ABSTRACT

"Freedom Faith": The Civil Rights Journey of Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall

Courtney Pace Lyons, Ph.D.

Mentor: C. Douglas Weaver, Ph.D.

Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall's theology revolved around freedom faith, the belief that God wants all people to be free and equips those who work for freedom. This dissertation offers a thematic biography of Hall, paying particular attention to her activism in the Civil Rights Movement and her womanist preaching ministry, through the lens of freedom faith.

Hall first learned of freedom faith from her father, growing up in North Philadelphia. Through her training in Fellowship House and her activism with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in Southwest Georgia and Selma, Alabama, Hall's freedom faith matured. After the Movement, Hall returned North and pursued theological education at Princeton Theological Seminary, where her freedom faith culminated in womanist liberation theology.

"Freedom Faith": The Civil Rights Journey of Rev. Dr. Prathia Hall

by

Courtney Pace Lyons, B.S.C.S.E., M.Div.

A Dissertation

Approved by the Department of Religion

W.H. Bellinger, Jr., Ph.D., Chairperson

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
Baylor University in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree
of

Doctor of Philosophy

Approved by the Dissertation Committee

C. Douglas Weaver, Ph.D., Chairperson

William L. Pitts, Jr., Ph.D.

Stephen M. Sloan, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School

May 2014

J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements vi

Introduction 1
- Introduction and Purpose 1
- Historiography 5
- Outline 8

"I See Africa Rising": Prathia Hall's Early Life 10
- Introduction 10
- Early Life and Family 18
- Fellowship House 24
- Freedom Faith: To Go Or Not To Go? 40

"Living in the Face of Death": Prathia Hall in Southwest Georgia 43
- Introduction: SNCC, SCLC, and the Albany Movement 43
- Prathia Hall Joins SNCC 50
- Freedom Faith Put to Feet 73
- "We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest" 88
- Freedom Faith Matured 117

"Equality Now": Prathia Hall in Selma and Alabama 122
- Introduction 122
- The Selma, Alabama Voter Registration Project 126
- Atlanta 133
- Africa 144
- Executive Committee and Hall's Other Service to SNCC 145
- "A Bloody Mess": The Selma March 154
- Freedom Faith in Transition 163

Who Had the Dream?: Prathia Hall and the "I Have a Dream" Speech 164
- Introduction 164
- Prathia Hall the Preacher 166
- Prathia Hall the Dreamer 172
- Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech 177
- Who Had the Dream? 181
- Conclusion 191

"Black, Baptist, Preacher, Woman": Prathia Hall as Womanist Preacher 194
- Hall's Life after the Movement 194
- Hall's Womanist Preaching 206
  - Developing a Womanist Hermeneutic 208

Advocacy for Women in Ministry 216
Preaching Justice and Liberation 227
Prathia Hall's Legacy 236

Conclusion 241
Bibliography 253

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the guidance and support of so many. The generous research fellowships received from Baylor University's Institute for Oral History, the Glen Hillburn Dissertation Travel Award, the National Association of Baptist Professors of Religion aided my work tremendously. Thank you to Becky Shulda for her fabulous help in equipping me for my research interviews. I am grateful for the helpful archivists at Temple University's Urban Archive Collection who assisted me in my research of Fellowship House. Princeton Theological Seminary allowed me generous access to Prathia Hall's student records. I am also grateful to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee for opening its Fiftieth Anniversary celebration to students, which allowed me to form relationships with so many who knew Prathia Hall: Martha Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Bob Zellner, Mary King, Penny Patch, Peggy Dammond Preacely, Faith Holsaert, Sheila Michaels, Rep. John Lewis, John Perdew, Peter DeLissovoy, Charles Sherrod, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Rutha Harris, Larry Rubin, Jack Chatfield, Chuck McDew, Connie Curry, Courtland Cox, Don Harris, Charles Nesbitt, James Lawson, Joyce Ladner, Dorie Ladner, Julian Bond, Frank Smith, Betty Garman Robinson, Ivanhoe Donaldson, Danny Lyon, and Wyatt Tee Walker.

In the course of my research, I also was fortunate to locate several of Prathia Hall's dear friends, who welcomed me and offered me invaluable resources for my project: Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Daryl Ward and Vanessa Ward, Presstonia Davis Brown, and LaGretta Bjorn.

Thank you to my community of Baptist women scholars (also known as “GAs Gone Bad”) who continually remind me of the importance of women’s studies and of working together to advance social justice. I am lucky to learn from and with these sheroes: Betsy Flowers, Eileen Campbell-Reed, Karen Seat, Susan Shaw, Melody Maxwell, Mandy McMichael, Lydia Hoyle, Alyson Dickson, Delane Tew, Laine Scales, Pam Durso, Carol Holcomb, Isabel Docampo, Jann Aldredge-Clanton, and Pamela Smoot.

Baylor University is one of the best places to be a graduate student. Not only did the Graduate School support me in establishing a parental leave policy, but they have also provided funding for research and conference travel and helped me find assistantships to support myself as I finished my work. The Department of Religion has likewise offered a community of support and resources to assist me in my work. Thank you to my dissertation committee and other Baylor faculty who have guided my work along the way: Bill Pitts, Stephen Sloan, Rosalie Beck, Bruce Longenecker, Beverly Gaventa, James Sorrelle, David Whitford, and my advisor/mentor/friend, Doug Weaver.

Gratitude is also in order for my students, past and present. I am also grateful for my team at Baylor, including my wonderful assistant Roberta Shipp, and Sinda Vanderpool, who makes going to work each day feel like dreaming big with a friend.

Outside of academia, I am blessed to have a wide community of support and encouragement. After completing my comprehensive exams, I celebrated my transition to dissertation writing with a performance at the Waco Civic Theater with my good friends Becky Fox, Rachel Leigh Landry, Amanda Rose Fisher, and Joel Michaelis. As a life-long figure skater, my “skating family” – my coaches Peter and Darlene Cain and my

favorite training buddies Ashley Cain and Kathryn Cotton – has offered both support for my work and the much needed balancing effect of insisting that I stop thinking about my work when I'm on the ice. I am grateful for my Lake Shore Baptist Church faith community, particularly the spiritual guidance of my pastor, Dorisanne Cooper. And to my two best friends – Elizabeth Grasham-Reeves and Kyndall Rothaus – who have slogged, trudged, clapped, and danced with me every step of this journey, I am forever blessed beyond measure.

And finally, and most importantly, none of this work would be possible without my family. Families just don't come more supportive than mine, and I cannot thank my parents, Roger and Janyce Pace, or my grandmother, Colyne Johnson, enough for the countless ways they have been the hands and feet of Christ to me as I finished this project. Thank you to my Papa Stanley for always believing in me. And a special thank you to my son, Stanley, just for being you.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction and Purpose

This dissertation is a thematic biography of Rev. Dr. Prathia LauraAnn Hall (1940-2002), an important figure in the Civil Rights Movement as well as a model of "Freedom Faith." According to Hall, freedom faith was the belief that God created humans to be free and assists and equips those who work for freedom. Phrased more colloquially, Hall defined freedom faith as: "This sense that I'm not a nigger, I'm not a gal, not a boy. I'm God's child. It may cost me my job, it may cost me my life, but I want to be free. So I'm going to go down to the courthouse, I'm going to sign my name. I'm going to trust God to take me there…and bring me back. That's freedom faith."[1] Hall explained freedom faith as the central concept of her theology, and my thematic biography will examine her life, especially her Movement activism and preaching ministry, in light of her freedom faith and how this idea developed throughout her life.

Hall was a civil rights activist with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and became a highly significant Baptist minister. Raised in Philadelphia, she assisted her father, Rev. Berkeley Hall, in his social gospel oriented church ministry. Her father was her primary spiritual and intellectual mentor, and he shaped her initial understanding of freedom faith. Having attended predominantly white schools, Hall first experienced Jim Crow segregation at age five when traveling to Virginia to visit her grandmother, and the experience galvanized her commitment to racial justice. She was involved with Fellowship House, a Philadelphia social

[1]Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 73.

justice organization for youth and college students, where she studied the philosophy of non-violence and social justice, which further developed her understanding of freedom faith. After her father's death in 1960, Hall became extensively involved in the Civil Rights Movement, joining the Freedom Rides and SNCC, practicing her understanding of freedom faith.

Hall is a significant figure of the Civil Rights Movement for several reasons. Because of the real and present danger involved in door-to-door voter registration done by SNCC field workers, women in the movement predominantly helped with secretarial work and through education programs at churches. Hall was one of the few women field workers in SNCC. She was also second-in-command of SNCC's Southwest Georgia Project in Albany, Georgia, led by Charles Sherrod. When Martin Luther King, Jr. or any other high-profile civil rights leader visited Albany, Sherrod frequently chose Hall to speak at the mass meeting. She later became the leader of SNCC's Selma, Alabama voter registration project. She was included in a very short list of SNCC leaders who traveled to Africa in 1964 upon invitation by the Guinean government. Hall described her time in the Movement as the best education she ever received. In Southwest Georgia, Hall's freedom faith was contextualized and achieved maturity.

When King visited Albany in 1962 after a string of church burnings, Hall reportedly used the phrase "I have a dream" in a prayer service King attended; he so admired her preaching that he described her as "the one platform speaker I would prefer not to follow."[2] While Hall modestly withheld this information for most of her life, she confirmed her origination of the

[2] http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/prathia_hall.html (Accessed 01/23/2014).

phrase “I have a dream” to her closest friends, and in every case simultaneously praised King’s legacy and preaching acclaim.[3]

Hall resigned from SNCC in 1966 because of rising militancy in the organization. She had joined the Civil Rights Movement, in part, to wrestle with her vocational calling, but her experiences in the Movement helped her discern and confirm her call to preach. Her practice of freedom faith transitioned to her womanist preaching ministry and religious education.[4] Hall became one of the first African American Baptist women to be ordained by the American Baptist Churches of the U.S.A. (1977) and was the first woman accepted into the Baptist Minister Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity (1982). She completed her M.Div. (1982), Th.M. (1984), and Ph.D. (1997) degrees at Princeton Theological Seminary, and became a well-respected professor, primarily teaching womanist theology, Christian ethics, and African American church history at United. She served as Associate Dean of Spiritual and Community Life, Director of the Harriett L. Miller Women’s Center, and Dean of African American Ministries at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio (1989-1998) and held the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chair in Social Ethics at Boston University School of Theology (2000-2002). In 1997, *Ebony* magazine named her first in its list of “15 Greatest Black Women Preachers,” and she was the only woman considered for its list of “10 Greatest Black Preachers,” ultimately placing eleventh. In 1999, the International Theological Center in Atlanta awarded her its annual Womanist Scholar Award. She pastored Mt. Sharon Baptist Church in Philadelphia, her father’s church, for nearly a quarter century. She mentored over two hundred African American clergy

[3]Faith S. Holseart, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010).

[4]Womanism is a liberation theology that affirms the equal humanity of all people regardless of race, gender, or class. Chapter Five provides a more detailed description of womanism.

women, and there is a prominent blog for African-American clergywomen named "Prathia's Daughters."[5] Even after establishing an academic career, Hall remained active in the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Churches USA, the New York Board of Education, the Association of Black Seminarians, and domestic and international advocacy for liberation and equality of men and women of all ethnicities.[6]

My dissertation offers a thematic biography of Hall, focused on the development of her freedom faith and its expression in her life. I demonstrate her importance in the Civil Rights Movement and the significance of her later preaching and teaching career. Her connection with King is important and demonstrates her influence even as early as 1962, but she is a significant figure in her own right because of her leadership role in the Movement as a woman and her influential preaching and teaching ministries.

In addition to providing the first scholarly work exclusively on Hall, this dissertation offers a unique opportunity to study several aspects of the Civil Rights Movement. When asked about the complexity of the Civil Rights Movement, Hall replied: "The movement was so much more than Dr. King…It was largely women."[7] Because Hall was an African American woman, religious leader, and civil rights activist from the North who worked in the South and later became a strong advocate for gender and racial equality within Baptist life, her story provides a glimpse into the intersection of these issues both in and after the Movement.

---

[5]http://www.prathiasdaughtersvoices.ning.com (Accessed January 23, 2014).

[6]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., *This Far By Faith*, "Episode Four: Freedom Faith," Directed by Alice Markowitz, Blackside, Inc., 2002; Roger Fritts, "The Most Famous American Sermon of the 20th Century" (sermon given at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Bethesda, MD, January 13, 2002), http://www.cedarlane.org/02serms/s020113.html (accessed September 29, 2008); Jim Haskins and Kathleen Benson, *Black Stars: African American Religious Leaders* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 2008); Interdenominational Theological Center, "WPS Scholars – Dr. Prathia Hall," http://www.itc.edu/pages/wsp/WSPDrHall.htm (accessed September 29, 2008); *Ebony*, November, 1997, "15 Greatest Black Women Preachers: Experts and Leading Blacks Name Select Group of Ministers."

[7]Rhiannon Varmette, *Daily Free Press*, January 16, 2001.

Historiography

Even as civil rights historians have transitioned their focus beyond Martin Luther King, Jr. to include groups like SNCC, only in the past two decades have scholars published widely on women in the Civil Rights Movement. Jo Ann Gibson Robinson's 1987 memoir revealed the critical work of women, indicated by her title *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It.*[8] Other noteworthy titles include *Women in the Civil Rights Movement* (1990) edited by Vicki Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, *Gender in the Civil Rights Movement* (1999) by Peter Ling and Sharon Monteith, *How Long? How Long?: African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (2000) by Belinda Robnett.[9] Similarly, Lynne Olson's *Freedom's Daughters* (2000) describes the various political and social organizing of women toward gender and race equality.[10] Rosetta Ross broke new ground with her *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (2003).[11] Most recently, Danielle McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (2010) analyzes the movement in light of gender oppression.[12]

---

[8]JoAnn Gibson Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

[9]Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods, *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers and Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Peter Ling and Sharon Monteith, eds., *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004); and Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

[10]Lynne Olson, *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, 1830-1970* (New York: Scribner, 2001).

[11]Rosetta Ross, *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003).

[12]Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010).

Additionally, biographies of prominent women leaders began to emerge in the early 2000s. There are two biographies of Fannie Lou Hamer by Kay Mills (1993) and Chana Lee (2000). Barbara Ransby's biography of Ella Baker (2002) and Cynthia Fleming's of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson (1998) are two other examples of biographies of highly influential women leaders in the movement often ignored by movement literature.[13]

Even with the depth of current scholarship on the Civil Rights Movement, SNCC, and women in the movement, most of which mention Hall's name, there continues to be no extensive scholarship of Prathia Hall. The works which mention her name offer little if any information about her life or significance. My dissertation provides an in-depth investigation of her life and work, addressing the silence of scholarly work on Hall.

My project draws from a variety of sources. I have acquired four interviews others held with Hall before her death about her civil rights work and later ministry. I have also gathered numerous news articles, two memoir chapters written by Hall before her death describing her work in Albany and Selma, audio recordings and transcripts of her sermons, academic publications, her dissertation, manuscripts from some of her speaking engagements, a chapter she authored about her preaching process, and a dissertation chapter which highlights her as a case study of womanist preaching. The SNCC papers, including field reports and meeting minutes, illuminate Hall's work in the organization, augmented by Hall's FBI file and records from several civil rights cases involving Hall. Temple University Libraries' Urban Archive Special Collection have the full papers of Fellowship House, the civil rights organization in

[13]Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); Kay Mills, *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer (*New York: Plume, 1993); Chana Kai Lee, *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer (Women in American History)* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

Philadelphia where Hall was involved as a high school and college student.[14] My work also utilizes oral history sources, which provide valuable information both supplementing and adding to hard copy sources. I have conducted interviews with approximately three dozen of Hall's friends and SNCC colleagues, including Rep. John Lewis and Charles Sherrod.[15]

Cheryl Greenberg's *Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* includes three sections of Hall's reflections on her SNCC work, recorded at the twenty-fifth anniversary of SNCC in 1988. Several women of SNCC have collaborated to publish an edited volume of their memoirs, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (2011), which includes chapters by Hall about her work in Albany and Selma. Blackside Inc., the production company of Henry Hampton, released *This Far By Faith* (2002), the fourth episode of which features Hall. I have the full recording and transcript of Blackside's interview with Hall as well as some additional materials collected by the producers. Wesley C. Hogan's *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* narrates SNCC's history angled around the organization's educational efforts. Hogan includes her name in a short list of influential preachers of the movement: Martin Luther King, Jr., James Lawson, Charles Sherrod, and Prathia Hall.[16]

---

[14]"Fellowship House / Farm." Acc. 723. Records, 1931-1994. Temple University Libraries Urban Archives Special Collections.

[15]I have interviewed Rep. John Lewis, Bob Zellner, Mary King, Julian Bond, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Frank Smith, Faith Holsaert, Charles Sherrod, Don Harris, Penny Patch, Pete De Lissovoy, Larry Rubin, Peggy Dammond Preacely, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Chuck McDew, Carolyn Daniels, Jack Chatfield, John Perdew, John Churchville, Echol Nix, Presstonia Brown, LaGretta Bjorn, Daryl and Vanessa Ward, Joyce Barrett, Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Wyatt Tee Walker, Renita Weems, and Jeremiah Wright. These interviews are archived in the Prathia Hall Special Collection at the Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

[16]Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 229. See Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering the SNCC* (New York: Rutgers University Press, 1998); Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., *This Far By Faith*. Episode Four: "Freedom Faith," (Directed by Alice Markowitz. Blackside, Inc., 2002); Faith S. Holseart, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, eds., *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010).

Outline

The dissertation presents Hall's life story through five chapters, emphasizing freedom faith as the central theological commitment of her life, and particularly examining her time in the Movement and her preaching ministry.

Chapter One explores Hall's early life and family, including her education and religious background. This chapter describes the profound influence Hall's father had on her intellectual and spiritual formation, her family's involvement in social ministry, her education in primarily white schools. The chapter also introduces Fellowship House, a social justice organization in Philadelphia where Hall first became involved with organized non-violent direct action. This chapter argues that Hall's father's death was a turning point in her life which led to her joining the Civil Rights Movement in the South.

Chapter Two details Hall's entry into SNCC and her work in Southwest Georgia. This chapter characterizes Hall as a well-respected organizational and spiritual leader within SNCC, highlighting her work with volunteer training and voter registration. This chapter argues that Hall contextualized her freedom faith through her experiences in the Movement.

Chapter Three describes Hall's work with SNCC after Southwest Georgia including the Selma, Alabama voter registration project, membership on the Executive Committee, a public speaking tour to raise funds and awareness for SNCC's work in the South, and participation in SNCC's trip to Africa. This chapter addresses the growing tension within SNCC and black communities surrounding non-violent resistance, with special attention to Hall's crisis of faith after the 1965 Bloody Sunday march. This chapter will also describe her decision to leave the movement and return to Philadelphia.

Chapter Four assesses Hall's role in originating the phrase "I have a dream," which Martin Luther King, Jr. made internationally famous. This chapter argues that King originally heard "I have a dream" from Hall at a 1962 prayer vigil in Sasser, Georgia, after which he incorporated the phrase into his public speaking. Through analysis of what little secondary literature has addressed Hall's involvement with "I have a dream," I utilize sources on the 1962 vigil and oral history interviews to argue in support of Hall's origination of the phrase.

Chapter Five gives account of Hall's life after the Movement, including her graduate education, social justice activism, and womanist preaching ministry. This chapter describes Hall's journey to womanist theology and how this liberation theology expressed itself in her preaching. The chapter draws upon a representative sample of her most commonly preached sermons to demonstrate her strong womanist theology.

The Conclusion summarizes Hall's biographical narrative, particularly related to her developing understanding of freedom faith. Hall was a significant figure in the Civil Rights Movement in her own right. After the Movement, Hall's freedom faith led her to a highly influential preaching ministry which promoted womanist liberation theology.

CHAPTER TWO

"I See Africa Rising": Prathia Hall's Early Life

Introduction

This chapter addresses Prathia Hall's early life, education, and entry into the Civil Rights Movement, spanning 1940-1962.[1] During this time, the modern Civil Rights Movement (1954-1968) was beginning to take shape.[2] In earlier decades, many civil rights leaders had already been campaigning for civil rights activism, ranging from conservative to radical approaches. Intellectual leaders like Booker T. Washington encouraged African Americans to pursue respectability in their stations in life so that white America would be compelled to reject stereotypes of African American deficiency. The NAACP offered legal defense in cases which might raise awareness of and defeat racial discrimination. Marcus Garvey's United Negro Improvement Association and W.E.B. DuBois's Pan-Africanism advocated for a strong sense of Black Nationalism.

At the end of World War I (1914-1918), many African Americans migrated from the South to the urban North.[3] The Southern economy discriminated against African Americans through sharecropping and Jim Crow segregation, and the boom of the industrial revolution in the urban North created thousands of new jobs. The Great

[1]Each chapter of my dissertation will have an introduction which contextualizes Prathia Hall's story within the larger narrative of the Civil Rights Movement at that time.

[2]For a complete timeline of the Civil Rights Movement, see Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, *My Soul Is A Witness: A Chronology of the Civil Rights Era: 1954-1965* (New York: Henry Holt: 1999). For a more focused survey of the factors leading to the modern Civil Rights Movement, focused specifically on 1953-1963, see Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

[3]For a history of African Americans in World War I, see Adriane Lentz-Smith, *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).

Migration (1910-1930) involved over one million African Americans leaving the rural South for the North and Midwest. At the end of the Great Depression, another wave of migration (1940-1970) followed. While some African Americans did find jobs, many found continued racial discrimination in new forms. Urban housing was ill-equipped for the mass influx of European immigrants and African Americans, which led to slum living conditions and strenuous working conditions for all. Europeans typically received preference over African Americans.[4]

African American military service in World War II (1941-1945) aimed at accomplishing the "double V," a victory for freedom abroad and at home.[5] Though African Americans fought for the United States to protect freedom elsewhere, they did not receive the same freedoms at home. The Cold War (1944-1991) and the Korean War (1950-1953) consumed the attention of the president and the legislature, which delayed civil rights legislation for a year after World War II ended.

