things were a part of my upbringing. They were all swirling around me and in my mind as I thought about the kind of person that I wanted to become.

Doing the right thing had concrete form in the house I grew up in.

Judy Richardson.

Bell: I want to go back a little bit to the kinds of things that you did in terms of the—not just keeping the records, but of—I'm trying not to put words in your mouth, which I don't think I could do, but I'm trying to be more clear in my question. Connection—what contribution—back to those three years in SNCC. What would you say your biggest contribution was?

Richardson, J: I think in some ways I *helped* coordinate . . . along with others . . . there's always others around me. So yes, I *helped*. I was on the WATS line—the wide area service, the 800 line.

Bell: I remember those.

Richardson, J: When somebody called in. And there are people who remember me. I don't know why. They remember that they would call in because we had this thing where you had to call in every couple of hours so we knew that

> they were still alive and what was going on and I was able to keep calm. It's one of those things that I learned in the movement. How you keep calm when people are saying things like they just shot into the Freedom House.
>
> I would get all the information I would need to then call the FBI, depending on where that was. Before '64 there is no FBI office in Mississippi. To call the FBI and then to call John Doar at the Justice Department, and then to call SNCC's Friends of SNCC volunteers in various cities, so they could call the jail. But the main thing was to stay calm and get all of the detailed information. To ask about how many people were involved. Get all that down and disseminate that information to those who might or might not do anything with it. There was that.

Richardson did not hesitate to use her secretarial and administrative skills at a time when women were questioning what some considered the menial roles to which women were routinely relegated. She saw her role not only as one of communications but also as providing critical linkages to those in the field.

Richardson, J: There was a sense I think that even the secretarial skills were helpful. I remember sitting there transcribing Prathia Hall, who was the first female [SNCC] field secretary. She'd come out of a church in—her mother and father had an evangelical church in Philly. Crazy to preach. Dr. King even said, "I don't want to follow Prathia."

> Prathia goes into Selma, Alabama. Before that, she was Assistant Project Director with Charles Sherrod in southwest Georgia, in Albany. I remember sitting in that teeny tiny little [SNCC national] office on 8-1/2 Raymond Street in Atlanta and transcribing, on those big green stencils, her speech. It was a speech I think she'd given [at a mass meeting] in Selma, Alabama. Just tears rolling down my cheeks because she was so powerful.
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> Well, I couldn't speak like that. What I *could* do was transcribe it. I had the skills to do that. The kind of things I've done since then are more related to how do you get the message out about who we were, what we did, and why we did it as young people in SNCC. But that's after, because I just couldn't speak in front of a mass meeting back then. I was afraid of public speaking.
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> A lot of it was just the skills that I had at that point and got nurtured. My writing skills get nurtured when I'm in there. So when Julian Bond is convinced to run for the House seat, that is, a new open seat in Atlanta for

the House of Representatives, the Georgia statehouse—so Charlie Cobb and Ivanhoe Donaldson become the campaign mangers because they want to test this thing about what does it mean for SNCC people to run for regular office, aside from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party, which was against the all-white Democratic party in Mississippi.

So now we're going for the seat and I run the office. I come out of Lowndes County [Alabama] and I run the office. But that's what I could do because I can administrate and I can organize that way. But I wasn't going to be speaking. It was—I had certain skills.

And when Julian gets the seat I become temporary director of communications, but it was like rolling off a log then because Julian and the communication department had a system. There was very little I had to do to get the SNCC newsletter out.

Subtheme: Strategic vision.

Kathleen Cleaver.

Cleaver: But, but that's not how it's perceived, that's what I'm trying to get at. There's different ways in which movements function as opposed to a military, a corporation, a government. Okay, the leadership, the kind of leadership notions that most people have come from corporate structures. Military, states, corporations. Social justice activism does not use that structure, and social justice activism doesn't use the kind of people who are leaders in those contexts, which means that when you say "leadership" that that's all nice, well, and good. But civil rights are the rights of citizens, so if you're a citizen you have these rights. So that was of that whole dynamic, okay? Well, we are second-class citizens, so we are citizens, but we're not really citizens like the other people. So we don't really have the rights, so therefore we want to get our civil rights.

It's kind of old fashion. I mean 1940s, 1950s. By the '60s we were calling for liberation. This is different. That means we are acknowledging the lack of rights is a form of imperial power or community domination or however you want to say it, we were using concepts that were produced by the post-World War II revolution for independence and self-determination in the colonial world.

So it's a time in which the old 19th century imperial world is deteriorating and it's being replaced with a different world and the Vietnam War is right in the crux of all of this. The Vietnam War, I call it proxy war, Soviets v. United States. The communist world fighting the capitalist world. Although they all want to say it's about freedom. So that's a time in which

> our movement escalated and it went from civil rights to black power very quickly.
>
> And from black power to black liberation very quickly. And so that's a period of revolutionary change that very few people in this country anticipated, you know. Americans don't anticipate revolution, they seek stability. Don't have it, but they seek it.

Myrlie Evers. Evers' references to her husband Medgar put both of their lives in context. They both knew that their lives were in danger, and they made the decision to persevere in spite of the danger. She referred to their heroic sacrifice as a kind of liberation. Evers characterized women's struggle to be recognized as a contribution to the struggle for civil and human rights. She recalled an encounter with the indomitable Fannie Lou Hamer, recounting how the two of them were able to challenge each other and eventually reconcile their very strong and different opinions on black men's support of black women.

Evers: He knew the price that he would have to pay. He still stepped up and did it. He is free and there's hope for everyone else in that fire. . . . And it's marvelous that—that—that—that I had this vision because it helped to free me from that remaining hatred that I had in my heart and in my soul.

> So, here I am today, tired. Tired, but so thankful for everything that happened. How many of us have an opportunity to know what it is we want to do and feel so strongly about it that we give our all to that cause. And I think about women in the movement. Just recently, attending the March on Washington, and remembering the struggle that women had, and how hard they fought to be a part of that program; to be recognized because we were still being pushed back not only by society, but by our own male counterparts.
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> Had it not been for Dorothy Height, I'm not sure that a woman would have been on there [the program] at all or that the march would have been what it was. But we don't get credit for everything that we do. She was the mother. She told the men, "Stop fighting amongst yourselves. Martin Luther King will speak on that program." Because there was the effort to keep him from being on that program, they put him at the end of the program thinking that everyone would be tired and walk away. And it opened up the whole life and the movement of this man.

I think of Fannie Lou Hamer. “I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.” She and I attended a meeting, the organizing meeting of the National Women's Political Caucus in Boston. We came together. There were some 200 of us. . . . And we were debating whether we should support men candidates, male candidates, with funds or should it be for women only.

People would get up and go to the microphone and talk; pro/con. Fannie Lou Hamer walks up to the microphone and she says, “I'm here because I'm strong.” Yes, you are. “There's not a man who ever did anything for me. I'm here on my own strength.”

That time, I couldn't take it anymore. And I was standing in line, and when my time came, I said, “What about the men who feel the same way we do about certain subject, should we neglect them? We should include them. We should be inclusive.” And I turned and I said to her wherever she was sitting, “Fannie Lou Hamer, you don't speak the truth,” and you go hear the silence in that auditorium. I said, “If it had not been for Medgar Evers who supported you, who helped you, you would not be where you are today.” And I turned around, sat down. Three years passed before she spoke to me again. And every time I saw her, I would delight in speaking to her because I knew it would make her so angry.

We finally reached the point where she said to me, “I understand where you were coming from and you were right.” And I said, “Yes, I know I was right. I'm a woman. We are not treated fairly in American society, certainly not in politics.” And I had run for two offices, then. I said, “But we cannot afford to neglect those, the males, who support us.” “Oh, yeah,” she said. And I said, “Oh, yeah.” And we embraced and that was the end of that.

But women have had such a struggle. I have been identified more as Medgar's widow than any of the other things that I have done. And there have been occasions when I have had to say, “I'm more than just a widow. I'm my own woman. I have carved out my own path with help of others, but I stand on my own as a woman.” And my husband told me, you're strong. You're bright. You can do whatever you want to do.

I still hold that near and dear now, and I think about the young women today. Many of them who could care less about the women who paved the way for the doors to be opened now. And some of them think that they've done it all by themselves, and that’s the group that I would like to just bring in and say, “Sit. Read. Listen. Learn. You didn't do it by yourselves. There were others who paved the way with blood, sweat, and tears.”

The grammar might not have been correct, no. They might have sung out of tune. They may have not dressed well. They might have been

overweight. They might not have known the latest dances. But they had that good old common sense and joy in the heart to move us forward. And I said to a group of young men in corporate America, “You know you're fighting us.” “What do you mean we were fighting you?” I said, “This competition between us, and I'm not sure either of us are winning at this point.” “I don't understand, you all just came in, and moved in, and tried to take the positions from us in corporate America.” And I said, “No, you all thought you had it, but you didn't because corporate America was playing one against the other, and you are still locked into that, momma syndrome.” “Well, what's that?” “Momma was the one, in slavery, who always had some little job. She took care of her family. That's momma.”