Underlying the public demonstrations of the movement were theological and ethical commitments of the Black Church, namely God's solidarity with the oppressed and God's promise of deliverance from oppression. Black Churches were central to the

[4]For a survey of the long Civil Rights Movement in the North, see Thomas Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008). For more information about African Americans in the urban North, see Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds., *African American Urban History since World War II* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009). For an in-depth study of civil rights activism in postwar Philadelphia, see Matthew Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

[5]For more information about African Americans in World War II, see Neil A. Wynn, *The African American Experience During World War II* (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010).

movement's organization and leadership. Churches hosted mass meetings and freedom schools. Most of the movement's major leaders were ministers.[6]

The modern Civil Rights Movement began with the 1954 Supreme Court decision *Brown v. The Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas,* which overturned "separate but equal" education established by the 1896 decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson,* and integrated public education in the United States. NAACP lawyer Thurgood Marshall won the case, in which five parents from multiple states claimed inequities in segregated education. On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court made its historic, unanimous ruling, but failed to set a timeline or procedure for school integration. Local attempts to integrate schools had varying levels of success. Segregationists, the Ku Klux Klan (KKK), and White Citizens Councils used multiple avenues of local control to resist integration ranging from public addresses to intimidation tactics to violent demonstrations against integration. Some states outlawed the NAACP and similar organizations. In some communities, lynchings occurred well into the 1950s and 1960s.

In 1955, the murder of Emmett Till made national headlines. Till, a fourteen-year-old African American from Chicago, was visiting family in Mississippi. Till said "Bye, baby" to Carolyn Bryant, a white cashier at a store in town, but her husband, Roy Bryant, swore that Till had forcefully grabbed her wrist, spoken multiple sexual innuendos, and

[6]For an overview of African American religious history, particularly its connection to social and political efforts, see C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990); Peter Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998); Gayraud Wilmore, *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans* (New York: Doubleday, 1998); Andrew Billingsley, *Might Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B, Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr. and Nancy Lynne Westfield, *Black Church Studies: An Introduction* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007). Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984) may also be a helpful resource on the connection between the Black Church and civil rights organization.

howled at her. Bryant and his brother-in-law kidnapped Till in the middle of the night, violently murdered him, and dumped his body. Bryant and his brother-in-law were acquitted of all charges, though they later accepted a paid interview in which they confessed how they murdered Till in graphic detail.

In the city of Montgomery, Alabama, in December, 1955, local civil rights organizations like the Women's Political Council and the Montgomery Improvement Association pooled their efforts against bus segregation. African American bus passengers were required to sit in the back of the bus and to stand if a white passenger needed the seat. Though not the first person to refuse to surrender her seat to a white passenger, Rosa Parks's December 1, 1955 arrest marked the beginning of a more than year-long boycott of the Montgomery buses. Jo Ann Robinson and other African American female leaders duplicated thousands of fliers calling for a boycott of the buses.[7] Local ministers met on the first day of the boycott to make plans for its future. When the NAACP hesitated to get involved, these local ministers formed the Montgomery Improvement Association to direct the campaign. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a new minister in town and was elected to head the organization.[8]

King agreed to direct the Montgomery bus boycott, which began December 1, 1955, and firmly believed that nonviolence would be an effective means for appealing to the conscience of American society. African Americans in Montgomery overwhelmingly supported the boycott. Some donated cars or financial resources toward the upkeep of

[7]See JoAnn Gibson Robinson, *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990).

[8]Noteworthy biographies of Martin Luther King, Jr. include Taylor Branch, *America in the King Years, 1954-1968*, 3 vols, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988-2006); David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986); David Lewis, *King: A Critical Biography* (Westport, CT: Praeger Books, 1970); and Harvard Sitkoff, *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop* (New York: Macmillan, 2009).

donated cars. Citizens walked to work or participated in carpools, and taxis offered discounted fares.

The city's financial loss from the boycott was devastating. Many white business owners employed their own intimidation tactics to thwart the efforts of the boycott. Rumors against King circulated, and King received multiple threats against himself and his family.

After 386 days of boycott, the Supreme Court ruled against segregated busing in *Gayle v. Browder* (1956). Nevertheless, segregationists continued to resist integration with implied and actual violence. More than twenty cities mimicked Montgomery to desegregate their local bus systems.

Montgomery launched King to national fame, and in 1957, he founded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), an organization primarily of African American Baptists, to coordinate civil rights activism. A few of the significant leaders within SCLC included Ralph Abernathy, Andrew Young, Fred Shuttlesworth, Wyatt T. Walker, C.T. Vivian, Hosea Williams, James Bevel, Bayard Rustin, Stanley Levison, and Ella Baker.

In Little Rock, Arkansas, school officials drafted plans for integrating, beginning with Central High School in 1957.[9] The community expressed concern for the potential social and moral issues involved with interracial education, and white parents remained strongly opposed. The school district initially selected seventy-five of 517 African American students to integrate Central, but the list was eventually narrowed to nine.

[9]See Elizabeth Huckaby, *Crisis at Central High, Little Rock, 1957-58* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980) and Will Counts, Will Campbell, Ernest Dumas, Robert McCord, *Life is More than a Moment: The Desegregation of Little Rock's Central High* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999).

Governor Orval Faubus aided segregationists in undermining desegregation. On the day of desegregation, National Guardsmen blocked the doors so that the Little Rock Nine could not enter. Federal troops were soon involved, and state and national authorities engaged in a battle for jurisdiction over local schools.

Eisenhower's decision to support the integration of Central High School was significant because the US had been condemning apartheid in South Africa. Racial tension and hierarchy within the US would open America to moral critique for inconsistencies with its international political statements. Eisenhower personally was not in favor of integration, but for the first time since Reconstruction, the president sent national troops to protect the civil rights of African Americans. In protest against integration, Governor Faubus closed all of Little Rock's secondary schools. White parents funded private, segregated schools or left the community. Most private schools in the South founded between 1954 and the 1970s were founded in direct opposition to the integration of public education.

By 1960, the failed efforts of Eisenhower and other officials to effect significant change left an opening for new activists to arise: students. In February, 1960, four students in Greensboro, North Carolina sat in at a Woolworth's lunch counter.[10] For college students nation-wide, Greensboro was the spark that ignited dozens of sit-ins.

Rev. James Lawson, a Vanderbilt divinity student, led student activists in Nashville. After serving time as a conscientious objector to the Korean War, Lawson studied nonviolent philosophy in India. He led nonviolent workshops for student activists, training them to endure racial abuse and maintain an attitude of love for their

[10]See William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensbro, N.C. and the Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

persecutors. In 1960, Nashville students launched a wide-scale demonstration movement on segregated businesses in the city. Many were arrested and opted to remain in jail rather than pay bail. Diane Nash confronted Mayor Ben West on the steps of City Hall, where he conceded in front of television cameras that racial discrimination was wrong.

SCLC director Ella Baker arranged a meeting at Shaw University in April, 1960 for the student protestors.[11] She wanted to encourage them and help them organize their efforts for maximum effectiveness. Over 200 students attended the meeting, where both King and Lawson addressed the crowd. Lawson's involvement with the sit-in movement gave him strong rapport with the students. There, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was born.[12] SNCC would engage in both direct action campaigns and voter registration canvassing, be multiracial, and be democratic. SNCC rejected any formal ties to SCLC, the NAACP, or the Congress On Racial Equality (CORE). Headquartered in Atlanta, SNCC began projects in Southwest Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama, and across the South. Friends of SNCC groups in the North and West raised local awareness and support for SNCC's efforts in the South. College students from across the country came South to be a part of SNCC's front-lines civil rights campaign. These students gave the movement a revolutionary energy, flooding jails with their "jail, no bail" policy. Their efforts created local and national tension that applied sustained pressure to elected leaders to protect the civil rights of African Americans. The students

[11]The definitive biography of Ella Baker is Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003).

[12]For more on SNCC, see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007, and Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Cambridge: South End Press, 2002).

found tremendous support from celebrities like Harry Belafonte, Sammy Davis Jr, Sidney Poitier, and Dick Gregory.

In May 1961, CORE organized "Freedom Rides" to test the desegregation of interstate busing established through *Boynton v. Virginia* (1960).[13] The interracial group of freedom riders would ride from Washington DC to New Orleans over the course of two weeks, and they planned to sit together both on the bus and in the bus stops. FBI director J. Edgar Hoover distributed the riders' plans to Alabama officials, many with known KKK ties. At almost every stop, the riders faced violent verbal and physical abuse. Neither local nor national law enforcement protected the riders, and even Attorney General Robert Kennedy's associate who was sent to investigate the situation was attacked by segregationist mobs. President John Kennedy made token efforts to support civil rights work, but activists remained largely unprotected.

Prathia Hall's early life and entry into the movement offer a unique glimpse at several important aspects of the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s. Hall's upbringing in North Philadelphia by a family with Southern roots deeply committed to the Black church gives her a unique vantage point for understanding multiple aspects of the postwar African American experience: class stratification, regional conflict, religious diversity, and social justice issues. Educated in an integrated school in a city with a rich history of racial activism, empowered by her father to do something significant with her life yet well-aware of sexism and racism, and trained theologically to expect God to work against oppression, Prathia Hall's story offers a lens for examining the larger story of the Civil

[13]See Ray Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Rights Movement, African American women, and the relationship between religion and culture in postwar America.

Early Life and Family

Prathia LauraAnn Hall was born in Philadelphia June 29, 1940 to parents Rev. Berkeley L. and Ruby Hall. The Hall family was originally from Virginia, but Berkeley and Ruby moved north to Philadelphia as a young couple so that their future children would not grow up amidst Jim Crow segregation. Prathia was the eldest, followed by son Berkeley, Jr. and daughter Teresa. Rev. and Mrs. Hall had a son before Prathia, but the baby did not survive.[14]

Berkeley Hall's family was from Florence, South Carolina and Richmond, Virginia. They moved frequently "for the best work." Prathia Hall's paternal grandfather died when her father was thirteen years old, leaving her father as the breadwinner and parent figure for his siblings. Rev. Hall quit school to work full-time, but still made time for occasional classes. By his eighteenth year, Rev. Hall moved his family to Philadelphia. He was in a train accident which severed his leg through the bone. Doctors wanted to amputate his leg, but he refused. Prathia Hall reflected later in life with admiration for her father's strength: "He left this world with a limp, but he had two legs." She often wondered what he might have accomplished without racial barriers. Through his "incredible strength," he raised and supported his siblings, his sister's three children, and his own children.[15]

[14]Prathia Hall, Interview by Sheila Michaels, February 25, 1999, Film and Media Archive, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

[15]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

Ruby Hall's family lived in the Charlottesville area of Nelson County, Virginia. One of six children, Ruby grew up on a small farm, was very smart, and enjoyed literature and poetry. Ruby's parents wanted to give her every opportunity for a better life so they sent her to school in the county seat, where she boarded with her teacher in order to finish the eighth grade. Her parents then sent her to Baltimore to finish high school, which Prathia Hall described as "a pretty big accomplishment." Throughout, Ruby worked odd jobs to supplement what her parents sent toward the cost of her education.[16]

Rev. Hall founded Mt. Sharon Baptist Church, affiliated with the American Baptist Convention., which he pastored until his death in 1960.[17] The church originally met in the Hall residence. The living room and dining room were set up like a small church for services, and the family lived on the second and third floors. Rev. Hall, a "phenomenal preacher," declined offers to pastor larger churches because he was committed to raising his family and doing social ministry through Mt. Sharon Baptist Church in the North Philadelphia neighborhood.[18]

As an adult, Prathia Hall saw her father's specialized ministry in North Philadelphia as ahead of its time, meeting the "bread and butter" needs of families in their neighborhood, where "petty economic crimes" were numerous.[19] The entire Hall family was active in the church's ministry, assisting with its food pantry, clothes closet, visitation, and discipleship programs. Every week, her parents visited wholesale grocers

[16]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[17]Mt. Sharon Baptist Church is currently located at 1609 W. Girard Avenue in Philadelphia. The church formerly met on the first floor of the Hall family home, first at 1331 Jefferson Street and later at 1631 W. Girard Ave.

[18]Hall, Interview by Michaels; Presstonia Davis Brown, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 20, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

[19]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

or producers to gather food to distribute. The children were responsible for dividing the food into boxes and distributing the boxes to needy families. The Hall family opened their three-story Victorian row house to extended family and friends who needed a place to stay. Hall said that their home was "large and always full" and described their home as a "New Testament household" because they held "everything in common."[20] Ruby Hall stayed at home to manage the household and was strict in her expectations for her children.[21]

Prathia Hall learned a great deal from her mother. Ruby Hall taught children's Sunday School at Mt. Sharon Baptist and led the children in poetry recitation and dramas performed for the congregation. Hall remembered gaining her love for poets such as Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, and Countee Cullen, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow from her mother.[22] Presstonia Brown, a childhood friend of Hall's, remembered Mother Hall as "extremely bright" and good at managing money, especially helping the church's budget stretch to meet its ministry goals. Mother Hall was also reportedly very controlling and quick to ask people for what she wanted from them.[23]

In 1945, at the age of five, Prathia Hall, her sister Teresa, and her cousin Betty – Ruby's sister's daughter who was raised by the Halls and called "sister" – took a train to Virginia to visit their grandparents. This was Hall's first time to ride a train unaccompanied by her parents. The girls were dressed in their finest clothes and filled with excitement as they found seats, unaware of Jim Crow: "The conductor just literally

[20]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[21]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

[22]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[23]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

snatched us up by the collar, you know, and what are you doing here? You can't sit here." Without giving the girls time to respond, he shoved them from car to car, toward the front of the train. He pushed them into a car immediately behind the engine, filled with smoke. Hall later recounted the disillusionment of that moment: "The whole trip we sat there looking out the window, hurt far less by the pushing and the shoving, than in the psyche. The train ride had lost all its excitement. There was a message in rhythm of the wheels on the tracks. The message was: you're not good enough, you're not good enough, you're not good enough."[24]

Hall's primary spiritual and intellectual mentor was her father. Rev. Hall impressed upon young Prathia that she was destined for great things and cultivated a strong work ethic within her. He told her of a vision he had in the year she was born of God taking him to "a high mountain" and saying to him, "This is the year that marks the rising up of the colored peoples of the world." He told her: "I see Africa rising, Asia rising, India rising." This story instilled in young Prathia that she was "nurtured for the Freedom Movement."[25]

In many ways, Rev. Hall did raise his daughter for the freedom movement. He shared with her his passion for issues of faith and justice, particularly race. He frequently talked about "the struggles of black people, history of Africa, African Americans, Asia." He was passionate about solidarity between the oppressed "colored peoples of the world." Mt. Sharon Baptist frequently held Black History celebrations, in which the entire church participated. Hall remembered that her childhood friends would share how

[24]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc. This Far By Faith, Episode Four: "Freedom Faith," Directed by Alice Markowitz Blackside, Inc (2002).

[25]Blackside, This Far By Faith.

much they loved her father because when children were visiting at the Hall home, Rev. Hall would call them to his room to sit around the bed and floor to listen to him tell stories of African American history.[26]

When Rev. Hall would begin to "wax eloquent" in a teaching moment, her siblings would "flee for the hills," but Prathia would "draw closer" to hear his teaching. Hall laughed as she reflected: "Part of the reason he poured all those things into me was not gender, it was access. I was the one who was there." While her siblings received "the mandatory," Hall "went for more."[27] Presstonia Brown described Rev. Hall as a tall, "no nonsense" kind of man, resembling a professor. Though he was a very loving man, Brown still felt like she should sit with her hands folded in her lap when she was with him.[28]

Hall was lifelong friends with Brown, nicknamed "Prestie," with whom she shared many of the same interests. They frequently played at each other's houses. Brown remembered Hall as "always an excellent speaker," skilled in elocution and speech-writing, and encouraging Brown to try her best in the same. Hall frequently read for church services, and as a pre-teen, she was a regular participant in Mason, Eastern Star, and Elk Club debates, which awarded scholarships to its winners. Even as a young lady, Hall was a woman of conviction, determined to work hard for what she considered important: "If she believed in something, she didn't move off of it."[29]

---

[26]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[27]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[28]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

[29]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

Prathia Hall was so outspoken on issues of justice and race as a child that she faced consequences from her teachers. Hall attended predominantly white schools in Center City Philadelphia, including the Philadelphia High School for Girls, considered one of the top secondary schools in the city. Hall spoke out against the omission of African American history in her junior high and high school curriculum, which, she believed, led several of her teachers to penalize her grades.[30] As a junior in high school, Hall's guidance counselor asked her about her career plans. Hall told the counselor that she wanted to attend law school. The counselor interrupted her, insisting she abandon this plan as her family, obviously, could never afford law school and that asking them to finance such education was selfish on Hall's part. This counselor knew nothing about Hall's family when giving this advice; she assumed that all African Americans were poor, destined for continued poverty. Hall never forgot this conversation.[31]

Hall explained her desire to attend law school to "become a civil rights attorney like Thurgood Marshall and Constance Baker Motley."[32] She was determined to become a lawyer and equally determined not to become a preacher.[33] At the same time, she felt "a

---

[30]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

Prathia Hall's high school yearbook photo was accompanied with the following description: "welfare representative, classical club, ping-pong club, social service club, president of debating club, tennis club. Prathia…keen social consciousness…artistic command of the English language…deep-rooted convictions." *Milestone: Philadelphia High School for Girls*, June, 1958, 72.

[31]Joyce Barrett, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 12, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

[32]Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010), 173. Hall felt the support of her community as she pursued her education: "I'll never forget the woman who used to watch me walk to school with my books as she waited for the bus to go to her job as a domestic. When I would come pass her on my way to school, her own shoulders would straighten up and every now and then she would press a crumpled dollar in my hand and say, 'daughter do good. I'm prayin' for you." Barbara Ransby, Interview with Prathia Hall, June 25, 1997, in Denver, Colorado.

[33]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

war being waged in [her] consciousness against the compelling call to the ordained ministry."[34] She realized the difficulty she would face as a female minister and, in part, searched for alternative ways to follow her call.

In no uncertain terms, Hall knew she was raised as an adolescent to "have an identity" and not to "be a domestic." She and her sisters were raised to be self-sufficient, independent women. According to Hall, her father refused to accept excuses of race or gender for any level of underperformance. Not only did her father invest his wisdom into her, but Hall saw her father regularly help other women to become independent.[35] Though she had traits of both of her parents, Hall was her father's daughter.[36]

Fellowship House

During high school, Hall became involved with Fellowship House (FH), an interfaith, interracial organization, established in 1931 and led by Marjorie Penney.[37] Raised in a middle-class home in Philadelphia and a graduate of Pennsylvania Museum School of Art, Penney realized the power of young people to combat segregation through "a handful of young church folk, Negro and white, convinced that peace in the world

[34]Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 173.

[35]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[36]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

[37]FH first met in a home at 1431 Brown St. (1941), in "a conflict neighborhood." FH relished the opportunity to test their ideas in that atmosphere. The house, known as "Bums' Castle," previously functioned as a firehouse, coffin factory, and hideout for fugitives; the windows were painted black, the floors were so "thick with scum" that they were cleaned with an acetylene torch, and "it was big and cheap." As FH outgrew the Brown St. house, they moved to 1521 W. Girard Ave, less than one block from Hall's family home, in 1957. FH eventually expanded into eleven multi-state locations. In 1964, Little Fellowship House opened at Columbia Avenue and Twenty-Seventh Street, under the direction of Hall and Diana King, "to build hope and strength in a clearly disadvantaged and dilapidated neighborhood"; the neighborhood erupted into a three day race riot in August of the same year. Charles E. Marshall and Amos Johnson, "Fellowship House History and Program," Fellowship House Papers, Urban Archives, Acc. 723:5, Temple University Library; "Fellowship House Farm," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5; Courtney Lyons, "Burning Columbia Avenue: Religious Undertones of the 1964 Philadelphia Race Riots," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 77:3 (2010): 324-348.

must" come from people taking action in their communities. In 1929, these "church kids" met at the Quaker school Pendle Hill to address church segregation; by 1931, they began holding interracial worship services across Philadelphia after much struggle to find a willing church host. First Baptist Church of Philadelphia, Penney's church, was the first to allow them to meet, and "the church was always packed."[38] As early as the 1930s, Penney and her friends had been testing restaurants, theaters, and other public places in Philadelphia for segregation using nonviolent demonstration techniques, long before Martin Luther King, Jr. would popularize this approach; this group became FH.[39] When anti-Semitism "hit Philadelphia hard" circa 1939, Jewish leaders sought Penney's collaboration since eighty-three hate groups, even the KKK, were functional within the Delaware Valley. The FBI also sought Penney's collaboration since FH was "the only Christian group prepared to fight anti-Semitism."[40]

Hall's involvement in FH allowed her to observe women in leadership positions, and Penney was an outstanding role model for Hall. Penney served as Executive Director of FH for nearly forty years (1931-1968), modeling professional, capable, female leadership to thousands; the leadership of FH was predominantly women, at every level. In addition to exceptional wisdom and an enchanting sense of humor, Penney was

---

[38]E. Phyllis Grossman, "Marjorie Penney and Her Fellowship House," Fellowship House History and Program, Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:5.
Though originally bi-racial and exclusively Christian, by 1939, FH included interfaith worship between Christians and Jews. By the mid-1940s, FH included Muslim, B'nai B'rith, Native American, Buddhist, and Hindu. Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5.

[39]Hall learned nonviolence philosophy from her father and the writings of African American leaders he discussed with her, such as Howard Thurman. She also learned about nonviolence philosophy through FH. When King popularized the approach, FH began calling its campaign "Kingsway," though FH had been teaching nonviolence long before King's public activism. Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5.

[40]Grossman; Marjorie Penney, "Address – American Baptist Board of Education – Atlanta, Ga., February 4, 1966," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:7.

described as "an all-purpose mother-prophet-friend-confidante-adviser."[41] Elsewhere: "For Philadelphians, she is the epitome of sisterly love."[42] Penney frequently published articles in journals and magazines to promote Fellowship's teachings. She was a two-time recipient of the Philadelphia Award.[43]

FH was both an agency and a movement, and on both counts, gave Hall exceptional preparation for her later work in the Civil Rights Movement.[44] FH intended to give its surrounding neighborhood "the vision, the hope, the courage, the determination, and the training to make changes," rather than to just address the "social ills that beset people at the bottom."[45] The house offered educational resources for school teachers, community members, and churches, such as its doll library of historic figures and accredited teacher in-service and community workshops on the philosophies of nonviolence and religions, racial, and political reconciliation. FH commissioned speakers and a choir for local and traveling presentations and organized ministers of various local congregations in its work. They also supported the Civil Rights Movement in the South, raised awareness of injustice locally and internationally, and trained upcoming leaders to be "movers, shakers, and changers of the status quo."[46] FH offered housing to civil rights

[41]Fellowship House History and Program.

[42]Untitled Document, Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:90.

[43]The Philadelphia Award is given to the "Philadelphian who has made the greatest contribution to the city," – "a kind of local Nobel prize" – each accompanied by a $5,000 award, funded by the Curtis Bok family. Penney married Dr. Victor Paschkis, a science professor at Columbia University, and founder of the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, of which Albert Einstein was also a member. When Penney retired, she and Paschkis volunteered at the farm the rest of their lives.

[44]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[45]"The History of Fellowship House," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5.

[46]Marjorie Penney, "Address – American Baptist Convention – Atlanta, Ga. February 4, 1966," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:7.

leaders fundraising in the North, including many Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) workers and Medgar Evers shortly prior to his assassination in 1963.[47]

In addition to being ahead of its time with nonviolence, FH was ahead of its time in its inclusivity and ecumenism.[48] Baptist pastor A. Herbert Haslam coordinated its ecumenical and interracial worship services and minister's alliance. Haslam also organized home-based small groups "in strategic areas" of Philadelphia to discuss Fellowship ideas and plan outreach for their neighbors and communities. FH's Speakers Bureau served hundreds of engagements annually, often sending speakers in a Trio: "Negro, White Christian & Jew."[49] Religious Fellowship became so influential that large denominational bodies sought Haslam and FH for "guidance and program."[50]

Though largely ignored by scholars of the Civil Rights Movement, FH was a forerunner of the Movement. In 1952, young Crozier Theological School student Martin Luther King, Jr. attended a FH event to hear Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University, speak. Johnson had just returned from visiting Indira Gandhi in India, and at that event, King first learned of Mahatma Gandhi's nonviolent approach. The experience revolutionized King's theology. He recounted the influence of that lecture and FH in

---

[47]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[48]"The Religious Fellowship of Fellowship House," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1. FH collaborated with the National Council of Churches, NAACP, and the American Friends Service Committee, to name a few. FH viewed itself as a training center for "good human relations," promoting "the American faith in brotherhood" and "social justice through Fellowship." The organization praised democratic process, "equal rights," "equal treatment," and "equal opportunities."[48] Its purpose was "to point the way for everyone to get equality of treatment and equality of opportunity." Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:2.

[49]"History of Fellowship House," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:2.

[50]"A Statement Regarding the Work of Dr. Herbert Haslam, Founder of the Religious Fellowship of Fellowship House," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:11.

Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story:

> One Sunday afternoon I traveled to Philadelphia to hear a sermon by Dr. Mordecai Johnson, president of Howard University…for the Fellowship House of Philadelphia. Dr. Johnson…spoke of the life and teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. His message was so profound and electrifying that I left the meeting and bought a half-dozen books on Gandhi's life and works….It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and non-violence that I discovered the method of social reform that I had been seeking for so many months….I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom."[51]

King maintained a connection with FH from this moment forward. Throughout the Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956) of the Civil Rights Movement, Penney and King frequently corresponded as she quasi-mentored King in nonviolence and interfaith, interracial cooperation; she encouraged King to bring the movement to the North.[52] Penney updated FH volunteers with the latest news of the movement.[53]

As Hall participated in FH through high school and college, she was being formed by the same community that shaped King's understanding of nonviolent direct action. FH exposed Hall to world-class speakers on a regular basis, as well as educational programs which offered theoretical, historical, and practical instruction in the philosophy and theology of nonviolence.[54] FH taught ideas that King would popularize through the Civil

---

[51]Martin Luther King, Jr. *Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), 96.

[52]In an interview Penney recalled: "I went to Atlanta. We met in the airport; I was going one place, he was going another. I sat for an hour with Dr. King and Coretta and the children, and he felt that his place was in the South; he didn't want to come to the North. I argued, she argued, and at the end I got his willingness to come." Marjorie Penney, Interviewed by Rosa King Zimmerman, West Chester State College Oral History Program, July 20, 1976, Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5.

[53]Penney, Interviewed by Zimmerman.

[54]Hall, Interview by Michaels.
During Hall's involvement with FH, she had opportunity to hear internationally acclaimed speakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Mordecai Johnson, Howard Thurman, Reinhold Niebuhr, Abraham Heschel, Raymond Pace Alexander, Leon Sullivan, Fred Shuttlesworth, Frank Sinatra, Ralph Bunche, Harry Belafonte, Norman Thomas, Frank Laubach, Septima Clark, Mary McLeod Bethune, Dorothy Height, Margaret

Rights Movement: nonviolence as not just the absence of violence but also the "presence of justice," the choice of love and forgiveness rather than hate, willingness to suffer, and concern for the redemption of the oppressed and the oppressor. FH taught Hall, among its other volunteers, practical strategies for nonviolent demonstration such as withstanding physical injury without retaliation (external nonviolence) rooted in a spiritual commitment to loving others (internal nonviolence) long before such training became standard for student activists.[55] While many other student activists were not introduced to nonviolent philosophy or strategy until they joined the movement, Hall was as well trained in the techniques and strategies of nonviolent direct action as the Southern students who trained with James Lawson who popularized the student movement through the Nashville demonstrations and Freedom Rides.[56]

FH gave Hall opportunity to reflect in new ways on her father's teachings. Just as Rev. Hall taught her African and African American history, FH introduced her to the larger manifestations of racism worldwide, namely the processes leading to social sanction of systematic mistreatment of racial minorities and third world people around the world.[57] Hall further realized the global consequences of prejudice and the relevance

---

Meade, Dorothy Day, and Eleanor Roosevelt. She heard King and Thurman on multiple occasions. Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[55]Fellowship House Papers, Urban Archives, Acc. 723:26, Temple University Library. After King's notoriety in the South grew, Fellowship called its nonviolence training "King's Way." Their materials would include taglines such as "King's Way is Soul Force! He had it, you can have it!" Soul Force involved insisting on one's right to be treated as a human being, not letting hate compromise one's inner peace, and refusing to use violence no matter the provocation, with the goal that such an example would compel the other person to recognize one's humanity Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:8.

[56]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[57]"Racism," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:8.

of the struggle for social justice for everyone, particularly the parallels between the struggles of non-white and non-Christian peoples dominated by the West.[58]

While Hall had experience in public speaking through her church and her high school debate club, FH gave her additional preparation in making and supporting an argument, using inclusive language, connecting religious and philosophical ideas, and building relationships within the community.[59] Speakers were trained in how to handle hostile audiences and evaluate the success of projects.[60] These ideas closely resonated with the modus operandi of SNCC, further demonstrating how Hall's involvement in FH exceptionally prepared her for activism in the Civil Rights Movement.

Hall remained involved with FH throughout high school and into college. The High School Fellowship, "By Youth Itself," met on Tuesdays at 3:45 p.m., led by Mitzy Jacoby Barnes, a graduate of Philadelphia High School for Girls and Temple University. This group held work camps and conferences at the farm, weekly meetings, "action-training sessions for peaceful change," and musical-drama productions promoting social justice and human equality; they also produced a newsletter called "Viewpoint."[61] Hall was highly involved with High School Fellowship's music-drama team, and she often spoke at these programs. Dale Phalen, Secretary of FH, remarked in a 1957 board meeting: "Joyce Barrett and Prathia Hall presented revealing and inspiring pictures of

[58]"Units for Unity," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:11.

[59]Untitled Document, Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:21.

[60]"So You're Going to Speak for Fellowship House," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1.

[61]Archived copies of "The Viewpoint" are not available.

their participation in the work of the House in their well-delivered talks on 'What High School Fellowship Did for Me.'"[62]

Prathia Hall longed to join the Civil Rights Movement in the South. Because she attended predominantly white schools, she had never taken an African American history class, which was commonly offered in black schools. Upon finishing high school, she asked her parents for permission to study at Tuskeegee University for the summer of 1960, but after a racial incident in the area, her father forbade her to go. She later reflected: "So this race warrior, this minister with a passion for justice, who had groomed me for the Movement when it came down to seeing me in danger was not able to handle that." He feared for her safety; as much as he had trained her to bravely oppose injustice, he could not let her go South for fear that she might be hurt, or worse.[63] Rev. Hall was a "very sheltering father," specifically concerned for the safety of his children. Prathia Hall felt no gender bias in her father's protective nature. She was raised the same way as a son would have been raised.[64] She did have a closer connection with him than her siblings, however, as the oldest child, and as the child most like him, which she believed was the reason he forbade her to go South.[65]

Hall enrolled in Temple University, a fifteen-minute walk from her family home, in 1958. She majored in Political Science and minored in Religion. She attended 1958-

---

[62]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Directors, November 21, 1957," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1.

[63]Blackside, This Far By Faith.

[64]Like many fathers, Rev. Hall hoped to have a son to continue his ministry legacy. Berkeley, Jr., the second born and only son, did not share Rev. Hall's ministerial vision for his life. Rev. Hall recognized Prathia's maturity and giftedness and groomed her, in part, as the son he never had. Interestingly, Berekely, Jr. was the only Hall child *not* to become a pastor.

[65]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

1961, though she withdrew in May, 1960 and July, 1960, but re-enrolled later. Low grades placed Hall on academic probation in June, 1959 and June, 1961.[66] Hall remained very active in the college group of FH, founded by Joyce Barrett. The college group met weekly across the city but focused their efforts on work within North Philadelphia, particularly with children.[67]

Rev. Hall, Prathia Hall's father, was tragically killed in an automobile accident in late January, 1960. He was driving his 1949 Cadillac in North Philadelphia, when a trolley car hit him. His body was dragged by the trolley for several blocks and was completely underneath the trolley when police arrived on the scene. Desperate for her father to recover, Hall stayed by his bedside at Temple University Hospital until her mother explained that Prathia had to let her father go. He died shortly after Prathia said goodbye. Hall's father's death was extremely difficult for her, and she never fully recovered from the tragedy.[68]

The February, 1960 sit-ins at Greensboro, North Carolina occurred five days after Hall's father's death. She, like many other students who eventually joined SNCC, interpreted Greensboro as *the* signal to join the Movement in the South.[69] Hall later said

---

[66]Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 177.

[67]Untitled Document Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:8.

[68]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

[69]Howard Zinn, professor at Spelman College and strong supporter of SNCC, echoed: "For so many in SNCC, the Greesnsboro sit-in – more than the Supreme Court decision, more than the Little Rock crisis, more than the Montgomery bus boycott, more than the recent declarations of independence by a host of African nations – was a turning point in their lives." Copycat demonstrations erupted nationwide after Greensboro: "The sit-ins had begun a new phase of the Negro upsurge, in which students – matured overnight into social revolutionaries – started to play the leading role. These same students, in the brutal training ground of the Freedom Rides, became toughened, experienced." Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists,* 18, 41.

that "The movement was the healthiest, the most therapeutic thing for my grief."[70] As much as she would have liked to share her Movement activism with her father, she knew how difficult it would have been for him to see her in jail, to know she was in danger. The timing of her father's death and the beginning of the student movement created new possibilities for her.

Having closely followed the student-led Civil Rights Movement and energized by its momentum, a team from FH – Joyce Barrett, Marjorie Penney, and Claire Maier – went to Raleigh, NC in April, 1960 to attend a meeting led by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), King's organization, at King's invitation, on the topic of students in the movement.[71] King's speech at this meeting echoed, nearly verbatim, his lessons from FH:

> I believe with all my heart that the prejudiced mind of America can become a kind and loving mind if enough of us are willing to sacrifice and suffer for it. I believe that every man has a heart and conscience and can be reached, and we will never stop trying to reach them, no matter what they do to us. All the great turning points of history have been made by small, determined groups, and I am grateful that my life has been set down at this time and under these circumstances.[72]

FH financed the journey to Raleigh for Barrett, Penney, and Maier, and eagerly awaited news from the southern movement, including its "insight and real wisdom as to how to proceed in the battle for human rights, using love as a weapon."[73] They heard moving testimonies from student sit-in veterans, and Barrett visited five campuses where sit-ins had occurred. They even recruited some of the Southern workers to visit FH. Their

---

[70]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[71]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[72]"Report from the South," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

[73]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, March 17, 1960," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

trip extended beyond King's meeting to include eight days of touring civil rights projects throughout the Deep South – North and South Carolina and Georgia.[74]

At this meeting, Easter weekend, 1960, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed. Hall and Barrett were certain that they wanted to join SNCC as soon as they could, and they remained in correspondence with Southern workers. They kept FH up to date with the Movement in the South and coordinated Northern efforts to help SNCC.[75]

Hall described her difficulty concentrating in her Temple University classes because "the pull of the southern movement upon [her] heart was so powerful." Nevertheless, she remained at Temple until she finished her coursework in 1962, even taking a few seminary classes her senior year. Temple would not award her diploma until 1965, however, because of a dispute over one credit hour.[76]

Since Hall could not yet go South, she took advantage of multiple opportunities through FH for nonviolent demonstrations. She took part in integration demonstrations at local department stores and other locations throughout Philadelphia. She participated in FH's support of the movement, most notably its Kingsway campaign. Hall also collaborated with students from CORE to join weekend Freedom Rides to the Eastern Shore for demonstrations.

---

[74]"Fellowship House," Meeting of Board of Directors, May 19, 1960," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

[75]Joyce Barrett, Letter to Jim Monsonis, January 23, 1962 and May 10, 1962; Jim Monsonis, Letter to Joyce Barrett, May 17, 1962, Papers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Reel 6.

[76]Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 173; "Report from the South," and "Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, March 16, 1961," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

When the Philadelphia Human Rights Commission received complaints about racial discrimination in the city, they would often ask FH students to "test" the location, report their findings, and be available as witnesses if the incident moved into litigation. FH first sent white students to the location, then a group of African American students, then another group of white students, to assess whether the business in question discriminated against African American patrons. For example, in October, 1960, a group was denied entry to the Chez-Vous skating rink in Upper Darby, Delaware; only white skaters with membership cards were permitted to skate. Barrett challenged the inconsistency of this rule since white non-members were regularly admitted. The group of nine sat-in in the rink lobby reading Bibles, Gandhi, and King until they were permitted to skate. The rink's patrons fled as the group entered, and many of the demonstrators reported being tripped, shoved, or otherwise harassed in the rink lobby.[77]

Hall recalled their group's picketing Woolworth's and Cresky's stores as well.[78] They met at FH prior to each demonstration to practice the techniques of nonviolence. They practiced how to picket, how to shield their bodies, how to fall safely, and how to not respond to hateful insults.[79]

FH remained in close connection with King, who agreed to speak at their thirtieth anniversary celebration, October 22-24, 1961. Hall was among a group of college students who joined him for a question-and-answer discussion group on October 22, where King defended civil disobedience as a foundational principle in American

---

[77]"Go No Further," *The News of Delaware*, October 13, 1960; Barbara Murphy, "Drama, Tension, Tension Grip Skating Rink in Upper Darby's First Sit-In," Fellowship House Papers, Urban Archives, Acc 723:1, Temple University Library; Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[78]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

[79]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

history.[80] FH organized study groups, press releases, radio and television advertisements, and published over 20,000 copies of materials on "Kingsway" of nonviolence.[81] King received warm hospitality in Philadelphia, including an official resolution of the City Council welcoming him to the city; Mayor Richardson Dilworth declared October 23, 1961 to be "Kingsway Day."[82] Religious, civic, and educational organizations collaborated to promote and attend the event, and the influx of phone calls and correspondence to FH following King's visit suggests that these three days made a lasting impression on racial justice throughout the city.

On the weekends, Hall and other FH students traveled to Baltimore – Freedom Riders – to stage demonstrations.[83] Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and Juanita Jackson Mitchell of the Baltimore NAACP organized hundreds of college students along the Eastern Shore to sit-in. Students dressed "properly" for the demonstrations, men in ties, and women in dresses, hats, and gloves.[84]

To justify arresting demonstrators, Maryland drafted a statement which restaurant owners were required to read aloud to desegregation demonstrators. To warrant arrest, the owners had to ask demonstrators to leave, and the demonstrators had to audibly refuse to leave. Barrett later joked that demonstrators would often target restaurants owned by non-English speakers so that they could not be arrested, or the demonstrators would read the

---

[80]"'Civil Disobedience' Urged by Dr. King in Phila. Talk," *The Evening Bulletin*, October 24, 1961; Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

[81]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Directors, October 5, 1961," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

[82]"Proclamation, Kingsway Day," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:37.

[83]Though the Eastern Shore demonstrations were called Freedom Rides, this should not be confused with the 1961 Freedom Rides in the South.

[84]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

statement on the owners' behalf. Those who wanted to be arrested stayed for the reading, while those who were not prepared for arrest would move on to the next restaurant before the reading of the statement.[85]

On November 11, 1961, Hall and ten other demonstrators were arrested for sitting-in at Barnes' Drive-In Restaurant in Annapolis, Maryland; this was the first of a series of demonstrations held on November 11 along Route 40 in Annapolis, Baltimore, and Ferndale, Maryland, designed to force Maryland's governor to push for desegregation of all public facilities.[86] Twenty-two others were arrested for making "the rounds of restaurants refusing service to Negroes"; they were released November 12 on $157 bail for trespassing and disorderly conduct. Hall was released on $100 bail alongside seven others, while Diana King, Joyce Barrett, and Larsine Sirizotti refused bail and chose to remain in Arundel County Jail, though records do not explain why some opted to remain in jail while others did not. Those released on bail all pleaded innocent and demanded a jury trial.[87] Anti-segregation leaders met a few days later at Cornerstone Baptist Church to plan subsequent demonstrations for continued pressure against segregation in Maryland.[88]

---

[85]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[86]Arsenault, *Freedom Riders*, 461.

[87]Interestingly, Stokely Carmichael, future executive director of SNCC and leader of SNCC's Black Power emphasis, was among those arrested November 11.

[88]"3 in Sit-In Turn Down Bail; 7 Released in Maryland," *The Evening Bulletin* November 13, 1961; "Crowds Besiege Maryland Cafes: Day-Long Anti-Segregation Drive Brings 33 Arrests – 300 Students Picket," *The Evening Bulletin*, "Three from City Refuse to Bail Selves Out of Maryland 'Sit-in'" *Daily News* November 14, 1961, "'Happy,' Say 3 Jailed in Bias Drive," *Baltimore News-Post* November 14, 1961, "New Protest is Slated at Restaurants," *Baltimore Sun* November 13, 1961, "10 Demonstrators At Annapolis Diner Ask for Jury Trial," *Washington Post* November 14, 1961, and "3 Decline Bail for Café Sit-In," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:90.

Another interesting presence in these November 11 arrests was *AFRO* reporter Elizabeth Oliver, who had been with the demonstrators at the restaurant but left before the anti-trespass "readout" had been

On November 16, Hall spoke on behalf of the demonstrators at the FH board meeting:

> *Fellowshippers in Jail*: Prathia Hall, attractive and eloquent member of our College-Agers, gave a most moving recital of the sit-in protest on the Governor Richie Highway leading to Annapolis, State Capitol of Maryland. Like Route 40, African diplomats, as well as Negro Americans, have suffered humiliation and even arrest when they protested discrimination in restaurants. Nineteen of our College-Agers, well trained in non-violent protests and fired by Dr. King's mission here, took part in the demonstration. Nine voluntarily went to jail remaining from Saturday through Monday, four refusing to take bail remain in the Anne Arundel County Prison. Two, already noted, have served fourteen days. Their cheerful, courteous, helpful behavior has won sheriff, jailors and police. Their continued presence in the jail has hurt the conscience of the whole community, beginning with the Governor. Citizens, white and colored in Annapolis, have come to call and stayed to learn about the deep convictions and happy self-giving of our young people. She reminded us that this is Joyce's 22nd birthday. A telegram to the prisoners was approved by the Board. All legal proceedings are being handled by Leon Higginbotham, Esquire, whose praise for the conduct and appearance of our students is very warm. A question period concluded the meeting, with thanks to Prathia Hall, whose words had moved many of our members to tears.[89]

On November 20, the eight previously released, including Hall, opted to return to jail and wage a hunger strike. The jailers were perturbed that the young women would not post bail because they wanted to paint the cell where they were staying. In the spirit of nonviolence and reconciliation, the girls offered to paint the cell themselves. They received permission from Sheriff Joseph W. Alton and chose a light green shade, to add a

---

read. Oliver's story on the events includes detailed accounts of dialogue between restaurant staff, police, and the demonstrators. In spite of identifying herself as a reporter on multiple occasions, police required documentation, not believing an African American woman could be a reporter. The restaurant owner demanded she be arrested for violating the anti-trespass law, even though as press she was permitted to be on the scene. She and the nine student demonstrators filled their cell with freedom songs. Oliver joked with officers: "I felt cheated I did not get a ride in a police car to the jail." Within ten minutes, Oliver was released on $24 bond; her story ended: "When I left, they were still singing." "'I Was in Cell 8,'" Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:90.

[89]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Directors, November 16, 1961," Fellowship House Papers, Acc 723:1.

feminine touch.[90] A newspaper photograph showed the girls smiling from their jail cell window.[91]

Hall remained in jail for two weeks. Her mother called Marjorie Penney, concerned that Prathia was missing too much school, eager for Penney's assistance in getting Prathia released. Penney told Mrs. Hall: "You know, Mrs. Hall, your daughter is a very stubborn woman. And she has made a decision, and she's taking a stand, and she doesn't want bail posted for her. You'll have a hard time convincing her that she should be in class."[92]

Hall came to trial in mid-December for the November 11 demonstrations in Annapolis. A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr. (Philadelphia NAACP) and Juanita Jackson Mitchell (Baltimore NAACP) represented the students in Anne Arundel County Circuit Court, arguing the unconstitutionality of their arrests. Chief Judge Benjamin Michaelson refused dismissal or acquittal until he heard evidence. When the defendants requested jury trial, Higginbotham insisted that he question each juror about their views of "whites associating with Negroes" and "prejudice against the students because they were from out of state" since objections to both had escalated bias against the demonstrators. The 100 percent male, white jury deliberated less than fifteen minutes before convicting them for trespassing. Higginbotham announced plans for appeal immediately after the verdict, and

[90]"3 Jailed 'Freedom Riders' Paint Cell at Annapolis," *The Evening Bulletin* November 15, 1961; "8 Continue Hunger Strike: Refuse Bail In Maryland Sit-Ins," *The Evening Bulletin* November 21, 1961.

[91]"'I Was in Cell 8'"; Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[92]Hall, Interview by Michaels.

Judge Michaelson released the demonstrators on fifty dollars bond.[93] Eventually, the case was dismissed with the passage of civil rights legislation in 1964 and 1965.

Hall and Barrett were among student activists arrested on the Eastern Shore by state police at a fast food restaurant along Route 40. The restaurant was part of a chain that no longer exists, but Barrett could not recall the name. Police released those arrested the next morning. Barrett suspected that the restaurant had demonstrators arrested as a quick fix to remove them from the premises, and dropped charges the next day to avoid the hassle of prosecuting. Because the charges were dropped, no record of the case survived.[94]

Freedom Faith: To Go Or Not To Go?