And I said, “And today, what do you do? You look at the pretty ones and you say, hey, hot momma. So, there's a savior and there's a sex object, and somewhere you have to kind of make those two together and not let society part us. Fighting over the crumbs that are there. We have to make the pie. We have to make the cake. We have to make the bread. And we have to work together.”

So, it's very interesting to me to see where we have come in this last 50 years, and we—I mean, everybody, but women in particular—because we're still dealing with challenges that we should not have to, but we're rising to those challenges. And just don't forget those of us who struggled to get us this far. That's my wish. My hope.

Gay McDougall.

McDougall: I remember the first time I saw the UN on television. There were all of these guys—of course they were all guys—black men in their ceremonial robes from Africa, looking proud, sitting next to these people from Sweden and they were going to make decisions all as equals. That spoke to there being another world out there—a world different from the Jim Crow Georgia. A world in which race did not make you unequal.

Diane Nash.

Bell: What would you say are the lessons that you would say to youth today from your leadership experience?

Nash: One would certainly be, “Do not depend on elected officials to make the necessary changes in society.” I think if we had waited for elected officials to desegregate lunch counters and buses and get the right to vote in the South, now 50 years later, I think we’d still be waiting. And I think that if young people, and you know, any age, if citizens don’t take the best interests of this country into their own hands and make the necessary changes, nonviolently, 50 years from now they still will not be made. And

I think one of the worst things that people have done is that they have begun to rely on elected officials to do what's necessary. And they're not gonna do it.

Bell: Lesson one. Do you have another lesson you would impart?

Nash: Nonviolence is a very powerful way to make social change without killing and maiming your fellow human being." I think that if violence—well, usually when, or often, when people engage in violence their real intention is to improve things, and you know, make a better society. And if that worked, with all the violence that's been used in the last several centuries even, we would be living in utopia. But violence tends to increase the problems rather than to solve them. And I think there probably was no greater invention during the 20th century than Gandhi's invention of how to really wage warfare and change society using nonviolence. I'm surprised that with the degree of success that we had in the '60s and the relatively few casualties, and even one casualty is far too many.

Bell: Yes.

Nash: But comparing the number of casualties that we had in the nonviolent movement to the number of casualties that you have in violent attempts at social change, I really would think that people would be wise to study nonviolence, and use it.

Bell: Okay.

Nash: It's more efficient than just about anything I can think of.

Gloria Richardson. Richardson carved out a niche as an unrelenting and militant advocate. While she believed in voting and agitating for basic things like stoplights and community services, she sought and fought bigger battles. She wanted to support the national movement and the student protesters. She saw an opportunity to help them because of the proximity of Cambridge, Maryland to Washington, DC.

Richardson, G: So that's how the [Cambridge] Nonviolent Action Committee started. And because we weren't involved in politics, our thing was to create enough chaos to attract Washington, see, because we were close to Washington and because the President was running around Europe talking about this country's democratic ideals.

> We then decided that we would do—no matter how many or how few of people—we would do the picketing every day in the march or rallies and march. . . . So by the time Robert Kennedy got involved, I think the first thing he said to me was, "You know that town is broke." And my response was I really didn't care because we [in CNAC] were poor to start out with.

Speaking of the local, indigenous nature of the Cambridge Movement, she recalled,

Richardson, G: It wasn't, like, a place where people were moving in and out. People were still there, the grandparents, the great-grandparents. Whether they were—whatever their socioeconomic or religious or whatever their background was, they had been there for—ever since, I guess, they were children, for seven or eight generations.

> The committee was from every ward of the town whatever their religion or whatever—I guess there was about 12 different neighborhoods. The person at that neighborhood felt close to and would go to the problems. So actually, the so-called Executive Board knew the people, and the people knew them. And so that made a two-way conversation going on that came out in our meetings and what people were ready and able to do or wanted to do—so that's, I think, the unity that developed and held.

Richardson talked about how she cast her lot with the total black community and did not set herself apart as one with privilege or prestige.

Richardson, G: We went down to the City Council, and one of the men said to me, "Well, why are you here? You don't live in a house whose roof is leaking. You've been to school."

In response, she let the Council know that the committee was representative of the community and of people who had problems.

Richardson, G: And they didn't want to hear that, so the next time we went, we just took everybody, 10 to 12 people, down there so that they would not at least be able to say well, that's not happening to you.

> And then—and even in our small committee meetings—and we held them in my father's drugstore. But if somebody on the street wanted to come in and listen, they could because it wasn't any secret. They could disagree or whatever, and I think we were lucky because sometimes we just would meet among ourselves, which usually gave us a Plan A and a Plan B.

> So if you started out on the streets with what the consensus was and it wasn't working, you could switch to get—our community kind of knew that. So it kept us from making really horrible mistakes.

Judy Richardson. Richardson was given an honorary degree from her college—an honor that both pleased and surprised her.

> Richardson, J: In preparation for my speaking there, along with other panelists from Hands [*Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*], I said, "Let me do some research."

From her research, Richardson remembered that she had done a residential freedom school.

> Richardson, J: I came up with this idea, based on Charlie Cobb's coming up with an idea for freedom school, during the 1968 Freedom Summer. Then I decided I want to do something—and this was after we'd gone through Mississippi's Freedom Summer. I'd been in Mississippi the summer of 1964. Lowndes County 1965 and Selma in 1965 and then southwest Georgia also in '65. At some point all of this gets kind of conflated—but sometime in the summer of 1965—because I leave in '66—I and others in SNCC organize this residential freedom school.
>
> My idea was that the young people from the Southern movement who were still hopeful and still understood that they could make change could get together with Northern kids who understood that the North was just "up South" and who needed to be infected with this sense of "You can change this stuff." So if you got these two groups of young people together then the reality of what racism really was, and how national it was, would come to the Southern kids. And the Southern kids would give the sense of "You can do something about this."
>
> We had kids from Cambridge, Maryland and a couple of other places in the South. We did the first session in Chicago with some of the guys from the projects in Chicago, who were recruited by the director of Friends of SNCC there, and then we moved down and did just a week in Cordell, Georgia, in southwest Georgia.

In response to my question about whom she would consider leaders and why, Richardson responded:

Richardson, J: Okay, that's right. I'm thinking of Jo Ann Robinson and Mary Fair Burks, but that's right. As opposed to them, who are co-chairs of the Women's Political Council? Yes, I would consider Georgia Gilmore a leader. Yes.

Bell: Why?

Richardson, J: Because she understood a responsibility to herself and her community and she did something about it. She stepped out and she did something about it, even knowing she could be fired, her house could be shot into, and she did something about it. Yes, I would say she was a leader in her community.

Bell: What kind of leader—I know you described, and I don't expect you to know all the terminology that I've just spent the last few years trying to figure out, but if we were going to say what kind of leader she was, could we press a little bit further to say—how would you define it?

Richardson, J: We used to think of her as a local leader. She was a local leader who accepted this responsibility of changing things.

` I think for me, coming out of Tarrytown, New York, what surprised me was not just the courage and traditional wisdom, but the intelligence of regular black folk in the South. Could be unschooled, but an intelligence I would not have understood if I had just been in Tarrytown. It was coming through it and seeing so much of it that I acknowledged it. I had to acknowledge it. I said these people are some smart people. It was amazing. Strategically and making us think differently about things, that was surprising.

Now in terms of legacy, I think it is a sense that we didn't just change things for black folks. When you hear the SNCC speech that now-Congressman John Lewis gives—he was our chairman then, so he delivered the SNCC speech that many SNCC folks worked on. So at The March on Washington in 1963, yes Dr. King did this amazing speech, but also the SNCC speech is amazing too—even after they forced us to take out some stuff. I wasn't on staff there yet. I was there, but I wasn't on staff.

The SNCC speech questions the value of the proposed 1964 civil rights bill. Which was also what the March on Washington was organized to support. The SNCC speech opens with, "What is there in this bill that will help a maid making $2.00 a day in the home of a family making $70,000 a year?" Now the SNCC speech doesn't say "a black maid," or "a Negro maid" at that time. It's saying "a maid," because always we understood the whole income disparity included poor white people.

> Now poor white people may not have understood that connection that we had, but we understood it. So for example, with affirmative action, we open up the door for lots of different kinds of people. It's not just Latinos and Asian Americans who come in. So when the Stanford study of a few years ago confirmed that it is white women who most benefited from affirmative action, I'm thinking, "Well, somebody needs to tell them."

Subtheme: Diligence.