Even as Hall knew deep within her that she was called to join the Civil Rights Movement and once the completion of her education gave her opportunity to go, she agonized that she was disobeying her father's last directive to stay away from the danger of the Movement. Rev. Leon Sullivan, a major religious leader and director of the Opportunities Industrialization Center, located around the corner from Hall's family home, counseled her that she could best honor her father's memory by faithfully obeying God's call, even if that meant going South. Sullivan told Hall, "Prathia, you've got to remember that your father died that you might live." Hall reflected, "I didn't understand

[93]"Demonstrators Face Trials," *The Evening Capital Annapolis* December 19, 1961; Associated Press, "Jury Chosen for Sit-In Trial Of 9 From Fellowship House," *The Evening Bulletin* December 18, 1961; "9 From Here Face Trial For Sit-in," *The Evening Bulletin* December 19, 1961; Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[94]Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

that at the time and I didn't want to understand it….I wanted to tell Leon Sullivan a few things I wouldn't have been allowed to say."[95]

The cumulative influence of her father, the Greensboro sit-ins, her experience with demonstrations through college, and Sullivan's counsel empowered Hall to make her decision:

> I couldn't help myself. This was the moment. Greensboro was the signal. It was 1960. That's what you're supposed to be doing. It was a part of that knowing, knowing God as I knew myself. And knowing that I had been born to struggle. And that this was everything that I believed in. That it was God's work. That it was God's Movement, and that I had to go.[96]

For Hall, the Civil Rights Movement was a natural, necessary manifestation of her faith, both push and pull: "I think the reality of the problem was a pulling force….We were taught that it was our job to make a difference….But then there is a driving force also, and I think that faith is 'I feel God's fist in my back.' I don't have a choice, I have to do that."[97]

Rev. Hall was, as Prathia Hall describes him, "a race man." The Hall family home was often filled with conversations on racial advancement and the ideas of well-known speakers such as Howard Thurman and Adam Clayton Powell.[98] In reflections upon her father, Hall described him as her primary spiritual and intellectual mentor. His teachings on racial pride, the African American connection with African heritage, and the

---

[95]Prathia Hall, Interview by Vincent Harding, June 25, 1997, in Valparaiso, IN, Gandhi-Hamer-King Center, Valparaiso, IN; Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 173; Barrett, Interview by Lyons.

[96]Hall, Interview by Reel 3, 3.

[97]Hall, Interview by Harding, Reel 3, 3.

[98]Howard Thurman was the Dean of Chapel at Howard University and Boston University and a widely respected African American theologian, philosopher, educator, and civil rights leader. Adam Clayton Powell was the first African American congressman for the state of New York and pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem.

integration of religion and politics shaped her understanding of racial and theological identity.

From her father, Hall first came to understand "freedom faith." Rev. Hall taught his daughter that God intended all human beings to be free; when they are not, God equips and assists them in gaining their freedom. For Rev. Hall, this specifically meant that slavery was outside of God's will, as was Jim Crow segregation, and that God was on the side of those who opposed these systems of political and economic oppression. Hall later reflected: "I was convinced that [the Movement] was God's work and also my sacred calling, and so I went south."[99]

Hall described herself as born for the Movement. Having internalized her father's teachings on freedom faith, though the term was hers, she realized the dangers of going South, but she felt responsible to go where she was needed, even into peril. Her experiences – resident of impoverished North Philadelphia, educated in predominantly white schools, affiliated with the interfaith and interracial FH and trained in nonviolence and community outreach, around the corner from Rev. Leon Sullivan's Operations Industrialization Center, under the tutelage of her father, in the African American Baptist church – steeped her in the philosophical, theological, and practical aspects of social justice activism and uniquely equipped her for joining the Movement. She stood on the foundation of her father's teaching and began developing her own contextualized understanding of freedom faith through FH and her early encounters with SNCC. She bravely took her next step: joining SNCC's civil rights work in the South.

[99]Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 173.

CHAPTER THREE

"Living in the Face of Death": Prathia Hall in Southwest Georgia

Introduction: SNCC, SCLC, and the Albany Movement

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), created in 1960 at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina, organized voter registration and nonviolent direct action in conjunction with local activists and organizations. Though Martin Luther King, Jr. also spoke at the Raleigh meeting, Rev. James Lawson had a more profound influence on the students.[1] Lawson, the first African American divinity student at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where he was later denied graduation because of his activism, drafted the purpose statement of SNCC, rooted in Judeo-Christian nonviolence, social justice, love, and redemption.[2] SNCC affirmed the importance and potential of everyone in the struggle for justice. Headquartered in Atlanta, SNCC included delegates from several Deep South and East Coast states.[3]

Whereas Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) typically led short-term campaigns, SNCC students moved into communities for

---

[1]Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981, 1995), 23.

[2]Lawson, who learned non-violence while studying in India, trained the Nashville student movement volunteers in nonviolent workshops, learning resistance techniques like singing freedom songs in front of segregated businesses, sitting-in at counters where they were refused services, going limp when police tried to arrest them, and giving false names like "Abe Lincoln," "Super Snick," and "Freedom Now," when police demanded identification. These workshops also trained SNCC workers in self-protection during mob violence and prepared them for the kind of rhetoric and vocabulary they would hear in the course of their work. James Lawson, "Statement of Purpose," *The Student Voice* 1, no. 1 (June 1960), in *The Student Voice 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, edited by Clayborne Carson (Westport, CT: Meckler Corporation, 1990), 2.

[3]"Report from the Office of SNCC," *The Student Voice* 1, no. 3 (October 1960), in *The Student Voice*, 16.

long-term voter registration drives. A common saying was "SCLC mobilized, but SNCC organized." SCLC worked within existing structures, but SNCC operated via democratic leadership. SNCC cooperated with SCLC demonstrations, but many SNCC personnel resented King's sense of authority over local movement leaders and volunteers, giving him nicknames like "Da Lawd." SNCC also resented the attention white media gave to King's work rather than the hundreds of local volunteers that made the movement a national success. Ella Baker was an ideal SCLC mentor for SNCC because she refused to tolerate inflated self-importance, undemocratic processes, and hierarchy; when SCLC suggested SNCC be a "youth wing" of SCLC, Baker walked out of the meeting.[4] King enjoyed the enthusiasm of the young workers in SNCC and regularly sent financial contributions and spiritual encouragement for their work.

When SNCC first organized, one of their primary strategies was voter registration in the "Black Belt": rural counties, formerly plantation lands, where African Americans outnumbered whites, and where most congressmen had great power from long tenures in office. If African Americans could vote senior congressmen out of office, they could very quickly change the dynamic of Congress and its committees.[5]

The Albany Movement coordinated voter registration and freedom schools in several rural counties across Southwest Georgia. SNCC field secretaries canvassed door-to-door asking African Americans to register to vote. The county seat of Dougherty County, Albany was the biggest city in Southwest Georgia. Though slavery had ended,

---

[4]Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 40; Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 4, 88.

[5]Charles McDew, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX. See also "Southwest Georgia Voter-Registration Project," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

landowners continued to be white, and land-workers continued to be African American.[6] African Americans comprised forty percent of Albany's population of 56,000; locals called the African American side of town "Harlem." The key to Albany was its centrality to several surrounding counties "where black people outnumbered whites three to one."[7]

Three Freedom Riders arrived in Albany in October, 1961 to begin SNCC's project there. Charles Sherrod led SNCC's work in Albany, and Cordell Reagon and Charlie Jones worked closely with him. Ray Arsenault argued that wherever the Freedom Riders landed in late summer and early fall of 1961, they spread the spirit of nonviolence, kindling local African American support for civil rights efforts.[8] Some locals avoided them, scared to be connected with them: "Many of the ministers were afraid to let us use their churches, afraid that their churches would be bombed, that their homes would be stoned. There was fear in the air, and if we were to progress we knew that we must cut

[6]Faith Holsaert, Martha Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dottie Zellner, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010), 85; "Method of Revolution," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

According to a SNCC survey of African Americans in Terrell County, the average African American family earned less than one fourth of the average white household income, and less than one-fifth of the national household income. Twenty-five percent of African Americans had no more than a sixth-grade education. In 1960, African Americans comprised 64.4% of the population of Terrell County, yet represented only 0.04% of voters. See "In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Worker," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 7 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 87, 89.

[7]Bernice Johnson Reagon, "Uncovered and Without Shelter," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 122.

Sherrod compared the Albany project to Ezekiel's wheel within a wheel. Albany was the center, organizing work in surrounding counties. "Together, hub and spokes drove the wheel." Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 186; Howard Zinn, "Albany," January 8, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[8]Ray Arsenault, *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 402-403, 449, 452. Further, Arsenault argues that because these epicenters of rights activity were connected through the Freedom Rides, they created "an interlocking chain of movement centers" throughout the South. While Albany did not have a long history of civil rights activity, Sherrod believed the city held great potential for becoming a major movement center.

through that fear. We thought and we thought…and the students were the answer."[9] Sherrod recruited students from Albany State University (ASU) to join them.

The Albany Movement officially formed on November 17, 1961, the cooperative effort between the local Baptist Ministers' Alliance, Federated Women's Clubs, Lincoln Heights Improvement Association, NAACP Youth Council, SNCC, ASU students, and other local supporters, including several Albany gang members.[10]

The Albany Movement became the first massive African American "uprising" since Montgomery in 1955: "It represented a permanent turn from the lunch counter and the bus terminal to the streets, from hit-and-run attacks by students and professional civil rights workers to populist rebellion by lower-class Negroes." Most importantly, the Albany Movement highlighted with no uncertainty the reluctance of the Federal Government "to protect constitutional rights in the Deep South," demonstrated through the mass arrests and the repeated failure of the government to intervene to protect civil rights workers from discrimination or physical harm.[11]

With a sit-in to test the November, 1961 Interstate Commerce Commission ruling against segregated public transportation, several SNCC workers and ASU students were arrested on November 22 and held over the Thanksgiving holiday, which bolstered

---

[9]Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 125.

[10]Annette Jones White, "Expression of My Discontent," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 116.; Peter DeLissovoy, Interviewed by Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

The leadership of the Albany Movement included Dr. William G. Anderson, an osteopathic physician, as president, Slater King, a realtor, as vice president, Mario Page, a retired railroad worker, and C.B. King, Slater's brother, as legal counsel. Annette Jones White, "Expression of My Discontent," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 107-108.

[11]Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 123.

community support.[12] More than 700 were arrested the following week in various protest demonstrations against the December 10 arrests of twelve students sitting-in at the Central of Georgia Railroad terminal in Albany.[13] Albany Movement leaders offered to end demonstrations in exchange for desegregation of the bus station and release of those arrested, but Albany city leaders refused. The Albany Movement continued demonstrations and boycotts, and arrests continued.[14] Approximately 150 National Guardsmen, ordered by Georgia Governor Ernest Vandiver, and twenty state highway patrol officers were on duty to prevent mass racial violence, particularly after reports that Slater King had been beaten in jail and that Charles Sherrod had been "brutally beaten" at a Terrell County prison farm.[15]

Martin Luther King, Jr. was invited to speak at a December 15, 1961 Albany Movement mass meeting, where he addressed 1,500 African Americans in three services at two churches. King insisted protests remain nonviolent.[16] City leaders refused negotiations and continued demonstrations led to massive arrests: 749 since December 10

---

[12]Gordon Roberts, "Albany Student Penalty Stressed," *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, January 7, 1962. See also Joan Browning, "Shiloh Witness," (37-84) and Casey Hayden, "Fields of Blue," (333-376) in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, edited by Constance Curry, Joan C. Browning, Dorothy Dawson Burlage, Penny Patch, Theresa Del Pozzo, Sue Thrasher, Elaine DeLott Baker, Emmie Schrader Adams, and Casey Hayden (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000).

Forty African American ASU students were suspended or expelled in December, 1961 for participation in anti-segregation demonstrations, while zero white University of Georgia were punished for participating in resistance activities. Attorney C.B. King represented the students.

[13]SNCC News Release, Albany, Georgia, March 22, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 130, 134; Claude Sitton, "202 More Negroes Seized in Georgia: Albany Jails Demonstrators on 2d Day of Protests," December 14, 1961; Sitton, "202 More Negroes Seized in Georgia."

[14]"The Big Ambush," *The Student Voice* 2 (January 20, 1962), in *The Student Voice*, 48; Claude Sitton, "Guard Called Out in Racial Unrest: Georgia Parley Opens After Mass Arrests of Negroes," *New York Times* December 15, 1961; Sitton, "202 More Negroes Seized in Georgia."

[15]Claude Sitton, "Negroes' Unrest Grows in Georgia: Talks Continue in Albany – Dr. King and Aides Arrive," *New York Times* December 16, 1961; Arsenault, *Freedom Riders*, 471-2.

[16]Sitton, "Negroes' Unrest Grows in Georgia."

(less than one week), a national record for people willingly arrested for civil rights protests.[17] SCLC wanted to assume leadership of the Albany Movement, which deeply troubled SNCC.[18] SCLC, SNCC, and local civil rights leaders from Albany disagreed about strategy, which was the first time conflict between civil rights groups had "been aired in public."[19]

By the end of January, the Albany Movement had implemented a boycott of city buses and a selective buying campaign against white-owned businesses.[20] In early February, SNCC filed for an injunction against officials of the city of Dawson and Terrell County for interfering with voter registration attempts.[21] Although President John Kennedy issued a statement in support of civil rights and federal enforcement of civil rights laws, Albany law enforcement circumvented such initiatives by arresting demonstrators "fast, quietly, and on non-racial charges," which revealed the flaw in the Justice Department's "overvalue [of] public order."[22]

---

[17]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc. *This Far By Faith*, Episode Four: "Freedom Faith," Directed by Alice Markowitz Blackside, Inc (2002); Claude Sitton, "Dr. King Among 265 Negroes Seized in Albany, Ga. City Hall," *New York Times* December 17, 1961.

[18]Claude Sitton, "Negro Groups Split on Georgia Protest," *New York Times* December 18, 1961.

[19]Claude Sitton, "Rivalries Beset Integration Campaigns: Differences in the Protest Movement Tend to Stir Confusion but Center on Methods, Not Goals," *New York Times* (December 24, 1961). For more on the Albany movement in 1961, see James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 247-262 and Clayborne Carson, *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Warner Books, 1998), 151-169.

[20]Claude Sitton, "Negroes Boycott Albany, GA. Buses: Shift to Economic Weapons in Civil Rights Struggle," *New York Times* January 28, 1962.

[21]SNCC News Release, Dawson Georgia, February 3 and 8, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[22]Claude Sitton, "Civil Rights Report Applauds Kennedy," *New York Times* March 26, 1962.

Police harassed and assaulted voter registration workers in jail and in the streets, but SNCC continued canvassing for voter registration throughout Albany and expanded into nearby Lee and Terrell counties.[23] SNCC recruited teachers to help with citizenship schools and networked with community leaders for canvassing and mass meetings, in spite of injunctions against demonstrations in Albany.[24]

After a July 24 violent outbreak in Harlem, King declared July 25 a Day of Penance. Chief of Police Laurie Pritchett used the incident to promote his accusation that racial tension in Georgia was exclusively at the fault of "Negroes" and their "nonviolent rocks." While raising awareness of police brutality toward civil rights workers, King announced that if nonviolence was not restored, SCLC would leave Albany.[25] By late August, with few marchers still available and little hope for federal intervention, demonstrations waned. SCLC left Albany, but SNCC remained. Albany's white city leaders remained unwilling to negotiate with civil rights workers and persisted in

[23]See "Survey: Field Work, Spring 1963," SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

Voter Registration Demographic	Daugherty	Sumter	Terrell	Lee
Population Total	75,680	24,652	12,742	6,204
African American Population (% of Total)	27,245 (36%)	13,016 (52.8%)	8,206 (64.4%)	3,890 (62.7%)
Eligible African American Registered (% of African Americans)	2,850 (10.4%)	501 (3.8%)	51 (0.06%)	49 (1.3%)
Median Family Income – All	$4,401	$2,950	$2,057	$2,434
Median Family Income – Nonwhite	$2,430	$1,598	$1,313	$1,648
Median Grade Level Completed – All	10.5	8.4	7.6	6.9
Median Grade Level Completed – Nonwhite	5.9	5.0	4.5	4.0

[24]Claude Sitton, "Albany, Ga., Police Break Up Protest By 2,000 Negroes," *New York Times* July 25, 1962.

[25]Claude Sitton, "Dr. King Declares a Day of Penance," *New York Times* July 26, 1962; Martin Luther King, Jr., and W. G. Anderson, "Statement by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Dr. W. G. Anderson," July 25, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

conducting their segregation arrests using only the language of maintaining peace and public order.

Prathia Hall Joins SNCC

In 1962, Prathia Hall told her mother Ruby that she wanted to join the SNCC's work in the South. Her mother begged her to get a "real job," to be a teacher. Ruby told Prathia, "Well, since you must go, God go with you, God keep you as you go." Hall realized how difficult her work in the South would be for her mother: "I will always be grateful to her for that because she understood that it wasn't a choice, that I had to go."[26]

Hall went to a SNCC conference in April, 1962 at the Interdenominational Theological Center in Atlanta. She vividly remembered seeing Ella Baker, Julian Bond, Ruby Doris Smith, and Bill Strickland. Hall shared: "It was a powerful learning experience for me. I was tremendously inspired, went home really fired up knowing that I would be back just as soon as I could manage it."[27] In late August, 1962, Hall moved to Georgia after finishing her coursework at Temple University. A Temple University colleague whose family was also traveling South agreed to drive her. As she said, she "just showed up" at the Atlanta SNCC office, unannounced.[28]

---

[26]Prathia Hall, Interview with Vincent Harding, February 25, 1999, Ghandi-Hamer-King Center, Washington, DC; Prathia Hall, Interview with Sheila Michaels, February 25, 1999, Film and Media Archive, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

[27]Hall, Interview with Harding, Reel 3; Prathia Hall, Interview with Meredith Woods, October 4, 1999, Film and Media Archive, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

[28]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

Charles Sherrod was organizing volunteers for SNCC's project in Southwest Georgia, based in Albany.[29] In her second week in Atlanta, Hall was recruited to work with Sherrod and Charlie Jones. She had no trouble moving from Philadelphia to Atlanta to Albany because moving from one space to another was "all very natural" for her. She did not feel a "great moment of decision." Instead, she said, "It was in me."[30] Hall delighted in working with fellow ministers, but she continued to wrestle with her own calling: "I said very little about my own theological journey, however, since I was trying desperately to escape or evade the call to ministry."[31]

SNCC's staff in Albany was small, around two dozen by Summer, 1963: a variety of student workers, students from ASU, young people from Albany, and college students from the North, both African American and white.[32] SNCC's Albany office was in a

---

[29]The 1960s civil rights project of SNCC in Albany is most commonly called "The Albany Movement." The SWGA Project is a larger name to the multi-decade initiative in Albany and surrounding areas to promote racial and economic equality.

[30]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[31]Hall, Interview with Harding; Prathia Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 173-174.

[32]Anne Braden, "The Images are Broken: Students Challenge Rural Georgia," *The Southern Patriot* 20, no. 10 (December, 1962); Anne Braden to Charles Sherrod, October 24, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Joyce Barrett, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 12, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Sherrod introduced a new principle into SNCC: black and white students working together. The 1961 Freedom Rides were bi-racial, which contributed greatly to the violent resistance they encountered. Sherrod believed that if the beloved community was racially reconciled, then SNCC should model this integration no matter the danger: "We can only do this if they see white and black working together, side by side, the white man no more and no less than his black brother, but human beings together" Anne Braden, "The Images are Broken: Students Challenge Rural Georgia," *The Southern Patriot* 20, no. 10 (December, 1962).

Beyond theology, Sherrod had a specific, ingenious motivation for integrating SNCC. If white college students came South, they would bring their parents' financial support and national media attention with them, making voter registration a form of direct action. Charles Sherrod at 50th Anniversary of SNCC, Shaw University, Raleigh, NC, April, 2010; SWGA Panel; Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, ed. *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998), xiii, 57. Hall agreed: "As far as I was concerned, voter registration was direct action….On the field, it was the same struggle." Hall, Interview with Michaels. See also Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 221-223.

modest three-bedroom apartment, 504 South Madison Street, which multitasked as Albany Movement headquarters and housing for a few SNCC workers.[33] Hall described the Albany freedom house as "not much of anything…sparsely furnished…people sleeping everywhere."[34] Male staff shared a "musty fold-out couch" in the living room, and female staff slept on a bed and cot in the back bedroom.[35] Local supporters donated food and other supplies to SNCC.[36]

The Albany Movement prioritized voter registration over direct action. Hall explained the significance of this refocusing: "We soon discovered that [lunch counter desegregation] was not where it was at. Then we went into the Black Belt with voter registration. The people there couldn't eat at lunch counters because they were only making twenty-three cents an hour. That was where it was at."[37]

Field secretaries canvassed door-to-door to talk with local people about registering to vote, building trust and acknowledging the physical, social, and economic consequences for attempting to register: "We'd sit sometimes and rock on the porch for hours. Our intention was to finally convince a person to go and register. But we'd sit and

[33]Braden, "The Images are Broken."

[34]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[35]Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 185.

[36]Pete DeLissovoy described the collegiality of the workers gathered at SNCC's headquarters. Giles Grocery donated canned food to the movement so that they would not boycott his store. Sherrod ripped the labels off of the cans, "otherwise everybody eat the lasagna up first and all, all that's left is the string beans!" (Randy Battle, "SNCC Office: Sheriff 'Gator Johnson," in *The Great Pool Jump and Other Stories from the Civil Rights Movement in Southwest Georgia*, edited by Peter DeLissovoy (Lancaster, NH: You Are Perfect Press, 2010), 22-23.) They never had a lot of food, but they always had enough. Momma King, mother of C.B. and Slater King, was the matriarch of the King family, a very enterprising African American family, and regularly shared generously with the SNCC workers. Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[37]Guy and Candie Carawan, *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement through its Songs* (Montgomery, New South Books, 2007), 176.

listen." Some houses sent the students away "paralyzed by fear," though "always gracious." Others wanted to know about the SNCC workers and their family backgrounds. With time, Hall found that the local people would welcome the SNCC workers: "After several visits, the fearful and the skeptical usually allowed us to come in or to sit on their porches and visit. The topic of the imminent danger soon made its way into the conversation. They told us of people who had 'just come up missing' or had been found floating in the river after some minor assertion of personhood or an infraction such as trying to register to vote."[38]

Hall felt very comfortable engaging Southerners in conversation because she "knew the church upside down" and "knew their relatives when they came North." She said: "It was very easy for me to function very normally."[39] She also observed that SNCC workers "greatly respected that these people had been there all the time, and they weren't waiting for us to come in and save them." The local people had weathered and survived the system for years. Hall appreciated the "two-way educational exchange" of voter registration canvassing:

> We spent long hours on those porches. It took a long time. You didn't just walk up to somebody and convince them to register to vote and take their life in their hands. And so you talk to a person sometimes two weeks before you had permission, the time was right even to broach the subject. But during that time, we had the information about political empowerment, voter registration, literacy….They had the wisdom of the ages. And that's what we received. And this was especially true in my experience in Southwest Georgia, and I'm so glad that I really had that before getting involved in the cities.[40]

[38]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175.

[39]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 176.

[40]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

As SNCC workers sat on porches "learning from these people who worked from sun up to sun down…who suffered poverty and bigotry and brutality and never let it break them," Hall felt that the student activists were the "primary beneficiaries of the process, and that we were privileged to be there."[41]

Those who feared registration to vote, or even association with SNCC workers, understood the "entrenched white supremacy backed up by violence" that ruled Southwest Georgia.[42] Since whites controlled most African Americans' employment, housing, and utility infrastructure, those attempting voter registration frequently lost their jobs or suffered destruction of their personal property and homes.[43] Asking an African American to register to vote was asking him/her to risk everything. SNCC workers, too, were taking their life in their hands to live interracially and promote civil rights.[44]

To circumvent these intimidation tactics, SNCC implemented freedom schools to help potential voters pass voter registration exams. Since sharecroppers had to meet daily quotas, which often inhibited their participation in evening freedom school meetings, many SNCC workers helped sharecroppers on the field to meet their quotas so that they could make evening meetings.

---

[41]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow,* 176.

[42]Stephen Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 163.

[43]Those who mustered the courage to register to vote typically found excessive constraints arbitrarily imposed by voting clerks. Since the law permitted African Americans to vote, cities and counties created their own barriers. Voting officials often charged exorbitant poll taxes or required voters to pass difficult exams in American history. Many elongated the process by requiring a two week waiting period between registration and eligibility to vote, during which time the names of all who registered to vote were printed in the newspaper.

[44]Fred Powledge, *Free At Last?: The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991), 343-4.

Mass meetings facilitated gathering of the African American community and civil rights workers to discuss their work, confess their fears, coordinate plans, and sing freedom songs, the bread and butter of the movement.[45] These meetings sustained and nourished; they provided a key element of community support and spiritual encouragement for civil rights work as Christian orthopraxis.[46]

When Hall arrived in Albany in late summer, 1962, the Albany Movement was "in full swing."[47] She and Sherrod were instantly kindred spirits. They frequently discussed the work of theologians like Martin Buber and Paul Tillich.[48] Their shared commitments to social justice, education, and Christian leadership helped them form a strong bond, which Sherrod described as "closer than boy and girl friend."[49] Daniels remembered the two having a special connection: "Sherrod was a minister. And the two of them could communicate, you know. So they would always be, you know, doing their

[45]Joanne Christian Mants, "Right Side Up," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 130.

[46]One of the most significant contributions of the Albany Movement to the larger civil rights movement was music. Cordell Reagon brought songs from the Nashville student movement and Freedom Rides to Albany, where he organized the SNCC Freedom Singers: himself, ASU students Rutha Harris and Bernice Johnson, and SNCC field secretary Chuck Neblett (Carawan, *Sing for Freedom*, xx). The group toured the country spreading the music of the movement and Guy Carawan, a folk singer associated with SNCC, produced an album, *Freedom in the Air: A Documentary on Albany, Georgia 1961-1962*, which sold for $4.00 per copy as a fundraiser for SNCC field workers in Albany, eventually raising enough to support SNCC workers across the south. James Forman described the album as, "an excellent way of people from other areas to hear for themselves, in on-the-spot recordings, what the excitement and dignity of the Albany Movement sounded like." "Freedom in the Air 'Rich with Immediacy' says Harper's," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 3 (April, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 66.

[47]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 174.

[48]Faith Holsaert, Interview with Courtney Lyons, May 19, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[49]Charles Sherrod, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

little thing."[50] Sherrod described her leadership in Albany: "She was a beautiful person, in more than one way. She was smart. She could write. She was tactical."[51]

Hall and Sherrod keyed into the pastoral nature of SNCC's work. Hall pointed to the difference between SCLC and SNCC. "It was a life process…it was important that the first thing was that we lived with the people. This is one of the primary distinguishing factors between SNCC and SCLC. This is the difference between mobilizing and organizing. And the kind of organizing that we had to do…is that we lived with the people."[52] Through canvassing, SNCC workers discovered educational and practical needs of African Americans in the community and cooperated with community organizations and leaders.[53]

The respect that secular African Americans and SNCC workers had for the faith of local communities impressed Hall: "Everyone was impacted by the faith that the people had. Their courage was so much a product of that faith, and what makes people able to face death as a fact of life." Seeing the conditions of oppression that so many African Americans had endured for so long drew civil rights workers not only into respect, but "even a sense of participation….After all, they were facing death, and drew from the deep well of strength and struggle that was already present in the people." The

[50]Carolyn Daniels, Interview with Courtney Lyons, May 24, 2010, in Atlanta, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[51]Sherrod, Interview with Lyons.

[52]Hall, Interview with Woods.

[53]Jack Chatfield, Field Report, March, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

religious vitality of local communities "enriched" the entire community and sustained workers in the midst of extreme oppression.[54]

Though Sherrod was the primary leader of the SWGA project, Hall played a vital role. When Sherrod was out of town, which was somewhat often by 1963, Hall was in charge of the SWGA project. Sherrod trusted her implicitly, and later reflected, "I can think of nobody who didn't respect Prathia Hall."[55] Though some of the Southwest Georgia staff had tension at times with Sherrod, Hall was widely respected.[56] When SNCC veteran Sheila Michaels mentioned Hall's reputation of being a co-leader with Sherrod, Hall modestly responded: "Really? I didn't think that. I didn't know that."[57] Similarly, at Ella Baker's funeral, a male SNCC colleague told Hall, "We would have followed you anywhere you told us to go. That's how we respected you." Hall laughed and said, "Had I only known!"[58] Her significance was well-documented, however, as her name often appeared before or adjacent to Sherrod's in SNCC correspondence.[59]

Hall spoke often in mass meetings, and Sherrod frequently selected Hall to speak on behalf of the SWGA project and for fundraising. He described her: "She spoke well.

---

[54]Hall, Interview with Woods.

[55]Sherrod, Interview with Lyons.

[56]Faith Holsaert, "Staff Relationships or Personnel Politics," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.
Particularly as the Southwest Georgia project expanded into Lee, Terrell, Sumter, and other counties, SNCC workers in those counties had strong disagreements with Sherrod's strategy and leadership style.

[57]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[58]Barbara Ransby, Interview with Prathia Hall, June 25, 1997, in Denver, Colorado, Prathia Hall Papers.
Vincent Harding listed Prathia Hall with Bob Moses, Charles Sherrod, and Bob Zellner as leaders of the modern civil rights movement who were inspiring and empowering thousands to realize their capability to change the world. Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (Maryknoll: Orbis,1999), 74.

[59]Mary King to Burrelle's Press Clipping Bureau, November 6, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Ransby, *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement*, 345-6.

She went to talk with people well. She recruited other students to work with us very well. She did everything well. She was a great speaker. Little known to the world, she would awe Martin Luther King, Jr. down there in Southwest Georgia she spoke so well."[60]

In almost every issue of its newsletter, *The Student Voice*, SNCC solicited financial support from civil rights sympathizers. In its March 3, 1964 issue, this advertisement featured a full-page photograph of Prathia Hall standing behind a pulpit, addressing a mass meeting. The photograph, taken by SNCC photographer Danny Lyon, vividly portrays Hall's oratorical power and the respect her SNCC colleagues had for her leadership and wisdom.[61]

Faith Holsaert found Hall "extremely generous" and noted that although Hall was raised by a "race man," she never felt any barriers in friendship with Hall. Holsaert also appreciated Hall's leadership in taking them to church every Sunday and guiding them in the mores of Southern culture: "We should wear hose…and iron your clothes for Sunday church, et cetera….In a way, she functioned like an older sister for me."[62]

SNCC co-founder Julian Bond – later a twenty-year Georgia congressman and chairman of the NAACP – described Hall as "more formal" and "more deliberate" than other SNCC students. He found her thoughtfulness and wisdom remarkable and characterized her as "a young Ella Baker" in this regard.[63] Mary King also compared Hall

---

[60]Sherrod, Interview with Lyons.

[61]"Support SNCC Today!" *The Student Voice* 5, no. 8 (March, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 131.

[62]Holsaert, Interview with Lyons.

[63]Julian Bond Interview with Courtney Lyons, May 3, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

Hall saw herself in Ella Baker as well, though she was extremely modest in making this comparison. She admired Baker's leadership and courage: "I was a wandering pilgrim trying to

to Baker because of Hall's "paying close attention to what community people felt, attuned to unarticulated yearning," working with people where they were and paying attention to what they wanted and needed.[64] Larry Rubin, who previously met Hall through Fellowship House in Philadelphia, appreciated that "she was able to communicate with local people very, very well" and noted the authenticity of her commitment to non-violence as a principle for life.[65] He also mentioned how remarkable her "dignity" was for her age.[66]

Chuck McDew noted how welcoming she was: "She didn't make people feel that they were talking to a minister. She was not at all prudish." He was impressed by her ability to overcome social barriers: "Prathia could match you with somebody like two people, and would make you friends forever." He further explained: "These people here, and people in Georgia, would not see Prathia as being other than another good sister who was a hard worker…that we're all sitting at the same table."[67]

Many of her colleagues noted her maternal nature, even though she was the same age as they were.[68] Richardson agreed that Hall "seemed much more adult than some of

---

find my identity…I would find myself in her." See Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Freedom Movement*, 258.

[64]Mary King, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 15, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[65]For Hall, non-violence was not just an activism tactic, but was truly a way of life, a fundamental philosophical and theological conviction.

[66]Larry Rubin, Interview with Courtney Lyons, November 18, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[67]McDew, Interview with Lyons.

[68]Some in SNCC used to call Hall "the mother of the church" because of her deep religious convictions. Ransby, Interview with Hall.

us were."[69] Rubin echoed: "She was rather formal in the way she conducted herself…old-fashioned, polite."[70] Joyce Barrett echoed: "She had a dignity that most people don't have. I think she was born with dignity."[71] Her strength and power made them feel safe: "Prathia had that kind of prayerful way about her that you could just kind of get under her wing."[72]

Rep. John Lewis made similar observations about Hall. "Sometimes you would see her in a meeting, during a discussion. It seemed like she would just sit in there, not saying anything, but taking it all in, just absorbing; and sometimes in a prayerful mood." He remembered her dramatic flair for captivating storytelling: "She was known for her commitment, her dedication, her stick-to-it-ness; for hanging in there, for never giving up or giving in." He noted more than once that Hall "did not speak ill will or have bad feeling toward a fellow human being." Struck by her example, Lewis noted: "She was known for not just trying to be on the scene – be there for when the cameras were around – but going into places where you didn't see a camera." Lewis saw her "without a doubt, as a leader; that she was a leader in her own right." On Hall in SNCC executive meetings, Lewis shared: "She didn't speak a great deal, like some people….She didn't just run her

[69]Judy Richardson, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 30, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[70]Rubin, Interview with Lyons.

[71]Barrett, Interview with Lyons.

[72]Peggy Dammond Preacely, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

mouth. When she spoke out or spoke up, she had something to say. And people would listen to her."[73]

Sherrod echoed: "She could sing. And she could use the King's English, and get her way. She's a great speaker….She wasn't just a great speaker in a mass meeting. She was a great speaker in our meetings as well. When she was getting her point – wanted to make her point, if what we needed to do or what we needed not to do, she was also great at doing that."[74]

There was something exceptional about Hall, something difficult to articulate, that set her apart from her SNCC peers. Betty Garman Robinson said, "I was always…inspired by her presence….She had a presence that was beyond the ordinary….I don't know what the best word would be, but a very steady, strong, passionate, inspiring presence."[75] Don Harris agreed that Hall had an "extraordinary presence" of "dignity" and that she had a "sense of elegance and grace" that was "very, very clear."[76] Peggy Dammond Preacely described her as "so in charge of herself, and more assured than the rest of us."[77] Almost everyone I interviewed said something about her "presence" like, "There was just something about her" that riveted them.

Hall was also very responsible with money. Those staying with Carolyn Daniels received $30 monthly for host home expenses, which Hall would make stretch to feed the

[73]John Lewis, Interview with Courtney Lyons, August 11, 2009, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[74]Sherrod, Interview with Lyons.

[75]Betty Garman Robinson, Interview with Courtney Lyons, May 4, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[76]Don Harris, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[77]Preacely, Interview with Lyons.

entire group. Daniels compared her to Jesus feeding the multitude with the five fish and two loaves. “Sherrod always had to have his gallon of milk. And the milk was always there….Sherrod even asked me one day…‘How did we manage it?’ Said, ‘You kept a car and we ate.’” Daniels described Hall’s knack: “That’s just the way Prathia was….Whatever needed to be done, she would try to do it…She was just a leader. She was just a spiritual person. You could just feel it, you know, whenever she was involved, because that’s the way she was.” Daniels also noted that Hall insisted the group say grace every time they ate and that Hall had an extremely proper, respectable mannerism.[78] She carried white gloves in her purse and seemed to many of her SNCC colleagues to be “more proper, as more feminine, as more dignified than the rest of us.”[79]

One of the most influential aspects of Hall’s leadership was her guidance in training new SNCC volunteers. Her unique background prepared her for the challenges SNCC workers faced in the rural South; she was raised in the North by parents from the South, an African American educated in predominantly white schools, and familiar with the African American Baptist tradition. Hall could educate Northern white college students and non-religious or non-Christian volunteers about the idiosyncrasies of Southern African American culture, etiquette, and propriety to help them better form relationships with local people. Hall’s personal dignity, elegance, and composure set an example for how activists should conduct themselves in public: “Tall, gentle, and

[78]Daniels, Interview with Lyons.

[79]Preacely, Interview with Lyons.

fearless, Hall effortlessly reconciled a Northern élan with Southern roots and folkways."[80] Hall had a firm grasp of the different cultures involved – North, South, African American, white, religious, non-religious – and could easily foster communication between them. She stressed the importance of behaving according to Southern social mores, particularly details such as wearing stockings and gloves, attending church every Sunday morning, speaking politely, and finding a healthy balance between embodying the integration of the beloved community without needlessly causing a revolution against Southern sensibilities.

Larry Rubin described the practical and historical complications of Northern students doing civil rights work in the South: "We had trouble understanding each other's accents, but more than that, there was always a problem of built-in resentment and built-in feelings of differences between us – those of us from the North and the local people in the South – and that was true of black Northerners as well."[81] Peggy Dammond Preacely, a fair-skinned African American student from New York, appreciated Hall's guidance and realized the importance of modeling a new community with racial equality: "We've been singing long enough about 'Black and white together.' We have to practice it, live it, and as we do we make real a certain kind of dream."[82] Both saw Hall as an example of overcoming those bridges.

Because Sherrod knew he was inviting attack by living interracially and registering voters in rural Georgia, he demanded moral excellence from his team. "They live by a strict personal discipline. No drinking. No behavior that could even give the

[80]Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 73.

[81]Rubin, Interview with Lyons.

[82]Braden, "The Images are Broken."

appearance of anything but strict morality."[83] According to an Albany press release, "Snicks" were "not allowed to smoke, drink, swear or date. Girl workers must wear dresses at all times and low necklines are forbidden." SNCC workers were expected to observe the mores of the communities in which they worked, to the extent that even the non-religious were expected to "keep the Sabbath" and attend church services. For safety, no one was permitted to travel alone, ever.[84] Interracial teams were particularly careful about avoiding black males and white females sleeping under the same roof because of the danger this posed for the black males. Faith Holsaert, a Jewish New Yorker by way of Haiti who joined the movement in mid-September, 1962, recalled Sherrod's explicit "lynch prevention code," which meant she, a white female, was never to do anything to endanger black males or herself by giving even a hint of "fraternization."[85]

When SNCC workers would inquire about Sherrod's strict rules, he quickly answered, "I was trying to keep you alive."[86] Prathia Hall defended these strict rules as essential: "We have not only broken the sex line we have broken the color line. And because of this we must live up to the highest moral standards of the community."[87] Hall

---

[83]Braden, "The Images are Broken."

[84]Barbara Schwartzbaum, Press Release of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Albany, Georgia, July 17, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[85]Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 186.

[86]Peter DeLissovoy, "Southwest Georgia in 1963," in *The Great Pool Jump and Other Stories*, 50.

Chico Neblett's March, 1963 field report acknowledges the tenuous danger to all of the workers with bringing Faith Holsaert into Terrell County: "Due to the fact that we now for the first time, we have a white woman in the county, we are in a very tense state of being. We are concerned with what the community's reaction will be, both white and black." Chico Neblett, Field Report, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[87]Schwartzbaum, Press Release of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Albany, Georgia, July 17, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

was instrumental in helping Northern and non-religious SNCC workers understand and navigate Southern African American rural culture.

Sherrod initially operated via a "loving protection" of women by men, which did not work practically when women were some of SNCC's best volunteers. Hall described the revision of Sherrod's "loving protection": "It didn't work because the other thing is that when everybody was wounded, then whoever could get up first was the one who had to get up first and move, and that was just a reality."[88] Hall later said:

> Sherrod was a very strong personality. I thought that many of us were pretty strong, too, among the women. And of course Sherrod was very sheltering and of course I dealt with a sheltering daddy all my life. So I wasn't about to now be bothered by Sherrod, which is some of the jokes now that people tell about him."[89]

Some women within SNCC were upset by strict curfews and other rules for their conduct, to the extent that some women joked that jail was "the same as being in the project down there." Hall remembered these restrictions but "thought of them more as safety issues." During the daytime, SNCC workers could travel in mixed groups, but Hall quickly added: "You didn't want to be caught out there when the sun went down. And of course as we travelled in the cars, we travelled very carefully. And sometimes if you were a mixed group, the color of the driver determined who could sit up in the car if we were passed by somebody, and the others had to get down to avoid being stopped."[90]

White women in particular felt restricted by SNCC's rules, but according to Hall, "There was no way not to because the very color of your skin and living with these black people and the whole gender thing and the whole white Southern fixation on white

---

[88]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 146.

[89]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[90]Hall, Interview with Michaels. See also Penny Patch, "Sweet Tea at Shoney's," in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, 131-170.

womanhood and living with black men and all of those kinds of things placed on you restrictions of the movement."[91] Faith Holsaert did not feel sexism within SNCC but did feel limitations as a white woman, different from those of African American women: "Prathia had a male role and skills that I certainly didn't have [laughter], and so she had the greater freedom of movement."[92]

Hall understood the complexities of white Northerners living in the rural African American South and wanted to ensure that everyone was as safe as possible. She realized that many of the students she trained "had never had to 'take low,' to use the idiom, for anything." Once they came South, "Now…whatever they did they were doing with Black people, which immediately put everybody's lives at risk…without the period of proving themselves, of learning….You had younger students who had to be oriented in a hurry. And there is no way that you could give the same kind of responsibility to those people in that situation."[93] Hall's tremendous insight as a Northerner raised by Southerners became apparent in the dilemma of behavior restrictions and training new student workers in how to survive in the rural South:

> Northern people who were never told that they couldn't go anywhere, couldn't do anything, to the bathroom they wanted to or the drinking fountain or the restaurant, were not used to any restrictions. And we were in an extraordinarily dangerous world. We were in a brutally dangerous world where especially the fact that we were racially mixed was dynamite. And I did not find those kinds of restrictions irritating.[94]

---

[91]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

[92]Prathia Hall, quoted in Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* New York: Oxford University Press, 1997, 124.

[93]Prathia Hall, quoted in Robnett, *How Long? How Long?*, 126.

[94]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

When asked if Hall ever faced gender discrimination in SNCC, Holsaert responded: "I think that she was so self-assured, at least on the surface, that I don't think anyone in SNCC would have dared to try to cut off her opportunities….She really flourished partly because she was so confident."[95] Hall did see "tremendous sexism, chauvinism and even some misogyny among SNCC men," but even so, Hall said, "Even as a religious woman, I would never have had the freedom in SCLC that I had in SNCC. The difference in SNCC was that we could talk about it." She continued: "I don't believe that any men in SNCC ever disrespected me because of my gender. I never had the sense that I was not taken seriously."[96] By and large, "women felt themselves to be an important and integral part of SNCC."[97]

Reflecting on the sexism in the movement later in her life, Hall described the "complicitous…partnership" that African American women had with men. On the one hand, the dominance of men in leadership and interactions with the press were examples of sexism. On the other hand, "women often went along with that, feeling that it was important to our community that Black males be seen as competent, standing up and

---

[95]Holsaert, Interview with Lyons.

[96]Ransby, Interview with Hall.

The only evidence suggesting Prathia Hall was discriminated against as a woman is that when SNCC sought to appoint a dedicated fundraiser, to travel and raise support for SNCC across the country, though Hall's name was offered as a strong candidate for the position, "Forman mentioned that [a] male would be better since [the] job involved living virtually out of a suitcase." Executive Committee Minutes, September 4, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 36, quoted in Robnett, *How Long? How Long?*, 109.

[97]Robnett, *How Long? How Long?*, 111. For multiple perspectives of women in SNCC regarding gender discrimination, see *Deep in our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000) and *Hands on the Freedom Plow* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010).

Prathia Hall believed that African American women had an easier time asserting themselves for leadership than white women did: "There is a sense in which our social incubator in the Black community trained and nurtured Black women to do whatever was necessary," whereas white women "came out of that whole pedestalization and trivialization of women that the southern power establishment imposed on them." Prathia Hall, quoted in Robnett, *How Long? How Long?*, 123.

giving strong leadership. I don't think, at the same time, that women felt that taking that posture was depriving them or taking anything away from them….At that time, there was an attitude of partnership."[98] Rep. John Lewis lamented that the movement did not sufficiently look inward to recognize its own discrimination against women's leadership and noted: "Prathia, if she had been a man and not a woman, people would know much more about her….She would have been much more visible – not just within SNCC, but in the whole movement and in America."[99]

---

[98]Prathia Hall, quoted in Robnett, *How Long? How Long?*, 42-43.

[99]Lewis, Interview with Lyons.