Myrlie Evers. Myrlie Evers ran for chairmanship of the national NAACP with the urging of her husband Walter Williams, who was at the time dying of prostrate cancer. She recalled the dual difficulties of running for a hotly contested office while also taking care of her dying husband. She also spoke about reconciling the memories of the two men in her life, calling herself "twice blessed."

Evers: When the NAACP asked me to run for the chairmanship, I said, "No, I can't because I'm the caregiver for Walter." He was dying of prostate cancer. He told me—and I'm fast-forwarding—he told me, "This is the last thing I will ask you to do for me. You run and you win." I said, "Yes." And the day that I left to go to—I think it was—it was February—in New York to the annual meeting, we embraced. And I told him, "Don't you go anywhere until I get back." And he said, "I'll try. I'll try." And during those few days that I was in New York, and calling back and forth, and talking to the hospice representatives and nurses, they said, "Make your time short."

> I waited until the day after my election and I called home, and at that point, he couldn't talk. And I said, "I'm—I'm on my way. I'm on my way." That plane could not move fast enough for me to get home to this man who was my friend, who admired Medgar, who had been so good to my children, Pop Pop. And when I finally got there, he couldn't talk but he could motion with his eyes. And he lifted his feeble hand and tried to make a fist because I had won and he knew that. And I got in bed with him, and I held him. Walter got what he wanted. He said he wanted to die at home in his bed with me next to him and singing to him. And that's exactly what happened and I'm so thankful that I was able to do that.
>
> I still—people ask me about the name. Well, are you Evers-Williams? Or Evers or whatnot? And I—I said, "Both." But I keep Evers because of my love and respect for my hero. I don't want the public to ever forget that man. There will be a time, and maybe it's coming up now, where I will write about him, about Walter, and the work that he did, and the

Longshoremen's union, and breaking down barriers there, and the kind of relationship that we had. So, I sit here twice blessed. I sit here saying that women have such endurance. I sit here saying that we see far beyond what an ordinary view of life would be, and we never give up on living, and we never give up on positive change. And that's a part of the responsibility that all of us have. So, it's like, go for it.

Subtheme: Teaching others.

Leah Chase.

Chase: No, I'm grateful for what you're doing because you know, young people have to read these things, and they're—and I tell them all the time. Oh, they gonna march on Martin Luther King's birthday, they gonna celebrate, and they gonna dance, and they—I said, "But you forgot one thing, Martin Luther King died for you to work."

"He died for you to get good pay for your work. Now you're getting good pay for your work. We're paying the dishwasher $10.00, $10.50 an hour. So you gettin' fair pay for your work. So please work." That, to me, is how I do in honor of King, in honor Malcolm X, in honor of Medgar Evers. Work. Do for others. That's what those people died for.

Chase: And I don't know how in the world they did what they did. And that's three women that I truly admire. [Coretta Scott King, Myrlie Evers, and Betty Shabazz] They got women who did things, Dorothy Height and all these women, but these three women who just—just did what they had to do.

They were amazing. . . . I don't know how you get that much courage. I don't know. I just don't know how they did it, but they did. All three of them did. I saw Myrlie at the President's Inauguration—oh, I was so proud. She looked so beautiful. She looked so beautiful.

And this—it was just unbelievable. And you see, young people—when you write these stories, young people should let that soak in and say you are what you are today because somebody else laid the groundwork for you. Somebody died for you to get this far. So you may not have to die for it, but please do something to uplift somebody else. Do something that uplifts. And I tell 'em, pick up your pants and go to work.

You do like those three women I'm talkin' about did. Move on.

Jean Fairfax.

Bell: How did you address race and sex discrimination?

Fairfax: Here's what I benefit from, what I learned from my teachers. These are not always bad people, but good people doing nothing and letting evil take root. The structure became embedded.

People tend to be wary of people who are not like them. We need to have this political discussion and support education.

Aileen Hernandez.

Hernandez: Very few women were in Congress in those days. Very few women were at the state level in politics, too. So we had to get them to think, "I can go into politics."

Bell: How did you do that?

Hernandez: We called conferences. We had conferences over and over again. We had about four or five African American committees that we put together here in California because it was very important to do that. Most of the women were not getting involved. And the people of color who were getting involved were mostly men. The women were not out there. So we began to put them together out there. We started calling them all kinds of things. With the first one we set up was something called "Black Women Stirring the Waters." And we used one of the old women who had been early on the issue of equal opportunity. And guess who it was? Sojourner Truth.

We used Sojourner Truth as our person at that point in time. And we had our first thing that we put out, we had this beautiful picture of Sojourner Truth with the quotes that she made when she was dealing with the women's issue as a very few small, black group of women who were working on the things that were being done by the suffragists at that point in time. So we connected the Suffragist Movement with what we were now doing on the economic level and brought the two things together. And she was our person that we selected because she had said things that we could easily get out and have women say, "Sure, I can do that. I can be part of it. I'm a citizen of the United States and I ought to be able to do this."

Bell: Yes. But I guess I'm trying to just distinguish, just for a minute. But some of those, you took a leadership role in raising the issue, framing it, bringing people together.

Hernandez: One of the reasons I think—I was not the only one that did that. Because we kept finding the people who would work on that, the understanding that—don't assume that everybody is going to be understanding why we are doing this and how we are doing this. We are going to have to do a

little education at this point in time, and we're going to have to do for a lot of women who have never been invited into politics at the high levels. We have to tell them that you should be in there, because that's where the decisions are made. And it worked. It was amazing to me that it worked. But it was because we had all of these things happening at the same time.

I was working at the Fair Employment Practice Commission at that time, and I did training of the youngsters that went into the marches that were going on in the South. I couldn't go to the South because I was working here and I couldn't get away. I needed to stay here and work and earn my money. But what we did was what we could do.

Hernandez discussed training people for civil rights marches and the many roles of women as educators.

Hernandez: And we trained a lot of the people who, from the West, went all the way to the East to march in all those marches. And they got trained and we had to train some of them about you don't think for a minute that these people in the East don't know what this is all about. Don't go and say, "I'm from California and I know more than you do," because you don't. You don't know what it's like to be there. So when you go there, you're gonna dress in the best kind of way you can, you're gonna be polite to everybody, and you are changing the world by doing this. And a lot of people did go on that basis.

And a number of them really never came back because some of them died in some of those marches. As you recall, there was some violence as they went along. So this was part of it. And I think women are educators in a lot of ways because that's what they have been trained to do. Whether it's an actual program or not, they're expected to have a major part with the children in their families, making sure they get educated along the way. I can remember my mother having me come out to entertain the friends who came over, and she had taught me some kind of poet stuff.

And one of the poetries that she taught me was "When I was three years old, my mother bought me a petticoat all trimmed in gold. A penny in my pocket, a dolly in my hand. Ain't I cute in my bathing suit?" And then I would be shoved back into my bedroom because I had entertained enough. But I got used to women being part of the ways that you learned. Your father usually had to go to work and didn't always have time to spend on these issues, even though they loved their children just like everybody else. But they had other things to do. And I knew that women could do things. I knew that my mother, who actually worked at home—she never went into the industry until the war.

And my brother was in the war at that point, so she went into the industry at that point because she was a good seamstress. And she did some work during the war when my brother was in the Pacific in a segregated military thing.

Bell: I'm going to ask you two questions together, and they're not totally separate. But how would you like to be remembered? And what would you want to say to younger people today of the lessons that you've learned that you want to—that you would feel would be guidance for them?

Hernandez: How would I like to be remembered? I'm not sure that I care whether I'm remembered, but I would like to think for myself that what I did during my life is useful in terms of what I had been brought up to believe our country needed to do to change. And part of it was that I wanted to be part of the changes. I wanted to be sure that I was out there doing whatever I could do. And to try new ways of getting things done, which was the other thing I wanted to try to do anyway. For example, we put together one organization, which was put together for women of color.

Hernandez discussed how to expand leadership by teaching others to work with each other and to take risks.

Hernandez: And one of the things we did in that was to find a new way to come up with leadership. Because what we found was there would be one person up there doing everything, and everybody else was sitting back while that person was doing everything, and being nice but not necessarily doing anything beyond being nice.

Hernandez: So I figured, and so did other people who were working with me at that point in time, that we needed to broaden the group. We couldn't have the same people just doing it all the time; they would be falling down and not being able to get done because there was so much to do. So we said we've got to build more leadership, there's no question of it. And so what we came up with in this one was we decided that we would change the way we organized that group. And the way we organized it was to say that we would have leadership in that group, we would have leadership change every quarter.

So every three months, you would stop having the same person who was the president or the vice president or the treasurer, and new people had to come in. And those new people would have three months again to do what they would do. And people said that's crazy, they won't know how to do this. And I said how much trouble can they do in three months? But they will learn one thing: that if you're going to do this, you should be in

leadership. Because no one person can do this. We have to build the leadership. And people came in and took on this approach.

And we had some people who had come in and they were so quiet, you would hardly see them. By the time the three months was over, they had learned a lot. And they had learned a lot about how you do this; that you've got to work at it. You can't sit back and watch the person who was "the leader" doing it all because we have to constantly have leadership. And we really saw women change magically. They would come in and they wouldn't know how to do this, and they wouldn't know how to do this. And then they said, "Well, suppose they do something stupid?" I said, "How much stupid can you do in three months?"

But if you show them that leadership really means that you've got to do something, they're gonna change. And they did. So we built a whole lot of new leaders who came in, a lot of new, young women, a lot of older women who hadn't been asked to do anything except in the church—and that was the only place that they were gonna do anything. We got them to come in and they learned how to be politicians, they learned how elections were put together, they learned how to run a meeting, they learned how to take a chance on doing something that they had never done before and watch it work.

And we learned how to work with each other. We put on a conference in San Francisco—well, we did it in Berkeley, but it was in the Bay Area that we did this. We pulled these groups of women from all over the place that we had gotten leadership from, and we decided on a conference to look at issues that we needed to talk about. And we did that in 1982. We had over 500 women who came to that conference over in Berkeley.

And out of that came the next day 32 separate what you would call meeting groups on all kinds of issues. They picked out the issues they wanted, came and talked with each other, and came up with policies that have gotten out into a whole lot of other places, now. They don't need me anymore. . . . I love to see the young people coming in and being able to pick up and keep moving forward. And learning that it's not about you and it's not about me, but it is about a much bigger issue than that.

Judy Richardson.

Bell: When I think of your role at Drum and Spear it seemed to me that there was some—that there was shared leadership. You talk about the—in some of the things I've read about you, you have tentative opinions about your own leadership, while you're eager to give credit to others, for example Ella Baker.

I guess I was trying to tease out things. There are mentions of you in several books. It seems to me that people value your analysis, your opinion of things, of events that happened and other people's involvement in the movement. So the question I would have is one, do you think that's a correct assessment, and two, why would you think that would be the case?

Richardson focused not on her role, but that of Ella Baker.

Richardson, J: Ella Baker—I'm so glad you mentioned Ella Baker. She was amazing. . . .We went up to visit her in Harlem before she died. And I said, you know, "Great, but she's not going to know me from Eve." They said, "Of course she does."

I don't know whether she did or not. But Miss Baker, I watched how she moved, and Miss Baker was like—first of all, she always wanted to know who are your people? And part of that was—and I saw her do that in meetings. Part of that was she wanted to know what connections you had. What is your community? How were you raised?

Bell: Would you consider her a leader?

Richardson, J: Oh, absolutely.

Bell: How would you describe her leadership skills?

Richardson, J: Miss Baker was kind of a behind-the-scenes leader, unless she saw things going wrong, in which case she would enter the discussion. So, for example, I have notes from a staff meeting—about two or three staff meetings—that I took for the Atlanta staff. Miss Baker is in those. The reason I got them was because Joann Grant was doing the film on Miss Baker.

In 1994 Joann goes into the King Center papers, which include some of the SNCC papers, and sees these Atlanta staff meetings with Miss Baker in them, but they're in shorthand because, of course, I took them in shorthand. So I have to transcribe them for her. That's how I got a copy.

Richardson, J: So Miss Baker steps in and says to the person directing SNCC's Atlanta Project, which was working with the young people . . . they're working with high school kids . . . She says always make sure—she says to the SNCC people who are doing this—she asked—do the parents always know when their kids are going into jail? You have got to make sure that you contact the parents so they have a relationship with you.

> So yeah, she would come in, in the same way she kept the group together when they were about to split in 1961 with the direct action people separating from the voter registration people. "You can do both of these things." It's after a few days of meetings and SNCC about to break apart. She helps to get this compromise together. So she would step in, but only if something major was going really wrong that she didn't think the young people of SNCC would correct themselves.

Summary

The findings in this chapter, together with the literature review, identify leadership traits and styles of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. The literature review concentrated on historical women; that is, women, who because of the time period of the Civil Rights Movement, are no longer living. The findings in this chapter—from interviews with nine women conducted during the last two years—are illustrative of many of the leadership traits and styles identified in the literature review, although the relatively small sample size did not fully reflect the greater diversity included in the historical overview. However, each of the interviews provides rich information on the experiences of African American women leaders, deepening our understanding of the individual women and their contributions; each is unique, but also presents characteristics representative of other women.

These African American women leaders used vision, grit, and fierce intelligence to take on tremendous challenges and develop leadership skills that fueled the Civil Rights Movement. They are history makers and transformative figures. Their actions helped to make America a more democratic and representative country.

Taken together, the themes that emerged from the interviews express the commitments not only of these nine women but also of many other African American women leaders, whether acting visibly or behind the scenes. The major themes—authenticity, courage, and purpose—forge a leadership paradigm of great significance and inspiration. African American

women leaders persisted in the face of discrimination based on race, sex, and class, including sometimes-brutal manifestations of that discrimination, overcoming substantial barriers. They survived dehumanizing conditions with their humanity in tact, holding fast to basic human emotions of joy and hope.

Whether demonstrating self-reflection, anger, disappointment, doubt, or frustration, all of these women knew that their journeys were not theirs alone, but also those of other African Americans. The knowledge of this shared struggle bolstered their courage and helped define their sense of purpose. This knowledge is the essence of their leadership. They had no roadmaps; they made the road by walking. These African American women leaders' sacrifices, their experiences, and the richness of their lives form a leadership legacy that challenges and widens our understanding of leadership.

Discussion and Future Research

I seek to honor the lives and contributions of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement. My research acknowledges and builds upon the work of a number of scholars (e.g., J. M. Burns, Collins, Couto, Greenleaf, Heifetz, Hine, Payne, Robnett, Walters, and others), while reinforcing a leadership focus grounded in the leadership literature. The purpose of this study is to recognize and lift up the voices of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

The history of blacks in America is one of survival, courage, and adaptation. Acts of defiance and resistance by black people have occurred throughout the history of the nation. The Civil Rights Movement developed out of this tradition of activism. The period of the Civil Rights Movement was a time of rapid change in which American blacks and those supporting their fight for justice became motivated and energized and created a mass movement. African American leaders both emerged from communities and were propelled by those communities to take leadership positions. Examples of those emergent leaders were Fannie Lou Hamer of rural Mississippi and Daisy Bates of Little Rock, Arkansas. Examples of those called to service were Charlayne Hunter of Atlanta and Coretta Scott King of Atlanta and Montgomery. Martin Luther King Jr. is an example of someone who was not only called to serve his community, but also an exemplary servant leader. Reflecting on service, he said,

> Everybody can be great because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love. (King, 1968, para. 34)

With the passage of time since the Civil Rights Movement, there are those who would deny the reality and brutality of those turbulent times. In the Civil Rights Movement, black people, ever hopeful, challenged the country to live up to its democratic ideals and pressed for their rights to live as first-class members of this society. Their basic human longings for equal

treatment and opportunity were met by violent resistance, particularly in the South, as well as legal maneuverings throughout the United States. All this resistance was aimed at maintaining the status quo—a system undergirded by white supremacy. Whites who held on to the old system were perplexed at best and exhibited behavior that ranged from resistant to terroristic. In looking at pictures of lynchings and burnings, I wonder what happened to the perpetrators, their forebears, and their heirs, who witnessed atrocities and whose complicity allowed those atrocities to occur. America has not come to terms with our racist past, never had a powerful commission on race and reconciliation like post-apartheid South Africa, and never seriously considered compensating the stolen labors of generations of black people. We must confront our past to secure an equitable future.

Fannie Lou Hamer challenged the 1964 Democratic National Convention to understand the shameful legacy of slavery and segregation—typified by the denial of voting and other rights to black Americans—and to reject seating the all-white Mississippi delegation, a testament to that state and our country's racist past. She proclaimed, "If the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America" (Perlstein, 2002, p. 256). A sharecropper denied formal education due to her race and class, Hamer possessed a deep understanding of America's greatest paradox—the contradiction between the American ideals of freedom and democracy and the brutal reality of chattel slavery and Jim Crow laws. Her testimony was so powerful that President Johnson hurriedly called a sham press conference at the White House to distract the media from carrying her remarks live. Reporters, like other Americans, were transfixed by Hamer's eloquent and passionate call for justice. Her leadership within the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party inspired me to investigate her leadership experiences and those of other black women in the Civil Rights Movement.

My research questions grew out of wanting to explore the characteristics of African American women leaders and the choices they made. The fundamental questions were

- What are the leadership experiences of African American women in the Civil Rights Movement?
- What were their motivations to become leaders?
- What leadership lessons can we learn from their lives?