In a collection of narratives from women in SNCC, *Hands on the Freedom Plow* (2010), eight women from the SWGA Project relay their experiences in the movement, demonstrating the critical roles of support, organization, and courage. Annette Jones White recalled a woman who had been denied voter registration because she could not correctly pronounce "Constitution" greeting her after attending freedom schools: "She had finally registered to vote. One woman, one vote."[99] Faith Holsaert, an editor of *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, noted that almost everyone who addressed gender treatment within SNCC reported being "treated more democratically and in a more egalitarian fashion than anywhere else in culture at that time."[99] Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, another editor of *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, remembered a general understanding among SNCC "that there would be women in front of the press, women giving talks, women deciding strategy, philosophy….We grew up in the era of Daisy Bates, Rosa Parks…so it's sort of like you could be all that you could be." Annette Jones White, "Expression of My Discontent," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 114; Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

African American women understood their racial and gender vulnerabilities, and they understood that attaining dignity, equality, and an end to sexual oppression, brutality, and terrorism were important aspects of their fight against segregation. Bernice Johnson Reagon joined the movement precisely because of this awareness: "If you were a girl, some really bad things could happen to you – and often there was not one thing you could do about it….So, uncovered, without shelter, with every ounce of strength I had, and all my heart and soul, I joined this Movement for FREEDOM!" Though she did not count herself part of women's movement until the 1970s, her civil rights activism in Albany planted a seed that helped her realize: "This doesn't have to be a given. There might just be another way to be Black and female in this universe." See *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 87; Reagon, "Uncovered and Without Shelter," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 127.

There is a growing historiography of the movement from the viewpoints of women. Vicki L. Crawford, Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods' *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers, 1941-1965* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990) emphasizes that women participated in a variety of roles and experienced the movement in a variety of ways. Belinda Robnett's *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) offers a sociological, womanist retelling of the civil rights movement, from the vantage point of African American women "with a new understanding of how the movement succeeded and especially how important the symbiotic and sometimes conflictual relationship between men and women was, and is, to the African-American community" (6). Robnett argues that women, through informal and formal leadership, served as bridges between grassroots and formal leadership, stimulating the grassroots support for the movement upon which "the entire movement rested" (9). Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin edited a collection of autobiographical, biographical, and sociopolitical essays on African

Hall was key in preparing SNCC volunteers to adapt to the psychological realities of working in the "overlay of terror and violence" in the rural South, living with the reality that "at any moment and at any time, someone could come and kill you….If a car was heard too late at night, everybody just froze, because we didn't know whether that was friend or foe."[100] Hall's freedom faith gave her a steady perspective on managing fear:

> Fear was the most sane and intelligent response in a system like this. Our response was, we lived with the fear, we came to understand it and then our job was to work with it and to help people not to be afraid to learn how to keep fear from paralyzing you and to take necessary action in spite of fear and that was a slow process. We worked in the fields sometimes, we sat on porches, listening and talking before the subject of voter registration was mentioned. In that process, we were learning together how to allow the yearning for freedom which was lived so deeply, so profoundly within the being of the people to not only surface but to surround and transform the fear….It would be insanely dishonest to say we were unafraid. Fear was an intelligent response. Fear was part of the survival kit. The challenge was to use fear as a signal to exercise caution while refusing to allow fear to paralyze you.[101]

Another obstacle for Northern students who stayed in host homes was the reality of rural poverty: outhouses instead of indoor bathrooms, no air-conditioning in the

---

American women in the movement, covering a more broad section of African American women and their experiences than previously done. See Bettye Collier-Thomas and V.P. Franklin, eds., *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001) and Rosetta Ross's *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003). Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon have edited a collection of speeches by women in the movement, emphasizing both the contributions of women in leadership as well as the sacrifices women made in order to serve the movement. See Davis W. Houck and David E. Dixon, eds., *Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009). Danielle L. McGuire's *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010) tells the story from the viewpoint of African American women, both in their sexual exploitation by white men and their courageous resistance to this exploitation. McGuire emphasizes ways that, through the movement, African American women asserted themselves as human beings, "worthy of protection and respect," as well as the way white segregationists used sexual understandings to vilify supporters of the movement (95).

[100]Preacely, Interview with Lyons.

[101]Hall, Interview with Woods, 5; Prathia Hall, quoted by Charles Wheeler, "Revealing Voices for Civil Rights," *Greensboro News & Record* (March 20, 2011).

Georgia summer heat, and new types of cuisine. Preacely said, "They shot a squirrel for breakfast or skinned a chicken."[102] Hall described the rural poverty of Southwest Georgia:

> When I compare it with the slums of the cities, it seems that here, even the poverty seems primitive. The big city slums are a complicated, mechanized, industrial ugliness, woven in an intricate pattern which has a thread around many men. But here the shacks are low and makeshift – not the leftover houses of the wealthy or the middle class, but the shabby heirlooms which were built shabbily and have been passed on from slave to slave, from generation to generation. The shacks are low, the food simple, the work back-breaking, the poverty degrading. When you look up at the beautiful pure sky above, your glance has to come a long way down to see the unadulterated ugliness of the system on the ground.[103]

One incident particularly struck Peter DeLissovoy about Hall's leadership and respect within the Southwest Georgia community. On his second day in Southwest Georgia, the new recruits returned to the house where they were staying to find that all of their belongings had been stolen. The group immediately asked Hall and Sherrod about what to do. Hall walked up to James Daniel, an Albany gang leader, who had become a major supporter of SNCC's work in Southwest Georgia, and demanded, "James, get those things back." "Within three hours James Daniel had located the bunch of thieves in the Ritz movie theater with all these goods, watches, sleeping bags, everything. And they were right back. Everything: typewriters, every possession was returned the same day."[104]

Hall noted the adjustment between her Philadelphia community and the new community of the SNCC SWGA Project:

> The new community was really strange because we were black and white. We were Northern and Southern….We had come from different places, different

[102]Preacely, Interview with Lyons. See also Penny Patch, "Sweet Tea at Shoney's," in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, 131-170.

[103]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[104]DeLissovoy, Interview with Lyons.

> spaces. Some of us were very religious in our motivations. Others were very political….But, we had a common goal, and we had a common commitment. And I think that's what kept us together. And we had a common task, which was to stay alive today….Your differences begin to pale in the face of a need to stay alive…And we could not stay alive without depending on each other….Just the nuances of being black and white and living together in the same houses, or walking down the street together would so enrage the local whites that we could be shot down just like that….So we were living together and working together because of what we believed. And that took precedence over our differences.[105]

As Hall trained student volunteers to operate within Southern culture, she was also teaching them how to relate compassionately to the local people and to each other, to understand the multi-layered systemic oppression of Southern African Americans, and to build relationships across these divides.

Hall also articulated for new volunteers the importance and sustaining nature of mass meetings: "The mass meeting itself was just pure power." Describing her first night in Southwest Georgia, Hall said, "I had never in my life been so profoundly moved as I was by the mass meetings that were the central rallying points of the Movement….It was impossible to stand as a spectator outside the circle of this communion." She appreciated the "rhythm of the feet, and the clapping of the hands from the old prayer meeting tradition…the lined hymn tradition."[106] She described the power of mass meeting hymns:

> Every mass meeting was a prayer meeting and every statement and every report was a testimony. SO whether you called yourself religious or not, it was about the struggle of the powers of life against the powers of death, and that's religion. And when we would walk up to the churches, coming to the meetings, the people would already be there and the church would be rocking with "A Charge to Keep I Have." The last verse of that old, old hymn is:

---

[105]Hall, Interview with Harding.

[106]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., "Freedom Faith"; Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 174.

Hymn lining refers to the entire congregation singing, but one person lined the song before the congregation joined.

To serve this present age
My calling to fulfill.
Oh may it all my powers engage
To do my Master's will.[107]

Through days of voter registration canvassing on foot, waiting in line at the county courthouse, being crammed into filthy jail cells without water or food, helping sharecroppers meet daily quotas so they could attend mass meetings, and the ever-present fear that at any moment, death could come, Hall described: "The prayer meeting song is a testimony about what has already come, happened in one's faith and what will happen in the future....My back is against the wall and I am right now in need of help!! One calls up that help by affirming that it is already there."[108] Mass meetings would begin with an hour or more of singing freedom songs congregationally. Freedom songs breathed life and hope into darkness and despair: "The survival kit of oppression includes humor, faith, and music. We couldn't live if we couldn't laugh, we would not have lived if we didn't believe, and we couldn't have done any of that without the music."[109]

During the hours, turned to days, turned to weeks locked in infested jail cells, SNCC workers sang freedom songs as a practical tool for survival. Hall explained: "When fear was so real and so powerful we could taste it, we would sing those songs. And that we were bound together. There was a connection. That was where the community was."[110] When jailers demanded they stop singing, civil rights workers knew

[107]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 125.

[108]Hall, Interview with Woods.

[109]Hall, Interview with Woods; Reagon, "Laid My Burden Down," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 150.

[110]Hall, Interview with Harding.

their message was getting across: "We knew we were being heard, and we could just sing louder and longer."[111]

For Prathia Hall, singing Freedom Songs was practicing freedom faith. "What do you do when you are so surrounded by this powerful force of death? You sing life." Hall often spoke of the power of the music of the movement:

> Music was a lifeline, a source, a well from which we could draw, a source of courage and strength in the face of eminent danger. With these forces of death with their guns loaded and sometimes drawn, surrounding you and taking down your name or license plate number, to be able then to sing and the relationship between the songs of the movement and the songs of the church is of one fabric, that's a continuous thread. What the Freedom Singers and various movement projects did was simply add to the words, develop the subtle variations in the melodies, were almost a living expression of what we're living right now. In the movement rallies there would be some slight variation from the old prayer meetings that…has a different phrasing of the melody, those pregnant pauses, those are underlying, underscoring, it's almost like you're gulping for breath in the face of fear.[112]

"Because the mass meetings were a place of reinforcement for us," Hall explained," they were under constant surveillance." Phone lines were tapped, and local law enforcement often lurked outside the meetings, listing those in attendance, barging in on meetings, and making threats. Hall recognized the intimidation tactics but persisted: "It would be insanely dishonest to claim that we were unafraid…The challenge was to use fear as a signal to exercise caution while refusing to allow fear to paralyze you."[113]

Freedom Faith Put To Feet

In SWGA, Prathia Hall's freedom faith went from abstract to concrete, as Hall bravely entered the dangers of the impoverished, rural South.

---

[111]Reagon, "Laid My Burden Down," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 150.

[112]Hall, Interview with Woods.

[113]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 178.

Hall showed freedom faith for the meeting of her basic needs. SNCC field secretaries received "subsistence" income, anywhere from $15 to $40 per week; the SWGA team each received $10 per week, $9.64 after deductions, and sometimes nothing at all.[114] Many weeks, in order to eat, Hall and other SNCC workers earned money by "washing cars, dishes, floors, and windows, cutting grass, or any other chore around the house."[115] When donated cars failed, which was a recurring problem in Southwest Georgia, SNCC'ers walked or rode mules.[116]

Hall also showed freedom faith as she moved into Terrell County. Though SNCC workers occasionally traveled back to Albany for mass meetings or other resources, these volunteers were immersed in Terrell and Lee counties, where SNCC focused its work during Summer, 1962. "Terrible Terrell," also nicknamed "Tombstone Territory," was notorious for civil rights infringements: it was the first entity prosecuted for voting violations under the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which prohibited intimidation and similar tactics used against African American voters.

Very soon after Hall arrived, she experienced police scare tactics first hand. Police raided the mass meeting at Mt. Olive Baptist Church on the night of July 25, the second police raid on a mass meeting in two weeks. Sherrod led the meeting, and Ralph Allen, Penny Patch, Charlie Jones, and Hall were also present. Allen had brought two women planning to register to vote. As they walked to the church, Allen was surprised by

---

[114]SNCC depended upon donations and grants. SNCC suffered from severe financial difficulties and at times could not send any money to field workers. In a letter to Martha Prescod, Julian Bond said, "The best way to send money to SNCC is as soon as possible." See Julian Bond to Martha Prescod, December 13, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 8. Support-raising efforts in the North provided critical financial and resource support for SNCC's work in the South, including money, food, awareness, and volunteers.

[115]"They Lived in the Counties," *The Student Voice*, 57-8.

[116]Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 13.

the number of vehicles present until he realized "about twenty local white citizens" were there to harass the meeting.[117] As Sherrod led the singing of "Pass Me Not, O Gentle Savior," Sitton heard a dozen cars pull up to the church.

The police outside spoke loudly and called license plate numbers from cars parked outside the church. Hall and others continued their meeting, in spite of their fear. Thirteen "hat-wearing, cigarette-smoking, tobacco-chewing" police officers burst through the door; they "tried to intimidate the cool, poised bespectacled Sherrod, who refused to be stampeded."[118] Sherrod continued, "If God be for us, who can be against us. We are counted as sheep for the slaughter." Sherrod prayed for peaceful relationships between blacks and whites and for courage to persist in the struggle. He even prayed for the sheriff by name, that God would "free the sheriff from chains of hate and racism."[119]

As the congregation began to sing "We are Climbing Jacob's Ladder," Deputy R. M. Dunaway beat his flashlight against his palm in the back of the room. Lucius Holloway, a Terrell County voter registration leader, addressed Dunaway: "Everybody is welcome. This is a voter registration meeting."[120] Terrell County Sheriff Z.T. Mathews ordered Dunaway to take the names of mass meeting attenders and told a reporter: "You know, Cap, there's nothing like fear to keep niggers in line."[121]

---

[117]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 58.

[118]Trezzvant W. Anderson, "Sheriff Scares Would-Be Voters," *Pittsburgh Courier* August 4, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[119]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 178-9; Claude Sitton, "Sheriff Harasses Negroes at Voting Rally in Georgia," *New York Times* July 27, 1962.

[120]Sitton, "Sheriff Harasses Negroes at Voting Rally in Georgia"; SNCC News Release, Sasser, Georgia, July 26, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[121]Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 138.

Hall described the rest of the meeting: "We sang our freedom songs with defiant and prayerful fervor."[122] As the congregation began to hum "We Shall Overcome," police withdrew from the church. Sitton reported: "Their voices had a strident note as though they were building up their courage to go out into the night, where the whites waited."[123] As the mass meeting dismissed, Hall and others walked into a swarm of local police officers standing outside, taunting individuals with threats of terror.[124]

Hall later reflected pointedly on the realities of fear in the midst of terror:

> We've talked a lot about coming face to face with death, and I think sometimes for young people that's very hard to imagine. But we did it, we had to do it every day. That meant that if you were driving down the road and a car came up behind you, if the car stayed behind you, you were terrified that you were going to be shot from behind, and if the car passed you, you hit the floor, which put you in a pretty difficult position if you were the driver. Nobody here has ever said they were not afraid. In fact, anybody who came into that situation and wasn't afraid, we didn't want anything to do with.[125]

As Hall worked in Lee County with Penny Patch, Kathleen Conwell, Peggy Dammond, and Joan Maxwell, police used intimidation tactics against the women, including threatening to harm them or harm those who helped them, stopping them without cause, and threatening to bomb the homes where they were staying.[126] African American children in Lee County had only had a formal public education structure since

---

[122]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 178.

[123]Sitton, "Sheriff Harasses Negroes at Voting Rally in Georgia."

[124]Claude Sitton, "2 Negro Churches Burned in Georgia: FBI Men Attacked: Robinson Visits Site," *New York Times* (September 10, 1962); Sitton, "Sheriff Harasses Negroes at Voting Rally in Georgia."

[125]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 59.

[126]"They Lived in the Counties: Churches Burned, Nightriders Attack SNCC Staff in Southwest Georgia Voter Registration Drive," *The Student Voice* 3, no. 3 (October, 1962) and "In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Workers," 4, no. 7 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 57, 87; Peggy Dammond, Field Report, July 9-16, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7; SNCC News Release, Lee County, Georgia, September 10, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

1956. Prior to 1956, African American children were educated at churches and vacant houses.[127] Hall and other SNCC workers recruited families to file a school desegregation law suit, but they found less interest in pursuing legal action than they had anticipated.[128]

Hall showed tremendous courage and a prophetic spirit in the midst of police brutality. Deputy Marshall D. E. Short of Sasser arrested Roy Daniel (also known as Roychester Patterson), Hall, Ralph Allen, and Willie Paul Berrien for speeding on August 30. Short fired two shots in the air while pulling over the vehicle. Patterson challenged the speeding charge since he was only driving 30 mph at the time of being pulled over, to which Short responded: "you think you can do anything you damn well please."[129]

Hall "answered him by looking him in the eye – which was something that was forbidden, for black people to look white people in the eye – and said to him, we're talking to people about registration and you have no right to stop us."[130] Hall described his reaction: "He became just enraged. Changed colors, began literally foaming at the mouth,…cursed me in, with names I had, some I had never heard before or since." She later elaborated that after Short repeatedly shouted "Shut up!" he was "trembling with rage and calling me a long-haired [yellow] bitch, he pulled a gun and began firing at the ground around our feet."[131]

After emptying his gun, Short arrested all of them and held them at "this filthy little vermin-infested hold which passed for the Sasser jail….It was about three times the

---

[127]Kathleen Conwell, Field Report, July 10-14, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[128]Kathleen Conwell, Field Report, July 10-14, 1962 and August 17-26, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[129]"Two Negroes," *The Aiken Standard and Review* September 10, 1962.

[130]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., "Freedom Faith"

[131]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., "Freedom Faith"; National Archives File #44-HQ-20425, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

size of an outhouse and smelled as bad." The group was separated by race, not gender; the African Americans were in one cell, and the whites were in another.[132]

In that moment, Hall did not fear the shooting, her arrest, or being in jail. She feared "that perhaps no friendly person had seen us, and that we might be held there, and then taken out in the middle of the night, and done away with." As Deputy Short fired at her feet, Hall felt numb, which she believed was "a gift from God." Hall explained:

> If I had moved one muscle, I would have given him the excuse he wanted to raise the gun point blank and fire…I was numb….I believe my numbness was a gift from God that saved my life….And that I didn't move, I know that I was held because there were other times when we had to operate out of fear….Fear could be a very positive thing. Because for instance, fear would make you not do, not do, not, not do something stupid, you know. But in that particular incident, I wasn't operating out of fear, I wasn't operating. I was just there. By the grace of God. I was glad to stand in that vermin infested hole because I was alive. But I came very close to not being alive.[133]

Hall and her fellow SNCC field workers survived.[134]

Learning that the Albany Movement planned several voter registration attempts for September 4, 1962, a group of 3,000 Klansmen and sympathizers held a meeting in a pasture seven miles outside of Albany the night before.[135] After the 8:00 a.m. mass meeting on September 4, Prathia Hall and three other SNCC field workers – a white male and female and Roy Daniel – began their work of canvassing.

---

[132]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., "Freedom Faith"; National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

[133]"S. W. Georgia Voter Program Continues Despite Legal Losses," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 1 (April, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 66; Hall, Interview with Harding.

[134]"Two Negroes," *The Aiken Standard and Review* September 10, 1962; Hall, "Freedom-Faith," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 177; National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

[135]"Klansmen Stage Albany, Ga., Rally: Tension Rises as Negroes Schedule School Move," *New York Times* September 4, 1962.

As the four SNCC workers left the home of Lehman Davis, who had recently registered to vote, they "saw a great cloud of dust, a pickup truck barreling down the road." Deputy Short backed into a dirt road near the house, stopped the group, and shouted at them: "So, you're back, I'm going to hang something on you." Short harassed Allen about his vehicle registration and license plates.[136]

Short demanded that the workers ride in Ralph Allen's vehicle and leave town. Allen drove the vehicle outside city limits and turned right on a dirt road, at which point Short pulled up alongside the truck, demanded they exit the vehicle, and pulled a gun on them. He repeatedly shouted "Get!" while firing shots in the direction of their vehicle as they drove away from the scene. Hall recounted that "[Short] chased three of us out of town by firing gunshots at our car and threatening to fill us full of lead and put us all in the cemetery." Short followed the vehicle all the way to Dawson, threatening to shoot them when they stopped to use the telephone. As they reached the edge of town, Short shouted from his car window, "Get out and stay out" and fired a warning shot into the ground.[137]

Hall's discernment of Short helped her survive his brutality against them: "That was another one of those moments when you look death in the face and you also look at the enemy, which is that evil, and the victim who is the bearer of that evil, in the face, and it takes care of the fear problem."[138]

---

[136]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425; UPI, "Victims Pushed Voter Registration: Terrell Marshal Charged with Rights 'Violations,'" *Atlanta Daily World* January 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; (AP) "U.S. Accuses Sasser Officer of Harassing in Racial Case," *The Atlanta Constitution* January 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[137]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425; (AP) "U.S. Accuses Sasser Officer of Harassing in Racial Case," *The Atlanta Constitution* January 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[138]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 60.

On September 5, 1962, Hall was with a group gathered at the Harris house in Albany to welcome new recruit Jack Chatfield. They piled into "a little teeny Nash Rambler," which they filled with loud laughter, "a kind of defiant act in the middle of a tense city that had been shaken by a mass movement." After stopping at a gas station, Hall asked the group if their plans were straight for the next day as they continued to Dawson; it was around ten or eleven at night.[139]

The SNCC crew staying with Carolyn Daniels settled in for the night. Jack Chatfield was enjoying a late night snack in the kitchen, while others were already asleep. Hall described the quiet roar of a car motor: "As it slowed in front of the house, there was a hail of gunfire."[140] Shots riddled Daniels' house.[141] Chatfield described the sound: "They were so loud that I thought someone had thrown a firecracker, a cherry bomb, right into the midst of us and exploded."[142]

SNCC workers had been trained with a few precautions for moments like these. They had learned to sleep on pallets on the floor to dodge nightrider shotgun attacks, often aimed at the level of a person lying in a bed. Hall had also been trained to hit the floor at the sound of gunfire.[143]

---

[139]Jack Chatfield, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[140]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175.

[141]"They Lived in the Counties: Churches Burned, Nightriders Attack SNCC Staff in Southwest Georgia Voter Registration Drive," *The Student Voice* 3, no. 3 (October, 1962) and "In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Workers," 4, no. 7 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 57, 87.

[142]Chatfield, Interview with Lyons.

[143]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175; Preacely, Interview with Lyons.

"When the shooting started, they all tried to hide:" Roy behind the refrigerator, Sherrod under a piece of furniture, Chatfield under a window, and Hall and Daniels on the floor in a back bedroom. Sherrod called roll to ensure everyone survived the shooting. Prathia Hall and Chris Allen suffered minor bullet graze injuries, but Jack Chatfield was shot twice in the arm.[144]

Afraid that the night riders might return, Sherrod turned the lights off and insisted that everyone stay down. Hall recalled: "We hit the floor as we had been trained to do, while a blast of shotgun pellets was sprayed into the house. After the car drove off, we waited several minutes and then called to each other to learn if anyone had been hit. We were all alive, thank God. But this had been a very close call."[145] She said: "We were crawling around on the floor for quite a while after that not knowing if they were coming back."[146]

---

[144]Carolyn Daniels, "We Just Kept Going," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 155; "They Lived in the Counties: Churches Burned, Nightriders Attack SNCC Staff in Southwest Georgia Voter Registration Drive," *The Student Voice* 3, no. 3 (October, 1962) and "In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Workers," 4, no. 7 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 57, 87; Chatfield, Interview with Lyons; SNCC News Release, Terrell County, September 14, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

Hall and Allen suffered superficial wounds, but Chatfield's bullet wounds required medical attention. Chris Allen and Ralph Allen drove Chatfield – these were the three whites staying with Daniels – into Albany: "The idea was that if there were just three white guys, we wouldn't attract any attention." As they passed a gas station, "a car screeched out" toward them, and a police car stopped them and loaded them all into the SWAT car, arrested them, and took them to the Dawson hospital. "Why they didn't want us to go into Albany, I'm not sure, but they didn't." The doctor slammed the door open and asked Chatfield, "What are you doing sleeping with niggers?" Chatfield, Interview with Lyons.