My questions reflected the commitments of African American political scientist Ronald Walters (2007), who critiqued the status of leadership studies, suggesting intervention "to let the real experiences of blacks determine the shape of the models," an approach that would "serve as a critique to the existing literature and add a certain richness to it from the perspective of a cultural community" (p. 161).

I conducted extensive research on the above-mentioned topics throughout the course of my doctoral studies. Sources included academic databases; academic and trade press books, including memoirs and biographies; articles; and online sources. I have had the privilege of meeting and knowing many women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement—experiences too numerous to cite, but which informed my background and thinking on this subject. Additionally, personal conversations with historians, sociologists, educators, civil rights lawyers, and professors who were active in the Movement helped inform my understanding of the Movement.

Though the term leadership was not always used explicitly, a review of the literature revealed the leadership traits and experiences of African American women. The literature in this area presents several challenges, as discussed earlier in this study. The newness of the field presents a challenge, as does the fact that women and African Americans were not treated as

equal to white males—African American women leaders had to overcome two specific and potentially debilitating societal conditions, as women and African Americans.

The most fascinating aspect of this research is that I was able to interview nine remarkable women, whose leadership in the Civil Rights Movement helped shape American history. These women are thoughtful and articulate. Despite being well-known, whether only within the civil rights community or more broadly, they treated with respect my scholarly approach to their lives and work. They generously offered insights and understandings about their experiences, some of which were not revealed before this study.

Interviewing these nine remarkable women felt like a sacred trust: that is, I was entrusted to get it right and to tell their stories in a way that is honest and authentic—true to them, and meaningful for the reader. Though the women's lives are complex, the themes identified in the preceding chapter allow an ordering and hierarchy that captures the essence of their leadership contributions. Reducing the complexities of their experiences into three themes was difficult but necessary in order to compare and contrast their narratives to make meaning of what they told me. The three themes are authenticity, courage, and purpose. The most telling and overarching theme is authenticity. The particulars of these women's lives evoke universal truths about the human condition and the longing for freedom and justice. Their courage is no less than amazing, sustained by their sense of purpose.

The interviews I conducted with the nine participants have become the heart of this dissertation. The women's first-hand accounts provided a fascinating look at race and class—sometimes subtly and sometimes more directly—during the Civil Rights Movement, as well as the history leading to the Movement and its lasting impact on their lives and the United States. Some might eschew the reference, but for me the biblical story of Esther resonates. The

scripture says, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14). The overall leadership lesson I would highlight is that perilous times require heroic actions.

The women I interviewed did not set out to be heroes or martyrs. They are quiet, rational, level-headed, and sanguine. Their lives were forged in the crucible of struggle. They responded to the call for service and “bore their battles in the heat of the day.” Their experiences were rich and varied, all leading to a portrait of these African American women as leaders who reflected themes in the major leadership literature, but also contributed innovations and adaptations that expand our knowledge of what it means to be a leader. Chef and restaurateur Leah Chase’s comment that “We changed the course of history over a bowl of gumbo” speaks volumes.

African American leaders were able to hold in their hearts and minds the brutality of slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation, while forging ahead with hope, determination, resiliency, and vision. This study, however, is restricted to African American women leaders, whose very existence was near miraculous, considering the barriers they faced. These women are what Cornel West (2001) would refer to as “quality leaders.” They were products of communities—some local, some part of the African American diaspora—that nurtured them and gave them a cultural identity. Unfortunately, the lives and contributions of many African American women have been “invisible,” ignored, or not acknowledged in proportion to their contributions. This invisibility is both a reality within the black community and the society at large. Because African American men have not fared much better in the larger society, African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement tended to prioritize race over gender issues and, therefore, refrained from publicly criticizing black men.

My qualitative methodology of narrative inquiry was effective in achieving my goal of lifting up the powerful and unique voices of these African American women leaders, and allowed for an exploration that could not be accomplished with a quantitative study. However, in this chapter' s summary, I recommend both quantitative and qualitative future research. More studies and books about individual African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement would add to our knowledge about leadership and how effective leaders bring about positive change. For example, I think that each of the participants is deserving of more academic study as an individual.

Following Patricia Hill Collins (1998), I view African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement as pragmatic visionaries. Collins cites Sojourner Truth's "tradition of visionary pragmatism . . . informed by race, class and gender intersectionality, as well as pragmatic actions taken in search of freedom" (p. 240). Black women brought unique focus and perspectives to their work. Some might call it double consciousness with regard to sex and race, or triple consciousness, adding class, but no matter what terms are used, the work these women carried out was a pragmatic and necessary response to societal conditions.

The women I interviewed brought many dimensions of leadership to the struggle. Larraine Matusak's (2007) "collaborative transforming-leadership model" (p. 137), which encourages leadership at all levels, is a theme running through my research. Most of the women presented in my literature review in the second chapter and those interviewed for the findings in the fourth chapter did not become leaders by pursuing a carefully crafted career path. They sought first to support or join in the struggle for civil and voting rights. Some consciously sought leadership positions, such as Dorothy Height and Elaine Brown. Others, once involved,

recognized the obligation that leadership entails and accepted the challenge. Rosa Parks and Myrlie Evers exemplify this second path to leadership.

Transformational leadership emphasizes "motivation and morality" (Northouse, 2007, p. 176), although the approach has also been criticized (Northouse, 2007, p. 348) for not resolving the question of how one decides whose moral values should take precedence. I side with J. M. Burns (2003), who dismisses immoral leadership as demagoguery and worse. J. M. Burns observed that "Transforming leaders define public values that embrace the supreme and enduring principles of a people . . . at testing times when people confront the possibilities—and threat—of great change" (p. 19), further noting that such leaders "are the inspiration and guide to people who pursue and seek to shape change" (p. 19).

All the women I interviewed exhibited the universal moral value of respect for others. Respect manifested in many forms, including being reliable, showing up when needed, being transparent about intentions and process, and being inclusive. By enacting this value, Diane Nash and Gloria Richardson motivated and inspired others, exemplifying transformational leadership.

Diane Nash's reputation as reliable and relentlessly diligent led to her election as head of the Nashville Student Movement in 1961, where being accountable was a life or death matter for the Freedom Riders and others. Though she grew up on the Southside of Chicago, Nash joined the Southern struggle and studied at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. During our interview, she stated why and how she become involved in the freedom movement: "When I obeyed segregation rules, I felt like I was agreeing to my own inferiority . . . and I felt that . . . it was humiliating. . . . So, I started looking for an organization that was trying to do something to prevent segregation." In Nashville, she sought to empower people to take responsibility not only

for their individual lives but also as a part of a community—to build a system for change and make a transformative impact.

Gloria Richardson began her activism in support of her daughter and other young people. She recognized that her middle class upbringing and circumstances did not isolate her from the discrimination that faced black people as a group. Although supportive of civil rights activities, Richardson did not emerge as a leader until the businessman who headed the local civil rights organization asked her to take his place because he felt his job as a bail bondsman was in conflict with the task of getting demonstrators out of jail. She believes that he thought she or her family was "economically secure enough" to withstand economic reprisals. In reflecting upon her path to joining the Movement, Richardson emphasized that "the young people had done such a fantastic job." Rather than trying to control these young activists and leaders, she chose to support them as they sought to move beyond incremental change to instigate transformative change.

The adaptive work of African American women has developed a variety of approaches to leadership. In 1994, Heifetz wrote that "Adaptive work consists of the learning required to address conflicts in the values people hold, or to diminish the gap between the values" (p. 22). Amanda Sinclair (2007) cautions against the dependency that often develops between leaders and followers. Sinclair refers to Ronald Heifetz's work in recommending that "in situations of 'adaptive leadership'—where groups need to work out new ways to do organizational work . . . leaders need to find ways of not colluding with this dependency" (p. 68). Sinclair goes on to declare that "acts of leadership involve helping focus the group on overriding purposes or values, rather than telling them what the solution is" (pp. 68–69).

Adaptive leadership was exemplified by a number of the interviewees. Jean Fairfax asserts that if we are able to help catalyze a situation, we need to then "get out of the way" and allow people to develop their own approaches and support them in their realization of the goal at hand. Diane Nash's "diligence," her insistence on reliability and consistency, helped develop an environment of trust so that people could focus on solutions as well as logistical details. Judy Richardson understood the vital significance of running the SNCC telephone service—literally a lifeline for civil rights workers. When Mamie Till Bradley, the mother of slain teenager Emmett Till, expressed sympathy and love for the children of those who killed her son, that was a moment worth noting. Without using the terms, she spoke passionately and eloquently about the values of redemption and forgiveness, and of peace. These values, if heeded, are as powerful as Martin Luther King Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech. Bradley's choice to display the mutilated body of her son was a bold move of adaptive leadership. Her action forced an unblinking look at the reality of hatred and terrorism. I consider forgiveness a dynamic leadership trait, similar to nonviolence in approach, depth, motivation, and inspiration. Forgiveness, as exemplified by Bradley—as well as Martin Luther King Jr.'s and John Lewis—is assertive and positive. Those extending forgiveness exhibit personal power and moral authority.

Whether militant or relatively conciliatory, the African American women leaders I interviewed were oriented towards servant leadership. They embraced the fulfillment of work without recognition, but occasionally realized that recognition helped to foster the work. Humility was and is a defining trait of African American women social justice leaders. Thinking about humility as an aspect of African American women's leadership, I would want to see it overcome to the extent that the women become more aggressive about sharing their experiences as leaders. I believe that we benefit from their experiences and the wisdom derived from them.

I had anticipated that servant leadership would be a dominant trait, and the trait turned out to be universally applicable to the leadership styles of the women I interviewed. According to Greenleaf (2002), servant leadership refers to "leadership . . . bestowed upon a person who was by nature a servant" (p. 21). Greenleaf credited Herman Hesse's classic novel *The Journey to the East* as "the source of the idea about servant leadership" (p. 22). Introduced to Hesse's book early in my doctoral studies, I consider it a touchstone and a leitmotif. Another enduring metaphor comes from Martin Buber (1995) "All journeys have secret destinations of which the traveler is unaware" (p. 36). These women leaders accepted the responsibility of service and embraced the challenge of their unknown, uncharted journey.

Northouse (2007) calls Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership "somewhat paradoxical" (p. 348), while acknowledging its "increased popularity in recent years" (p. 348). He writes, "With its strong altruistic ethical overtones, servant leadership emphasized that leaders should be attentive to the concerns of their followers and empathize with them; they should take care of them and nurture them" (p. 348). I agree that servant leadership calls for ethical conduct—a concept I do not find paradoxical.

A major finding that I had not fully appreciated was the systemic approach that the leaders I interviewed took. For them, the Civil Rights Movement was not just one isolated event after the other, but a series of events tied to one idea or commitment. This driving force might be termed a liberation philosophy, one that focused on the present while also holding a strategic vision for the future of the black community. This liberation philosophy is a major concept discussed to some degree by all the women I interviewed.

The liberation philosophy that I invoke is inspired by the concept of liberation theology—some slave masters in America invoked religion as an insidious means to control their

slaves, but, in Payne's (2007) words, slaves took "what was intended to be a theology of accommodation and fashion[ed] from it a theology of liberation" (p. 257). Payne further notes that slaves and their descendants saw emancipation as a "fulfillment of [biblical] prophecy" (p. 256) for freedom. Of course, religious heritage or faith-based reasons for supporting civil and human rights were not universal. However, this liberation heritage undergirded the Civil Rights Movement, whose leaders, advocates, and activists looked beyond the shackles imposed on black Americans by adherents to systemic white supremacy.

Each of the nine women I interviewed embodied the three main themes presented in my findings: authenticity, courage, and purpose.

In being true to themselves, the women leaders I interviewed developed confidence and a sense of self-worth that allowed them to continue lifelong development as authentic individuals. Early grounding in black culture and recognition of their cultural heritage helped them develop coping mechanisms that grounded them as they participated in the Civil Rights Movement and continued to contribute to society after the Movement. Their individual growth and dedication to improving the lots of black people were logical and natural consequences of their personal philosophy.

The courage these women manifested did not preclude fear. They grappled with known dangers and demonstrated remarkable courage in accepting the uncertain and potentially dangerous consequences of their leadership. Myrlie Evers, whose family home was firebombed, lived with the threat of bombing and assassination. Diane Nash recounts that the freedom riders made their last wills and testaments prior to their actions. Kathleen Cleaver was targeted by the FBI. Jean Fairfax drove through hostile territory to advise people of their rights, and Judy

Richardson and SNCC were constantly under attack and threat of attack. Despite the danger, these leaders persevered.

The sense of purpose these women demonstrated derived from their authenticity and was bolstered by their courage. Each wanted to contribute to the African American freedom struggle and sought her own particular path to achieve her goals, seeking preparation through education and other experiences to be effective in the Movement. These women's diligence and dedication to community writ large were catalysts in their development of strategic vision. Each wanted to make her actions meaningful and effective.

This purpose-driven approach provided the ethical impetus and humility characteristic of servant leadership. Servant leaders, guided by a liberation philosophy to strategically concentrate on projected outcomes, learn to engage in adaptive leadership, which can lead to transformational leadership. This trajectory is reflected in the development of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement.

Looking Back: Continuing the Journey

The nine women I interviewed have recognized and analyzed the role of race in American society throughout their lives. These women leaders set out to make a difference, not to seek fame or fortune. All are intellectually curious and dedicated to education, whether formal or informal. They all have formidable personalities and are always building upon their impressive history and accomplishments. Their involvement in the Civil Rights Movement may have been their earliest concentrated work in confronting the "American Dilemma," but their lives since have been testaments to their commitment to community and their strategic vision. This section briefly reviews each woman's leadership since the Civil Rights Movement, including some information from the Literature Review and interviews for context.

Leah Chase. Leah Chase set out to learn not only how to cook but to elevate restaurant service for black people. She saw her hospitality as a community service. She learned as she went along, making some mistakes in the process, but moving forward at all times. After reluctantly accepting a suggestion that she take an interest in African American art, Chase became a leading collector. Her art became a part of her restaurant and both became integral to the cultural life of first black New Orleans, then the city. Despite her modesty, she has acknowledged that by hosting meetings of other civil rights leaders in segregated New Orleans, she "helped to change the world over a bowl of gumbo." She has remained a beloved part of her community, rebuilding her restaurant after it was almost totally destroyed by Hurricane Katrina. She could have lived elsewhere, but she chose to live in a trailer near her restaurant to oversee the rebuild and play a part in the revitalization of her community.

Kathleen Cleaver. Kathleen Cleaver learned early on to fight white supremacy. Her extraordinary family taught her to excel, to question authority, to take risks, and to take responsibility for her own actions. Although Cleaver was involved with SNCC, her involvement with the Black Panthers brought her notoriety. She later became a graduate of Yale Law School, a clerk for a federal judge, and a law school professor—all the while remaining true to her questioning nature.

Myrlie Evers. Myrlie Evers stayed in Mississippi for a year after the assassination of her husband, then moved to California to raise their three children outside of Mississippi's toxic environment. She went back to college, graduating from Pomona College, and became a corporate executive. Evers maintained her commitment to civil rights and public service, becoming the first black woman to serve on the Los Angeles Board of Public Works.

Evers certainly had earned the right to sit on her laurels, but she ran for and won a hard-fought election as the chair of the NAACP in 1995, serving in that position until 1998. This was a bittersweet time, since her second husband, Walter Williams, was dying. Always supportive of her and her children, he encouraged her to run and lived long enough to see her installed. She also vigilantly pursued justice in the murder of her husband, a three-decade commitment that ended when the killer, whose early trials had resulted in hung juries, was convicted in 1994.

Evers, who has written her autobiography and a book about Medgar Evers, delivered the invocation at the second inauguration of President Barack Obama in 2013.

Jean Fairfax. Jean Fairfax has continued to be a respected voice for social justice, her preferred description of her commitments, which include civil, women's, and human rights. Fairfax, who served as Dean of Women at Kentucky State College and Tuskegee Institute prior to her involvement in the Civil Rights Movement, continues a lifelong commitment to education and educational reform, and is credited with expanding the national school lunch program. Along with her older and now deceased sister, Betty, she became a leader in education and philanthropy. They used an inheritance from their parents to start a foundation and committed themselves to the post-high school education of a class of 90 students in their adopted town of Phoenix, Arizona.

Upon the death of Betty Fairfax, *The Arizona Republic* offered the following description of the women's philanthropy:

> Betty and Jean, then a civil-rights leader and scholar, were living out the principles of their parents: honor education and pass it on. The women fueled their philanthropy via modest living and savvy real-estate investments, rather than any hefty inheritance.
>
> Only about 10 percent of those students from 1987 enrolled in college, and while that saddened Betty, it didn't deter her. At the dedication in September 2007 of the Betty H.

> Fairfax High School . . . Betty and Jean gave the 500 freshmen the same tuition offer. (Sexton, 2010, para. 4–5)

Jean Fairfax promoted the concept of "strategic giving" as a catalyst to attract support beyond what individuals alone might be able to do. Her philanthropic efforts have garnered not only praise, but emulation, especially among black philanthropists. She and her sister demonstrated that one need not be mega-rich to be a philanthropist.