[145]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175.

[146]Hall, Interview with Michaels.

Early on the morning of Sunday, December 8, 1963, nightriders again attacked the home of Carolyn Daniels. Lying in bed, Daniels heard "footsteps and car doors slamming," and as gunshots came through her bedroom window, she rolled under her bed. A bomb thrown through the window rolled under the bed next to her, but "somehow the bomb did not go off." (Daniels, "We Just Kept Going," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 155; SNCC News Release, "Nightriders Bomb, Shoot Registration Worker," Dawson, Georgia, December, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13). Daniels' neighbor's house suffered over 100 bullet holes. The only gun in Dawson capable of such a shooting was a 50-caliber machine gun, belonging to Sheriff Z.T. Mathews (Randy Battle and John Perdew, "One Tough Rooster," in *The Great Pool Jump and Other Stories*, 219-220). No doctor would treat Daniels' bullet wound; she was instructed to clean the

After nearly forty-five minutes, Sherrod moved toward the phone. Knowing he could not trust the Georgia or local police, the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, or the FBI to protect them, he called *New York Times* reporter Claude Sitton, a Southerner with a reputation for fair coverage of the movement, at midnight.[147]

Police received a call about the shooting just after midnight. Dawson Chief of Police W.B. Cherry said that officers found the home empty when they arrived but did see evidence of "shotgun blasts." Cherry's report described police harassment of the workers at the gas station earlier that evening as police helping them because their car had broken down.[148]

---

wound with alcohol and go home. By the time Daniels returned home, the bomb had destroyed her house (Daniels, "We Just Kept Going," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 155; Daniels, Interview with Lyons).

Daniels was a primary target for white supremacists because of her enthusiastic advocacy for civil rights. Daniels joined the movement after her son Roy was assaulted by Sheriff Z.T. Mathews in 1961; she was outraged that though she was a home-owner, business-owner, and taxpayer, neither she nor her family had legal protection. She was the first Dawson resident to open her home to SNCC students, sheltering as many as nine SNCC workers at a time including Charles Sherrod, Prathia Hall, Jack Chatfield, John Churchville, Ralph Allen, and Chris Allen. She led a freedom school, and she often escorted voter applicants to the courthouse. Even after her house was twice the victim of nightriders' bullets and bombs, Carolyn Daniels continued her work in Southwest Georgia ("In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Worker," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 8 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 94). Prathia Hall said that by 1965, "more people frequent her beauty shop and talk openly with her about voting and matters of civil rights," demonstrating her influence in the community (Stephen Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta*, 172). Daniels was very fond of Hall, and SNCC field reports often mentioned that Daniels "misses Prathia," who was working with the Selma project by Fall, 1963 (Don Harris, Field Report, Americus, Georgia, December, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 17). Hall described Daniels as a mother figure. Discussing the 1962 shooting into Daniels' home, Hall said, "It did not move her. It did not unnerve her." Hall was aware of the personal difficulties Daniels faced, making her sacrifices for the movement even more inspiring: "She was a single mother struggling to make it but she was steel, she was strength for all of us, and she took all of us, with our Technicolor selves and our strange ways and some Northern and some Southern and all of that, and she wasn't that many years older than many of us, but she mothered us." Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 60; Rubin, Interview with Lyons.

[147]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175; Hall, Interview with Michaels; Sitton, "Negro Churches Burn in Georgia."

Sitton published a thorough report of the night's events, including the history of police harassment of demonstrators. Sitton described Daniels' house as "a four-room dwelling of concrete blocks, faced with red bricks and topped by asphalt shingles" with "ten neat holes punched through the front door screen by blasts of buckshot." The house was three blocks down a dirt road from where the pavement ended – the demarcation between the white and black parts of town.

[148]"2 Shot in Vote Try in Dawson," Dawson, Georgia (UPI), SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

Hall told Sitton after the shooting: “It’s fear that slams the doors in our faces and hope that makes those same people whisper about us and get down on their knees and pray for us.” In this conversation, Hall described her father’s teaching about racial justice and the family’s decision to move from Virginia to Philadelphia in the 1920s: “I feel that he left the South to somehow redeem me. And now it’s my job to come back and redeem somebody else.” She hoped that their work in the South would create space for African Americans to live abundantly in the South: “The sweat and blood of these people is in the very soil of this land.”[149]

The Sasser arrests and police threats as well as the house shootings were all reported to the FBI and the Justice Department. Within the larger investigation of Southwest Georgia racial violence, detectives followed leads on the vehicles allegedly seen after the shootings as well as bullets recovered from the scene. However, each investigation returned the same results: no suspects and no evidence of police brutality or civil rights infringement.

The shooting did not deter Daniels or any of the SNCC workers staying with Hall. She knew such danger was a constant possibility, but did not dwell on the incident: “We had been warned in orientation sessions not to go into the field unless we were prepared to die. That night any and all romantic thoughts about our freedom adventure dissolved as we came face-to-face with the real and present possibility of death.”[150] Chatfield later joked: “I was inclined to stay up late and read in the kitchen, which would seem to be crazy because that’s where I was shot, so you would have thought I would have gotten

[149]Claude Sitton, “Voting Drive Met By Hope and Fear: Student Workers in Georgia Tell of Rights Campaign Hope for Negroes Seek Meaning in Lives US Inquiry Under Way,” *New York Times* September 11, 1962.

[150]Hall, “Freedom-Faith,” in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 175.

out of the kitchen after that, but I didn't. Nobody did, actually."[151] Daniels revealed their resolve: "We kept going, kept in the streets, kept taking people to register, kept getting people to vote."[152]

Because of the real and present danger facing those who supported the civil rights movement, SNCC often struggled to find churches willing to host mass meetings. Daniels' church, Atoc AME Church in Dawson, would not allow Daniels or the SNCC workers to meet there: "You know these white people will burn our church down."[153] Hall reflected:

> Sometimes it was frustrating to us at the time or frustrating as when the pastors would not participate in the movement and local people would slam their doors in our faces. But we had to translate, we had to interpret that; it was a rational fear speaking. The courage was beyond reason, beyond the level of the rational! The courage to go down to the courthouse or the courage to open the doors and say let's have the meeting here was a courage that transcended reason.[154]

This courage beyond reason was freedom faith. Hall came to understand the profound demonstration of faith that churches made by cooperating with SNCC workers: "Churches were burned down, sometimes two or three in a night. For a congregation to open their doors and say, 'you may meet here,' was again as profound a test of the Freedom Faith as ever there could be. It's almost quite miraculous that there was always at least one church that would say, come."[155] In the summer of 1962, four African American churches in Terrell and Lee Counties, all associated with the movement in some way, were burned by white supremacists.

---

[151]Chatfield, Interview with Lyons.

[152]Daniels, "We Just Kept Going," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 155.

[153]Daniels, "We Just Kept Going," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 153.

[154]Hall, Interview with Woods.

[155]Hall, Interview with Woods.

On August 17, two days after the burning of Shady Grove Baptist Church in Leesburg, SNCC workers from Terrell and Lee counties gathered at the home of Mrs. Raines to assess the psychological damage of the burning on the community. At the meeting, workers emphasized their plan to recruit the community to work together to reconstruct the church and found the people steadfast in their commitment to the movement. They also discussed personnel availability, including Hall's and that she would remain in Terrell County. Conwell noted one "good result" of the church burnings was the necessity of rotating where meetings were held, which drew new people from the various congregations into the mass meetings.[156]

Two churches, Mt. Olive Baptist Church (Sasser) and Mt. Mary Baptist Church (Chickasawatchee), were burned the night of September 9, both wooden, located five miles apart, and burned within one hour of each other. A member of Mt. Olive who awoke at 2:00 a.m. to the blaze told reporters: "I didn't sleep a wink after that. I was too scared." Hall received word via telephone that Mt. Olive was on fire: "We dressed quickly and made our way to the church. There were no firefighters. The church had already burned to the ground." Those gathered wept together at the sight.[157] Hall reflected:

> As we stood there, more people gathered, members and friends of the church. We held hands together and sang and prayed. As we stood there watching the remains of Mt. Olive, Mr. Southwell of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation arrived. I extended by hand and said, "I'm Prathia Hall." He looked at me and said, "Don't you know better than to stick your hand out there like that to speak to me?" I said,

[156]Kathleen Conwell, Field Report, August 17-26, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[157]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 179.

"Don't human beings speak to each other that way?" He walked away saying, "Well it ain't the way I live."[158]

The burning did not deter SNCC, but SNCC's resilience did not deter segregationists. At an open air voter registration meeting on September 13, Terrell County's civil rights volunteers decided to raise a tent as a temporary meeting place until the churches could be rebuilt. Four days later, I Hope Baptist Church in Terrell County was burned, the fifth church burned in Southwest Georgia in the summer of 1962.[159]

Even though mass meetings were often held at Mt. Olive Baptist Church and a minister and deacon of Mt. Mary Baptist Church had been supporting the voter registration drive, Sheriff Mathews told newspaper reporters that the burnings had nothing to do with voter registration. He claimed that area whites were "not too much disturbed" about African American voter registration but did resent "outside agitators," a common phrase used against non-local civil rights workers. He also cited white disapproval of interracial cohabitation of the SNCC workers, drawing upon the long-held white assumption that black men posed a sexual threat to white women.[160]

---

[158]SNCC News Release, Terrell County, Georgia, September 14, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

[159]A church in Valdosta, Georgia was also burned during the summer. SNCC News Release, Terrell County, Georgia, September 14, 17, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13, 19.

Between 1961 and 1963, forty-one black churches in the South were burned. A UPI news article related: "Since desegregation activities were stepped up here last month, three Negro churches have been burned down, four Negro homes have been fired on and a white youth working in a Negro voter registration drive has been shot and wounded." See United Press International, "Urge President To Stop Terror in South Georgia," *The Daily Courier* (September 10, 1962). Another version of the same story reported: "The fires were the latest in a series of after-dark incidents in this area 19 miles northwest of racially-tense Albany. A northern white college student was wounded by shotgun pellets fired into a Negro house here last week and four Negro residences…18 miles east of here were peppered by gunfire. No one was hit." United Press International, "Two Negro Churches Burned; White Man Held for Attacking An FBI Agent," *Albuquerque Journal* September 10, 1962.

[160]United Press International, "Urge President To Stop Terror in South Georgia," *The Daily Courier* September 10, 1962; United Press International, "Two Negro Churches Burned; White Man Held for Attacking An FBI Agent," *Albuquerque Journal* September 10, 1962; Sitton, "2 Negro Churches Burned in Georgia."

Prathia Hall answered Mathews' claims with bold confidence: "We may have had visits from white girls at our headquarters…but none are staying here. The fires are the latest harassment. We've been getting the works." Hall told reporters about her recent encounter with Deputy Short and her arrest for speeding on August 30 as examples of police intimidation tactics against SNCC.[161]

SNCC Chairman Charles McDew demanded that President John Kennedy "halt the Nazi-style reign of terror in Southwest Georgia."[162] SNCC leader James Forman appealed to Attorney General Robert Kennedy to "restore law and order" and promised that SNCC would organize efforts to rebuild the burned churches. [163] President Kennedy responded to the events in Southwest Georgia: "To shoot…two young people who were involved in an effort to register people, to burn churches as a reprisal…I consider both cowardly as well as outrageous." SNCC workers demanded strong governmental action against civil rights violations in Southwest Georgia but received only short sound bites lacking tactical support.[164] Sheriff Mathews cited the federal court order as evidence of racial voter registration discrimination being a settled issue. Clearly federal intervention

---

[161]United Press International, "Urge President To Stop Terror in South Georgia," *The Daily Courier* September 10, 1962; United Press International, "Two Negro Churches Burned; White Man Held for Attacking An FBI Agent," *Albuquerque Journal* September 10, 1962.

[162]United Press International, "2 Churches Destroyed; FBI Agent Attacked," *The Delta Democrat-Times* September 10, 1962; United Press International, "Two Negro Churches Burned."

[163]United Press International, "Two Negro Churches Burned"; SNCC News Release, Dawson, Georgia, September 10, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[164]"In 'Terrible' Terrell: Night Riders Shoot Worker," *The Student Voice*, 87, 89.

In November, 1962, the Southern Regional Council, a multiracial organization organized to benefit Southerners, charged Kennedy with "no acknowledgement of a Federal duty to protect Federal rights, the rights of speech and peaceable assembly and equal protection of the laws." Zinn criticized FBI agents who, though taking dozens of interviews which confirmed "clear violations by local police of constitutional rights with undisputed evidence of beatings by sheriffs and deputy sheriffs," had failed to take any action. Claude Sitton, "President Chided Over Albany, GA: Fails to Guard Negro Rights, Southern Council Says," *New York Times* November 15, 1962.

was insufficient at best. Celebrities like baseball star Jackie Robinson and nearby religious organizations contributed money to rebuild the damaged homes and churches.[165]

"We Who Believe in Freedom Cannot Rest…"

In the fall of 1962, Hall returned to Philadelphia for a series of speaking engagements. SNCC Executive Secretary James Forman often asked Hall to speak at Northern SNCC fundraiser events, explaining why her name is often unmentioned in coverage of the movement: "A lot of time when something pivotal happened in the South I was in the North speaking at a rally."[166]

Hall's first engagement was the SNCC Emancipation Celebration at Tenley Temple United Methodist Church, where the Freedom Singers were also to appear.[167] Hall spear-headed SNCC's work in Philadelphia, organized out of Fellowship House. A

[165]Jackie Robinson, the first African American player in Major League Baseball, visited the church ruins and spoke at an Albany Movement dinner. Robinson was from a plantation in Cairo, Georgia owned by the Sasser family, after which the town had been named. He initiated a fundraising effort to help rebuilt the churches, estimated at $35,000. The combined funds raised by multiple secular and religious organizations, including the Fund for Rehabilitation of Burned Churches ("an Albany Negro organization"), reached approximately $60,000. Monks at the nearby Trappist Monastery in Conyers, Georgia offered to make stained glass windows for the churches. See Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 266; United Press International, "2 Churches Destroyed; FBI Agent Attacked," *The Delta Democrat-Times* September 10, 1962. Nelson Rockefeller, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Harry Belafonte were also significant benefactors and supporters of SNCC's fundraising efforts in Southwest Georgia. SNCC News Release, Atlanta, Georgia, September 13, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13; Claude Sitton, "Burned Churches Get $60,000 Gifts: Georgia Negroes are Given Help Toward Rebuilding Terrell County Churches United Church Gift Greater Capacity Planned," *New York Times* November 11, 1962.

[166]Hall, Interview with Woods, 6-7.

[167]SNCC News Release, Terrell County, Georgia, September 14, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

spectator described her talk at the Emancipation Celebration: "Her account was very simple and deeply moving."[168] The Jewish Labor Committee also made a generous financial commitment – a car, $1,000, and several supply drives – to the Southwest Georgia project during Hall's campaigning in Fall, 1962.[169]

Marjorie Penney appreciatively reflected on Hall's frequent connection with Fellowship House through Northern speaking engagements:

> Some of our young people who had gone South with Dr. King to work on the whole voting registration thing came back and spoke of the bravery of the black people….The intensity of the self-giving of many of these young people…in cities like Albany, Georgia; Americus, Georgia; Cleveland, Mississippi; Jacksonville, Mississippi; Florida towns; name it, and somebody from the Fellowship House was in there for a long or short time.[170]

On September 21, 1962, Hall spoke on a late-night broadcast of radio station 1340 WHAT in Philadelphia. Around 11:48 p.m., the Hall family telephone rang, and Hall's sister Betty answered the phone. An unidentified caller asked for Mrs. Hall and then said: "You damn niggers need to mind your own business. I am going to do like the people in Terrell County and do some shooting tonight." Betty hung up the phone, but the caller phoned again and again threatened to shoot at the Hall home.[171]

---

[168]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, October 4, 1962," "Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, November 15, 1962," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1.

Hall continued to attend meetings of the Director Board of Fellowship House during her organizing time in Philadelphia. She and Barrett were granted a one year's leave of absence from their Fellowship House staff duties to join – in Hall's case, continue – the movement in the South.

[169]Jewish Labor Committee Activities Review, April, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[170]Marjorie Penney, Interviewed by Rosa King Zimmerman, July 20, 1976, West Chester State College Oral History Program, Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:5.

[171]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

Ruby Hall was instructed by federal authorities to alert the Philadelphia police since the matter would fall under local jurisdiction. Detective Charles Graham of the Philadelphia Police Department investigated the call but found no leads. A memo from "Director, FBI" dated September 24, 1962 instructed the Philadelphia Police Department to keep the FBI and its Atlanta branch, which handled the investigation of Southwest Georgia racial violence, apprised of the investigation.

Hall realized how difficult her Movement involvement was for her family, who received harassing phone calls frequently. She called her mother a "trooper lady, warrior lady" and claimed her mother "was [her] number one supporter. She worried all the time. Wanted me to come home." Hall was aware that "Family conspired on various occasions to try to get this one or that one to try to persuade me to come home, which again, which irritated me no end at the time, but once you become a parent, you certainly understand."[172] Hall's Fellowship colleague Joyce Barrett recognized the pressure Hall faced from her family to return to North Philadelphia, but Hall's extreme modesty and privacy about her personal life precluded the two from discussing these issues.[173]

The Albany Movement celebrated its first anniversary in November, 1962 and invited James Forman to speak on behalf of SNCC at this celebration. Forman could not attend and asked Sherrod to speak in his place, but Albany Movement leaders requested that Forman find someone from out-of-town. Sherrod asked Prathia Hall to speak on SNCC's behalf. Though she had been working in Albany for a few months, she was a Northerner and had been in Philadelphia since the September shooting at Daniels' house. Hall spoke alongside Martin Luther King, Jr. and many other leading names in the civil rights movement at Albany's first anniversary celebration.[174]

SNCC's work in Southwest Georgia continued in spite of some difficulties. The project now included twelve field secretaries – Prathia Hall, Jack Chatfield, Carver

---

[172]Hall, Interview with Harding, Reel 3; Hall, Interview with Michaels.

Many of the SNCC workers' families received threatening phone calls and hate mail. See Penny Patch, "Sweet Tea at Shoney's," in *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*, 131-170.

[173]Barrett, Interview with Lyons.

[174]Holsaert, Interview with Lyons.; James Forman, Letter to Mrs. E. L. Jackson of The Albany Movement, November 2, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; Goldie Jackson, Letter to James Forman, November 9, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

(Chico) Neblett, John Churchville, Joyce Barrett, Don Harris, Ralph Allen, Eddie Brown, Faith Holsaert, Alfonzo Hubbard, and Joni Rabinowitz – who rotated from Albany to surrounding counties. Four lived at the Albany office, two at Koinonia Farm in Americus, and the rest with host homes in the rural counties.[175] Koinonia offered resources and support to SNCC including local contacts, help distributing information, and meeting space.[176] SNCC expanded to Sumter County in November and December of 1962.[177]

In January, 1963, US Attorney Floyd M. Buford, of the Justice Department, filed suit against Deputy Short for six counts of civil rights violations against Hall, William Berrien, and Ralph Allen from late August, 1962. Short pled not guilty.[178] Short's pre-trial remarks alleged that he stopped the SNCC workers' vehicle because of its out of state plates and its incorrect parking position, that he asked them to leave town because "Negro citizens in Sasser" had complained about the SNCC workers making threats

[175]"Survey: Current Field Work, Spring 1963," SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[176]Jack Chatfield, Field Report, March, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Norma Collins, Letter to Dorothy Swisshelm, October 22, 1962, and Dorothy Swisshelm, letter to SNCC, October 20, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7; Jack Chatfield, Field Report, March, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; DeLissovoy, Interview with Lyons; Faith Holsaert, Field Report, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Jack Chatfield, Field Report, April 16-25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Harris, Interview with Lyons.

[177]Braden, "The Images are Broken."

Americus, the county seat of Sumter County, was a trading and manufacturing town of just over 13,000 people. African Americans comprised 52.65% of the population of Sumter County yet only 1.01% of registered voters. In 1955, Clarence Jordan and his wife established Koinonia Farm, a biracial community eight miles southwest of Americus. Many whites blamed Jordan for inciting racial unrest in the community, and the farm was often the victim of nightrider attacks. For over four years, Americus merchants boycotted the farm. Claude Sitton, "Strict Law Enforcement Stifles Negroes' Drive in Americus, Ga: 4 Integrationists Face Death Penalty as Result of Riots and Demonstrations," *New York Times* September 29, 1963.

[178]UPI, "Victims Pushed Voter Registration: Terrell Marshal Charged with Rights 'Violations,'" *Atlanta Daily World* (January 4, 1963), SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

against African Americans who would not register, and that he offered to escort them out of town "for their safety and protection."[179]

Assistant Attorney General Burke Marshall supervised the investigation leading up to Short's trial, which the FBI grouped within its larger investigation of civil rights violations in Lee and Terrell Counties, including the burning of four African American churches and the unlawful arrests and violence against civil rights supporters.[180] Investigators delayed pressing charges against Short, however, until his involvement in the church burnings and other shootings could be ascertained.[181]

The investigation uncovered that William Challis observed the civil rights workers fixing a flat tire as he passed them in his blue 1962 Ford Galaxie. Upon seeing the workers, Challis returned to town to demand their arrest. Deputy Marshal Short arrested them and brought them to the Methodist church. Marshal Adams "specifically denied talking with anyone who was driving a 1962 blue Ford Galaxie. He specifically denied hearing anyone say 'lock them up.'"[182]

---

[179]SNCC News Release, Sasser, Georgia, January 3, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; UPI, "Terrell Marshal Charged with Rights 'Violations,'" *Atlanta Daily World*, Atlanta, January 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[180]Other events that the Albany Movement had reported to the FBI included the beating of pregnant Mrs. Slater King, the beating of Bill Hansen, and the beating of C.B. King. "The only federal prosecution in Albany during the attorney general ship of Robert Kennedy was *against* civil rights workers who had picketed a segregationist grocer." Zinn, *On Race* (New York: Seven Stones, 2011), 74, 177-8.