Aileen Hernandez. Aileen Hernandez is a key bridge between the movements for civil rights and women's rights. Upon hearing that I had interviewed Aileen Hernandez for this dissertation, Gloria Steinem remarked that more people should know about Aileen Hernandez and the critical role she played in the women's movement. Hernandez built on her leadership experiences as a civil rights activist at Howard University and the NAACP. After graduating from college, she moved to the West Coast to become an organizer with the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. President Lyndon Johnson appointed her to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1965, where she was the first black and only woman. Not satisfied with the Commission's lack of response to women's issues, she joined NOW as a charter member and became the second president of NOW in 1970. When interviewed recently for the *Makers* series, her profile stated that "under Hernandez' guidance, NOW organized the Strike for Equality in 1971, an event that heralded the arrival to national prominence of the women's movement" (Makers, n.d., para. 3). She was also a founding member of the Women's Political Caucus and chaired the California Women's Agenda, a coalition of 500 state organizations working to adapt the recommendations of the United Nations International Women's Conference in Beijing, China for California women. Hernandez has always been sensitive to and has led efforts to include women of color. A founder of Black Women Organized for Action in 1973, she is also a human rights leader, serving on various boards and commissions.

Gay McDougall. After becoming, in 1965, the first—and at that time the only—African American student at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia near her hometown of Atlanta, Gay McDougall amassed a number of singular accomplishments in human rights, both in the United States and abroad, most notably in South Africa. Her path to South Africa included graduation from Yale Law School and a short stint at a corporate law firm in New York City to hone her professional skills. She then worked for the National Conference of Black Lawyers (NCBL) in Washington, DC, and served as NCBL's representative to the United Nations. She left NCBL to work with the New York City Board of Corrections in the aftermath of the bloody Attica Prison riot in 1971 to help resolve the issues that instigated the riot. Always mindful of education as a way to be prepared for her challenging work, McDougall earned a Master's from the London School of Economics. She then directed the Southern Africa Project of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and was instrumental in the demonstrations that helped bring attention to and topple South African apartheid. She was married to fellow human rights lawyer John Payton until his untimely death in 2012.

McDougall's photo is often seen with Nelson Mandela as he votes for the first time in the free elections she helped oversee. She then became executive director of the International Human Rights Law Group and a law professor. In 1999, she received a MacArthur Fellowship.

Diane Nash. In an article about Diane Nash, *The Tennessean*, then and now the paper of record in Nashville, where Nash became a leader in the student protests, said, "There's still only one course of action Nash considers—the next right thing. She's precise, principled, honest to the very last word . . . her innate sense of justice is never far from the surface" (Hall, 2013, para. 7).

Nash became one of the first civil rights leaders to oppose actively the Vietnam War, taking an unauthorized trip to Hanoi. She and her then husband James Bevel reportedly influenced Martin Luther King Jr.'s opposition to the war. After her Movement days, Nash returned to her hometown of Chicago, taught in public schools, and was active in housing and welfare issues. Her pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement was depicted in the recent movie *Selma*.

Gloria Richardson (Dandridge). Following her militancy in the Cambridge Movement, Richardson sought a quieter life. She married photographer Frank Dandridge and moved to New York City where she was able to continue her commitment to community improvement by working with Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited. She retired from the New York City Department of Aging, where she worked for many years and was a member of a local union.

Judy Richardson. After her active Movement days, Judy Richardson co-founded Drum and Spear bookstore in Washington, DC and was later Associate Producer of the groundbreaking Public Broadcasting Service series *Eyes on the Prize* (Else & Vecchione, 1987).

Limitations of This Study and Future Research

This study was limited by the relatively small sample size of the interviews. A larger number of participants would have allowed more diversity in types of leaders. For example, the study is missing an interview with an indigenous, grassroots leader such as the late Fannie Lou Hamer.

Several people I wanted to interview died during my doctoral studies. Others were reluctant to relive what for them and many others were traumatic, deeply personal experiences. They lived with the consequences of fighting a system that did not want to change, that reacted in brutal, dehumanizing ways to subdue those fighting for freedom.

There are many possible avenues of future research. Because the participants in the Civil Rights Movement are aging, a quantitative study that surveys as many people as possible would help preserve history as told by its participants. A survey and analysis of existing civil rights archives would be helpful. I emphasize analysis of the various resources because of my concern that black history is always being appropriated and distorted.

Studies that focus on the intersectionality of race and gender, as well as a separate study on race, gender, and class, would add to our knowledge by illuminating the way these social categories intersect and the way they operate discretely. Further scholarly study might tackle bridging the divides that still persist. Another area of study to consider would be the impact of and resistance to "black feminism." Other aspects of the lives of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement demand exploration as well. How did the survivors not only survive, but also thrive?

In anticipating further research in this area, my major recommendation to others engaged in similar research is to respect the person interviewed. After setting up certain prompts, get out of the way of her telling her own story. Interview with as few interjections or interruptions as possible. Treat the interview as a partnership of discovery and illumination.

Finally, a discrete study of servant leadership in the Civil Rights Movement would show the concept's applicability to contemporary social issues such as criminal justice reform, media depictions of people of color, and the continuing struggle to ensure voting rights.

Epilogue, Personal Reflections

This study of African American women leaders in the Civil Rights Movement has been challenging, fascinating, and richly rewarding. A major challenge has been negotiating the balance between being an informed observer and acting as a guide to reveal the contributions and, as in the interviews, the voices of women leaders. As a participant in the Civil Rights Movement myself, I had to remain aware that my knowledge was not their knowledge and try not to impose on what they had to say. I believe that I achieved the goal of addressing my research questions and fulfilling the purpose of the study.

My contribution to the leadership literature has been to amplify the authentic voices of some remarkable women, women who changed the course of history. My work only begins to address the absence of such voices and I hope that it will inspire others to go beyond my work to bring forth more of these powerful and relevant women. They are not historical characters. They are very much contemporary figures and have things to say. We would all benefit by hearing them.

My work on this dissertation has several distinct parts: the coursework that I completed so long ago; my struggle in the face of personal challenges, or "life getting in the way"; and a fierce determination to earn my doctorate. I celebrate my evolution from a practitioner-scholar to a scholar-practitioner—a transformation that did not come easily. I continue to wrestle with the distinction, as well as the obligation and privilege of joining the ranks of scholar-practitioners. Perhaps there is a third category: a scholarly practitioner. Could I have done this journey a different way? Maybe so. But my journey has been one of my own making. I accept the reality and the responsibility.

"It was my destiny to join in a great experience" (Hesse, 2003, p. 3). These words from Herman Hesse's *The Journey to the East* aptly describe my life and my quest to earn a doctorate. Unlike Hesse's self-accuser, my grounding in African American culture and history give me strength. Through my research, my information and experience have been forged into a wisdom I used to disavow, but now embrace. I came to know the "President Leo in the servant Leo" (Hesse, 2003, p. 101). My journey has also been one of self-forgiveness. I have held fast to the tenet that has nourished and guided me, that the many "Morbio Inferiores" (Hesse, 2003, p. 37) are measures not outcomes.

I never forgot that part of my personal destiny was to be an intentional life learner with a commitment to leadership and change. Along the way, I have become more steadfast in my confidence in my ability to rise to whatever occasion greets me, although the road may be long and winding. As civil rights lawyer and Federal District Court Judge Constance Baker Motley, the first woman hired by Thurgood Marshall as part of his stellar team at the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, said, "You can't invent events. They just happen. But you have to be prepared to deal with them when they happen" (Lanker, 1989, p. 65).

What has remained vividly true over the past few years is this statement from my Antioch Ph.D. in Leadership and Change application: "This program, while looking outward for leadership and change, is also a personal gift, guiding me through a reflective process and validating my life journey." The reflection and the disciplined scholarship have helped immeasurably as I dealt with the unexpected and brutal radical right-wing assault on my husband Derrick several months after his death. As a professor at Harvard, Derrick had supported the student protests for diversity at which a young Barack Obama had spoken as the first African American editor of the Harvard Law Review. At one rally, Obama hugged Derrick and called

him “the Rosa Parks of legal education.” My husband had become the first tenured African American professor at Harvard Law School two decades earlier. The right-wing’s tortured syllogism alleged that Derrick Bell was a radical so any association with him made Obama a radical as well, with the implication that Obama was, therefore, unfit to govern. The political attacks were cynical attempts to destroy the President of the United States. We know their intent because they stated it publicly (Frank, 2012). The right-wing attacks were also on black culture and black leadership in general. Neither my mother nor the women I have studied would stand silently by while such offenses occurred, and neither did I. I had to go beyond my comfort zone and mount a public defense of my husband, giving interviews in a range of media.

The death of my husband was the single most significant event that occurred during my doctoral journey. His death followed a decade of illness, marked by hospitalizations, extensive treatment, and helping him as he struggled to hold on to his quality of life and do that which he most wanted, which was to continue teaching. His examples of courage, tenacity, faith, and love of teaching and learning are constant guideposts in my personal and academic journey and a large part of my motivation to complete my doctorate.

Against the backdrop of the closing of the flagship Antioch College, which was an unsettling surprise for me and others, I was able to introduce Derrick to Richard Couto, then an Antioch professor in the Ph.D. Program for Leadership and Change. While we were on an academic visit to the University of Pittsburgh, Dick visited us on his way to West Virginia, where he was consulting with a labor group fighting for justice. Dick was the first faculty member from Antioch Derrick had met. Dinner and discussion with Dick, a scholar of the first order, relieved any doubts Derrick had about the quality and importance of the program. Derrick later spoke at the Leadership and Change program’s Keene residency in 2008 and became a

cheerleader for me and for the Ph.D. program at Antioch. This was ironic in a couple ways: Wanting to make my own mark, I at first did not want my cohort mates to know that I was married to Derrick because I wanted to be accepted on my own merits and because, frankly, Derrick occupied a lot of psychic space in a room whether trying to or not. He and I were both growing and negotiating new aspects our relationship—such as teaching together—when I began the Antioch program. By the time he came to speak at Keene, most of my cohort mates and other students knew me and knew of him. A couple had already come across his work in their research and asked me if the Derrick Bell to whom I was married was *that* Derrick Bell. The game was over, and rightly so. We both had a wonderful time in Keene, so much that Derrick wanted to join me at the Santa Barbara residency at the end of my third year.

Unfortunately, Derrick was ill during that time. The "white water" that time was the brush fires and the concern about the air quality. Because Derrick insisted upon going to Antioch Santa Barbara if I went, I decided not to attend, given Derrick's delicate health condition at the time. I do not regret that decision, but still do regret missing the Antioch Santa Barbara experience with my cohort. I've been to Santa Barbara to visit friends but the cohort experience is unlike any other.

Even with my own occasional insecurities, the uncertainties of living in permanent white water, and occasional derailments due to illnesses and work challenges—even while "life got in the way"—I have continued to grow both as an involved human being and as a learned scholar-practitioner. My technology skills—or rather, my relative lack of them—tend to slow me down. But I've been determined to hold on to this lifelong dream. I also feel a sense of obligation to some of the women whose stories I want to share who are of advanced age. Given the time period of the Civil Rights Movement, some women who were adults in the 1950s and '60s are

now in their eighties and nineties—as was exemplified by some of the women I had the distinct privilege of interviewing. The "younger" ones, like me, are in their late sixties.

My mother remains the greatest single influence in my life; her spirit is ever-present. From my mother I learned the values, faith, and skills that have influenced my choices and approaches to leadership challenges. Her example of hard work, sacrifice, and love of learning continued to motivate and buoy me until Derrick was able to join my life, then my doctoral journey.

My mother was an adherent of the unilateral ethics perspective described by Gerri Perreault (2005)—although she would not have known to call it that. She simply said to "treat others as you would be treated." She tried to practice that ethos as a parent by being an empathetic and deep listener and supporting my developing independence. As a communications professional, I've been told that one of my greatest skills is in listening to the story of others and then being able to communicate to larger audiences.

My mother continued to believe in a better day, despite the burdens of race and sex discrimination. It must have been a constant frustration to know that no matter how good and brilliant she was that American society would try to keep her in what society considered "her place."

Although I have earned and enjoyed a successful career in my chosen field, this program has allowed me to strengthen and elevate my own voice as well as acquire knowledge to sort out social contradictions when it comes to race and gender.

Over the last twenty years, and especially since Derrick's death, I've accepted responsible leadership roles for his family as well as mine. Another family or community is composed of two generations of Derrick's law students, many of whom now look to me for at

least some of the guidance and inspiration that Derrick provided. This is a leadership role I did not anticipate or seek, but one that I have accepted. This particular development has brought me unexpected joy and catharsis; it has been transformative. In my life, I've sought to balance the need for selflessness with what I term "creative selfishness," or personal, inward-focused activities such as this program. Leadership research that I conducted in this program has helped me toward achieving balance by revealing examples of leaders of all kinds and in various stages of development. It has also prepared me to become a better leader and mentor to leaders.

In a chapter of Derrick's (Bell, 1996) *Gospel Choirs: Psalms of Survival in an Alien Land Called Home*, there is a fictional parable in which a race riot occurs in New York City. To protect themselves against a violent white mob, building owners and managers hang up signs to declare that they had gotten rid of their "nigger" problems. Derrick describes my fictional counterpart's work in the safe house where she was providing shelter and services: "As I might have expected, she was in the midst of that crowd, helping those who were hurt, hungry, and simply exhausted" (Bell, 1996, p. 139). Although this is a flattering and, I would hope, accurate, description of what I would be doing, I am absolutely certain that given the same set of circumstances this scenario is what my mother (and Derrick) would be doing—helping those who need it by putting faith to work and demonstrating leadership. This is the kind of servant leadership the women leaders I interviewed would be doing—in fact, it is what they have done. That Derrick would characterize me this way is an indelible legacy and awesome responsibility. While Derrick did not use the language of leadership, he was commenting on the nature of leadership and those who lead and facilitate change. The inscription in *Gospel Choirs* was to his mother—his greatest influence—and to me, declaring his "belief in the potential of women to save us all" (Bell, 1996, Dedication).

The life lessons from the women leaders I interviewed are consistent in their authenticity, courage, and purpose—the three main themes illuminated by my research. It was an immense honor to interview the nine participants and to hear them speak, to try to lift up their voices as leaders. No written narrative can fully capture their cadences and thought patterns, the verbal and physical windows to their personalities and souls. Much more remains to be learned from them as leaders and as human beings who came to terms with a society where they might have succumbed to anger and immobilization caused by invisibility and marginalization. I, for one, am eager to hear more. I hope that my research encourages other academic researchers to expand work in the area of civil and human rights leadership.

Back to my mother, the keeper of many secrets. She did not gossip; she did not tell tales about herself or others. I remember when John F. Kennedy ran for president and came to our hometown of Erie, Pennsylvania. Even as a high school student, I was allowed to volunteer as a "Kennedy Girl," a kind of cheerleader who met the candidate at the airport. Mom enthusiastically supported Kennedy and my work. She voted as she always did on Election Day, taking a bus a long way to do so. I casually asked for whom had she voted. She stopped her chores, looked at me, and said, "It is a secret ballot." She never confirmed to me her vote. Her pride in being able to vote and keeping her voting confidential perhaps results from her earlier life in the Deep South, were Jim Crow laws denied her the franchise.

Despite her relative poverty and her daily struggles to raise a large family and extended family, my mother found the time to be a leader in our community. My mother lived a life of grace and graciousness. On one of her many trips to visit me in Washington, DC where I was then living, I took her to see Ntozake Shange's (2010) choreopoem, *for colored girls who have considered suicide/when the rainbow is enuf*. I was worried that the impassioned, stark, and

sometimes raw language and images presented would be disturbing to her. I'd never heard her utter a vulgar word. At the time, she was about 60 years old and had not exhibited deep anger or resentment no matter what the circumstance. She sat quietly—watching, listening, and thinking. When the play ended with its famous declaration "i found god in myself/& i loved her/I loved her fiercely" (Shange, 2010, p. 63), she cried softly, said "Amen," wiped her tears, got up, and then kept going.

My mother carried on with determination; that is what the women leaders I have discussed have done and continue to do. I hear their voices, relate to their struggles, and share in their dreams. They are sources of courage, knowledge, and inspiration.

Appendix

Appendix A: A Note on Research for Photos of the Women Interviewed in My Dissertation

There was understandable interest from my dissertation committee and others in having photos of the remarkable women interviewed in my dissertation that would show them during the time of the Movement and now. My writing about their lifelong commitment to justice helped stoke this interest, which mirrored questions I received from several of the participants. Including photos was a great idea, but came up against copyright and permission issues, except for the few photos I took during several interviews. I spent over 50 hours searching for photos, even getting a major assist from Norman Dale, but finally was unable to obtain photos for everyone by the time of the publication deadline for my dissertation. Not wanting to have an uneven presentation of photos, which might raise more issues than it solved, I decided that the prudent and fair choice was not to include photos of anyone if I could not include all of them. However, photos of all the women I interviewed are available on the Internet.

An important finding from my search for photos is that many of the repositories for African American photographs, including those of the Civil Rights Movement, do not necessarily own the photos in their collections and therefore cannot grant permission to publish them. Most iconic photographs I wanted to use are owned by large media conglomerates who charge for their licensing, sometimes at rates that prohibit including them in a dissertation. Because they are news photographs, those photographed do not share in the profits. Perhaps that latter fact is a study for another day.

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