[181]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

[182]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

During the January, 1963 Federal Grand Jury trial in Americus, Justice Department lawyers insisted that African Americans be identified as "colored folk" rather than "Negro" and enforced segregated seating.[183] Justice Department lawyers requested that the SNCC workers, particularly the three witnesses in the trial, behave according to Southern mores during the trial. SNCC workers were asked to refrain from interracial gathering, though Daniels and Ralph Allen allegedly embraced in the hallway outside the courtroom. Justice Department lawyers "would not allow one young Negro woman field secretary, Prathia Hall, to wear a hat in the courtroom" because "her dignified dress might offend Sasser farmers" and give "the impression that she was an 'uppity nigger.'" Hall described it: "I was called as a witness for the prosecution. I dressed as I had been taught was appropriate for a court appearance. I wore a business suit, hat, and gloves. As I waited to testify, I was approached by one of the Justice Department attorneys and asked to remove my hat, because the local whites were offended by the presence of a black woman dressed in such professional attire."[184]

Hall, William Paul Berrien, and Ralph Allen testified in the trial, recounting the events in which Short fired gunshots at their vehicle and at them, as well as arresting them on trumped up charges. Deputy Short alleged that he ran the SNCC workers out of town for their own protection from "angry white citizens." In spite of obvious lapses in fact in Short's testimony, such as the speed capabilities of his 1953 pickup truck and the reasons for stopping the workers, Justice Department officials did not challenge Short's testimony. Short's lawyer made "slanderous remarks about the morals of SNCC," and

[183]National Archives File #44-HQ-20425.

[184]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 177; William Paul Berrier, Untitled Document, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

particularly concerning "the language and behavior of Miss Hall." When on the witness stand, Hall could not bring herself to repeat what Short had said to her. Judge Elliot allowed her to "state that Mr. Short had been abusive."[185]

Hall testified to federal investigators that she was instructing Edith Page and Catherine Mallory in preparation to register to vote and accused Sasser officials of running the SNCC team out of town to prevent the successful completion of their voter registration work.[186]

Short's account differed significantly from that of the civil rights workers. He claimed that he stopped them for speeding and brought them peaceably into his office. Then he claimed that the arrested workers ran into the jail cell together, implying that they wanted to have sex, a common accusation by segregationists against civil rights workers. Short's defense also emphasized the Northern students as outside agitators, further strengthening segregationist animosity toward Hall and the other students.

Larry Rubin recounted that during the trial, Hall laughed, which to him "was just an example of her courage…the way she held up when she was arrested." He was impressed that "she didn't allow herself to be intimidated." He found her reaction particularly powerful since the sheriffs were unaccustomed to such reactions from African Americans or women.[187]

---

[185]"Statements from SNCC Workers on Trial of D. E. Short," Americus, Georgia, January 25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; William Paul Berrier, Untitled Document, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; (AP) "U.S. Accuses Sasser Officer of Harassing in Racial Case," *The Atlanta Constitution* January 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[186]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 177.

[187]Rubin, Interview with Lyons.

After twenty minutes of deliberation, a twelve-man all-white jury acquitted Short of all charges on January 25, 1963.[188] Rubin overheard jurors saying to each other that they would not convict "a man who stood for segregation."[189] After Short's acquittal, Hall and eleven other SNCC workers gathered in an old farmhouse to pray. Holsaert remembered their prayer: "Oh Lord, give us the power and wealth to be vessels of jubilee and truth in an unjust and untrue society."[190]

When Hall returned to voter registration work in Southwest Georgia on February 23, 1963, she brought her childhood friend Joyce Barrett with her. Fellowship House director Marjorie Penney, Aura Yores, and Claire Maier – who went to the 1960 founding meeting of SNCC – drove Hall and Barrett to Albany.[191] Hall phoned Holsaert at the Albany office to let her know that she would be arriving with two white and one African American woman. The phone line must have been bugged because immediately following, Marion King reported that local radio stations were announcing that two new white women were joining SNCC.[192] Sherrod distributed area SNCC workers in different locations to make room for the visitors, who arrived around 1:30 a.m.[193] Of her return to Southwest Georgia, Hall wrote: "It's good to be back home."[194]

---

[188]SNCC News Release, "Sasser Policeman Acquitted in 33 Minutes; SNCC Workers Decry Lack of Justice," Americus, Georgia, January 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[189]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 177.

[190]William Paul Berrier, Untitled Document, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[191]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, March 21, 1963," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1.

[192]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[193]John O'Neal, Field Report, February 23 – March 6, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[194]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

The next day, February 24, the Southwest Georgia team met at Koinonia Farms with the visitors from Fellowship House. Hall described the morning: "The sun spread its refreshing light and warmth on my first day back in S. W. Georgia."[195] Penney, Yores, and Maier offered moral support and suggestions for effectively working with people for social change, and gifted to SNCC some needed supplies as well as assistance with odds and ends around the SNCC office.[196]

Penney, Yores, and Maier left from Albany on February 25, after an evening mass meeting. The meeting was "run in real SNCC fashion," with each county giving a report of its progress, and Hall described the people as "almost transfixed in admiration" of the reported activism. Hall appreciated multiple testimonies because "this kind of witness increases intercounty unity and at the same time gives form and backbone to the emerging leadership in the counties."[197] Penney, Yores, and Maier reported to Fellowship House upon their return:

> Fourteen young people are working in the counties – teaching sharecroppers to register and vote. The living conditions of these brave young people is appalling. Joyce remains in the student office in Albany; Prathia is back in Terrell County where she was wounded last fall! We feel that both girls are taking our places. One happy fact is that the Knit Goods Workers Union have purchased a good used car for the students.[198]

While Hall had been in the North, she wrestled with the verdict of the Short trial. Hall felt "despair," but when she returned to Southwest Georgia, she realized that "the people in the counties looked on it as a measure of hope" because Short's trial was "the

---

[195]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[196]John O'Neal, Field Report, February 23 – March 6, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8; Holsaert, Interview with Lyons.

[197]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[198]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, March 21, 1963," Fellowship House Papers, Temple University, Special Collections, Urban Archives Library, Acc. 723, Box 1.

first time a white in this area had even been questioned and brought to trial for an injustice to a Negro." [199] The biggest surprise awaiting Hall upon her return to Southwest Georgia was the progress made in Sumter County, which she called "the delight of my heart." In her field report of her late February activity at Koinonia, Hall lavished praise on the high mass meeting attendance and consistent voter registration attempts in Americus:

> People sit in the meetings with their heads high as they sing and talk about freedom. Even a teacher was present and offered his services in our new night school project….Can you imagine a real live teacher? We are on our way. Mr. Weston – fire, articulate and militant – told the people "don't you go down to that court house with your head down, scratching when you don't itch. Stand up! And speak up!" Already they are talking about economic security and establishing a savings and loan association. Yes, Sumter may prove to be the salt of our movement.[200]

Hall returned to Daniels' house with Faith Holsaert, who described them as a "triumvirate of female workers;" as the only white worker living with Daniels, Holsaert was "always with Prathia or Carolyn."[201] Hall spent the remainder of February, 1963 there. Terrell County mass meetings were well-attended, "a tent full," and Hall noticed "a new spirit of progressiveness" among the people. She said, "Warm arms of friendship and shared suffering welcomed me into the family."[202] Hall canvassed for voter registration with Albany's Rev. Samuel Wells, whom she greatly admired, and some high

[199]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[200]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[201]Holsaert, Interview with Lyons.

[202]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

school students, as well as assisted in the SNCC office as much as she should while battling the flu.[203]

Hall's field reports mentioned a "snatching" technique of approaching people in the street in front of City Hall and taking them to register to vote on the spot. She found the method to be "extremely good." She appreciated its confrontation aspect: "Since people were frightened – like the woman who pushed me away as she ducked into a store to avoid giving me her name which I asked her for when she hastily told me she had been registered for years. I don't know, some I believe, and some I don't." The approach was particularly effective with people who were open to registering or were on the fence: "As a group we found 15 who more than anything else, needed an invitation."[204]

On Sunday, March 3, Hall and Holsaert were still suffering from the flu, so after helping make copies for the Albany night school and driving Barrett and Eddie Browne to Albany churches to distribute the fliers, the two went back to bed to rest.[205] Hall's letter to SNCC, drafted the next day, began with an eloquent, prophetic statement:

> There's a throbbing all over me, a never ending ache back and forth across me. It is cold pain frozen within my soul by the suffering of the years and add to this my plight – I stand within the center of a razor blade, high walls of stainless steel around me – boxed. The ugly face of Segregation hovers over me……but this is the beginning.[206]

Later on March 4, Sherrod met with the team about to move into Terrell County – Hall, Holsaert, and Neblett – primarily about caution in the rural counties. They decided to remain within one block of Carolyn Daniels' home in Dawson, and that they would

---

[203]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, February – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers.

[204]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[205]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[206]Prathia Hall, Letter to SNCC, Albany, Georgia, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

take Eddie Brown with them if they decided to leave the block so that they would have a witness.[207]

A March 4 mass meeting led by Rev. Wells, Slater King, Charles Sherrod, Marian Page, and Rev. Anderson reinforced the importance of maintaining the boycott of segregationist businesses, particularly given the proximity of the Easter holiday. Hall was a bit unsettled by the meeting, unsure of the response since the normally "clap at everything" crowd responded to Sherrod's exhortations with quiet agreement. Both Sherrod and Slater King expressed disappointment with the "lethargy" of the people in Albany to support the movement.[208] Still gathered, the crowd listened to President Kennedy's forty-minute address, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Department of Labor, which Hall characterized as "he oaked the salve of irrelevancies on the people's conscience." Hall lamented that he did not use his "good-natured charm" in "ways in which he could really serve."[209] After the meeting, Hall, Barrett, Holsaert, and a few other SNCC volunteers spent time with C.B. King.[210]

Around 1:00 a.m., Hall left with Holsaert and two other SNCC volunteers for Terrell County.[211] This particular move into Terrell County was important because of Faith Holsaert. Moving white men into Terrell had been a big step, made easier by the "affectionately open personality" of Ralph Allen. Faith Holsaert's transfer to Terrell

---

[207]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Joyce Barrett, Letter to SNCC, March 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[208]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[209]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[210]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[211]Joyce Barrett, Field Report, March 2 – 10, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

created “havoc for the white community” because she was a white female. Holsaert understood the risks and liabilities and agreed to “be extremely careful in an attempt to avoid violence.” Holsaert stayed several nights at Daniels’ house but never officially lived there because of the certain danger such news would bring.[212] During the first week of Holsaert’s residency, she and Hall canvassed close to where she was staying for safety: “You see, we are trying to gauge the climate in the community in an attempt to control a potentially explosive situation. If there is violence we would like to feel that we have done all we could to prevent it – everything short of dishonest compromise that is."[213] They recruited several high school students to keep them informed of what the community was saying about SNCC’s presence there.[214]

Hall invested several visits in a Mrs. Holloway, who supported the movement but would not register, nor would allow others in her household to register, for fear that the men would lose their jobs. Hall did most of the talking, offering many good reasons for Holloway to at least come to a meeting, which Holloway agreed to do if SNCC could provide a ride. The perpetual issues with having working cars often halted such plans.[215]

Though Hall knew a Mrs. Bell’s daughter Peggy well, Hall’s first visit to Mrs. Bell was noteworthy. Hall described Mrs. Bell as “A STRANGE BREED.” Bell allowed SNCC to visit her and her daughter but made quite clear that neither she nor Peggy would register to vote, though she was extremely supportive of the Albany night school. Peggy, around nineteen years of age, had a small child and due to her mother’s threats to kick her

[212]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[213]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[214]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[215]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

out of the house "if she had anything to do with it," could not register. Bell owned her home and greatly feared that segregationists might destroy it if she supported the movement. On March 6, Hall met with Bell privately while Holsaert and Chico Neblett met with Peggy in another room of the house. Bell's normal reasons for not registering gave way to new excuses, which Hall viewed as evidence that Bell might be losing her "firmness" against involvement. Hall recognized that Bell was searching them just as they were searching her. As they left her home, "she went to the yard to chop wood." Neblett helped her for thirty minutes, but she still told Holsaert and Hall that she could not attend the mass meeting because she had too much ironing to do. "Faith and I just didn't have the time to do her ironing for her. Maybe next time we will, if we think it will work."[216]

The Sumter County team drove Holsaert and Hall to the mass meeting in Terrell that evening. A large number of high school students hoped to attend, but SNCC's difficulty securing working cars prevented their transportation. Hall took notes during the meeting, and Holsaert sketched people from the meeting, something she had been wanting to do but could not because she was usually taking notes.[217]

On Thursday, March 7, 1963 the Albany City Commission voted six to one to desegregate Albany and reopen the Carnegie Library – which had been closed for seven months to avoid demonstrations – as a scheme to further insulate Albany from federal civil rights prosecutors. Albany Movement and SNCC leaders were "overjoyed" at the decision, not realizing the emptiness of the Commission's agreement. In spite of

---

[216]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[217]Faith Holsaert, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Kathleen Conwell, Field Report, July 1-9, 1962, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

Sherrod's optimism, the ordinance only meant that the city would no longer enforce segregation, leaving the decision of integration to individual citizens and business owners. The library immediately removed all chairs to prevent integrated seating.[218]

News of the integration of Albany did not immediately reach Hall, who remained hard at work canvassing for voter registration throughout Terrell County. On the afternoon of the ruling, Hall visited a Mrs. Brown, the sister of Mrs. Bell, who had convinced herself that she might contract various diseases if she attended a mass meeting. Hall suggested to Mrs. Bell that sometimes going to church can help a person feel better when they are sick, but Bell responded with another story of someone who became terminally ill from attending a meeting. Hall noted "It's amazing what forms fear will take. Maybe one day we can write a report just on the many ways fear comes out once it has been digested. Such a report might give us some insight into dealing with and remolding fear into courage." Brown asked Hall about the rebuilding of Mt. Olive Baptist Church, one of those burned in the summer of 1962, and Hall said she believed this was coming soon. Hall noted in her field report that the rebuilding of the church would mark a

[218]Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 135; SNCC News Release, "SNCC Workers 'Overjoyed' at Albany City Commission Vote to Repeal All City Segregation Ordinances," Albany, Georgia, March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

In the week after the Commission decision, several demonstrators "tested" the ruling by attempting to access public accommodations such as restaurants, libraries, and movie theaters. The demonstrators were asked to leave by police. The city later privatized all three swimming pools. Claude Sitton reported: "[Pritchett] sitting in his newly renovated office flanked by the flags of the United States and the old Confederacy, glanced up from his glass-topped desk and grinned. 'You look around and see if anything's integrated, and if it is, call me will you?'" Pritchett was referring to his particular loophole: though he had arrested 1,500 demonstrators since November, 1961; he always did so with non-racial charges, such as parading without a permit, obstructing traffic, or loitering. He laughingly claimed to enforce the law "without regard to race, creed or color." See Claude Sitton, "New Racial Technique: Trend in South Toward Flexible Laws Complicates Rights Cause City Is Off the Hook Convictions Thrown Out," *New York Times* (March 12, 1963). David Chappell's *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994) offers a slightly defensive analysis of Pritchett. Chappell incorporates discussion of Pritchett's actions against violent white segregationists to protect civil rights demonstrators in Albany: "Though he first followed the segregationist line blaming all disturbances on 'outside agitators,' by the summer of 1962 he was trying to persuade Albany's white leaders not to lull themselves with such delusions" that a majority of local African Americans supported the movement (p. 129).

"turning point" in their work in that area. Hall suspected that the progress of rebuilding the churches was why city leaders took such great lengths to interfere with these efforts.[219]

After meeting Mrs. Brown, Hall and Holsaert met John Churchville and Larry Rubin who drove them to the Sumter County meeting. They forgot to get gas which forced them to stop at a station in Dawson. A police car also stopped at the station followed them to Carolyn Daniels' home, where Hall and Holseart were staying, and continued to follow Rubin and Churchville "with their bright lights on to the edge of town."[220]

The incident scared Hall. The next morning, after Hall saw a white man with a raised tool approaching the window, she "let out a terrific scream and went leaping like a mountain goat into the bedroom." Holsaert flattened herself against the wall, and Neblett assured them both that the man worked for the electric company and was only inspecting the meter. When Hall saw him, "she hadn't waited around to ask questions," and did not realize that he had come to disconnect their power due to an unpaid bill.[221]

Later that day, Hall and Holsaert canvassed a young student from Carver High School who seemed drawn to them as a "mother - sister combination," which this student craved due to her parents' separation. Hall and Holsaert asked her about police beating African Americans in the area on the weekends, and the girl confirmed that this happened regularly, even to her father. As Hall and Holseart visited Mrs. Toliver, mother to several

[219]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[220]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; Faith Holsaert, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[221]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

young children who was open to registering but could not attend mass meetings because of her children, Hall rocked one of the babies to sleep. Hall and Holsaert offered to stay with the babies so Toliver could attend the meeting. Next, they visited Mrs. Hightower, a seamstress, who offered to take Mrs. Toliver with her to the next meeting.[222]

On the evening of March 8, Hall and Holseart went into Albany for a staff meeting and party. They were to move to Dorchester, and Neblett was to stay in Albany. Holsaert expressed frustration at the amount of investment required to make inroads in the rural communities and the interruption in these relationships caused by transfers to other areas.[223] On Saturday, March 9, Hall and Holsaert worked on field reports and cleaned house. They were worried about growing tension in Albany and were glad to attend the mass meeting that evening where they learned of progress with voter registration canvassing.[224]

On Sunday, March 10, because their vehicle was not working and walking was too dangerous, those staying with Daniels were unable to attend worship. They were able to attend a meeting that evening where they observed police interrogating Sherrod, who were trying to trap him on "contributing charges" to the demonstrators arrested the previous day.

As the activists were meeting, a loud knock on the door announced the arrival of several Mississippi SNCC leaders: "We didn't even say hello, we just sat back and sang

[222]Prathia Hall, Field Report, February 23 – March 8, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[223]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[224]"A Tribute to SNCC On Its Fifth Birthday," 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 22; Joyce Barrett, Field Report, March 2 – 10, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Faith Holsaert, Field Report, February 19 – March 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

for about half an hour."[225] Hall and several others left after the meeting for Dorchester to attend an inter-organization workshop, organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation on nonviolence, relationship between the organizations, and strategy. Leaders such as Lawson, Rustin, and King were in attendance. Hall spoke as the SNCC representative for Southwest Georgia and emphasized the importance of leadership from within the local community. Those at the inter-organization workshop also discussed ways to encourage community economic efforts. When the meeting ended on March 13, Hall, Holsaert, and Neblett returned to Dawson.[226]

On March 15, Hall, Holsaert, and Neblett remained at Daniels' house. Carolyn Daniels had gone to Florida for two weeks for a job, which led many in the community to suspect that "Mrs. Daniels has run away from it all." The three workers staying in Daniels' home were flooded with calls from people in the community wanting more information.[227] When Daniels returned home on March 16, her shop was crowded with people who wanted their hair styled for the weekend, so Hall and Holsaert used the opportunity to recruit voter registrants.[228]

On Monday, March 18, Hall and Holsaert visited Mrs. Perry, Daniels' next door neighbor, and, in Hall's words, "sort of the everybody's maiden aunt type." Holsaert noted: "Mrs. Perry does appreciate the niceties of life, and Prathia and I can nicety her

[225]Faith Holsaert, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[226]Faith Holsaert, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[227]Chico Neblett, March 15-16, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8; Chico Neblett, February 12-13, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[228]Chico Neblett, March 15-16, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8; Faith Holsaert, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

right into registering, I think."[229] They next visited a Mrs. Sanders, an older woman tied to her home, where she cared for her ill parents. Sanders forbade her granddaughter Mary from participating because of the danger.[230] Because of cases like Sanders, Hall and Holsaert suggested itinerant freedom school tutors who could offer education to those unable to come in the evenings. They recognized the power of education and its appeal in the rural counties [231]

Later that day, Hall and Holsaert visited Mattie Mae Jackson, a former client of Daniels, who "just hadn't had time" to have her hair done since the shooting at Daniels' home. She avoided eye contact with Hall and Holsaert, sneaking glances at them occasionally. They encouraged her to see how she could be part of changing the system that she feared, but as they were talking, she sat on her bed, "trying to shrink into as little space as possible, trying to exist as little as possible." Hall and Holsaert continued canvassing on Tuesday, March 19, and they noticed two white boys on bicycles watching them, and very often, cars of whites drove past Daniels' house.

For a March 20 all-day staff meeting in Terrell County, Hall and Holsaert prepared a report of their activity as well as suggestions from their canvassing. They suggested creating responsibilities and leadership opportunities for some of the high school students. Holseart reported: "Prathia has stated very well the present situation in Dawson as far as our opposition is concerned. That is that the frenzy there is high, but

[229]Faith Holsaert, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6; "A Tribute to SNCC On Its Fifth Birthday," 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 22.

[230]Chico Neblett, Field Report, February 12-13, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[231]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

that the authority has subjected itself to a new discipline, and that when these two elements are brought together, we will have real trouble."[232]

After the meeting, Hall, Holsaert, Larry Rubin, and John O'Neal canvassed to promote the mass meeting in Terrell that evening. Though Terrell meetings had averaged fifteen to twenty five people, that evening, the tent meeting was standing room only. A carload of young men in their twenties arrived, one of them drunk to muster the courage to attend. They were thrilled at the diversity of ages of those in attendance, each of whom could "penetrate another level of the community."[233] Hall and Joyce Barrett returned to Philadelphia from March 21-28 because of a death in Barrett's family. They spoke for several Union groups, promoting SNCC's work and recruiting Northern support.[234]

In late March, Hall was back in Terrell County with Faith Holsaert and Chico Neblett.[235] Neblett commented that he, Hall, and Holsaert worked "well as a team even under all the restrictions." The three frequently discussed strategy and ways to foster better group relations within SNCC.[236] The entire Southwest Georgia team traveled to Sasser, in Terrell County, every Wednesday for tent-meetings.[237] Their work must have been fruitful because Chatfield heard over the radio in early April, 1963 that Terrell County had formed a Terrell County White Improvement Association, "organized for the

[232]Faith Holsaert, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[233]Faith Holsaert, Field Report, March 9 – 22, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[234]Joyce Barrett, Field Report, March 10-April 14, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

[235]Jack Chatfield, Field Report, March, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

[236]Chico Neblett, Field Report, March 15-16, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[237]Jack Chatfield, Field Report, April 16-25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

sole purpose of figuring out and dealing with integration groups in this racially-disturbed corner of the free world."[238]

In mid-April, 1963, Sherrod implemented his idea of revolving staff among the counties, which was widely unpopular with SNCC's staff; Hall and Holsaert were stationed in Terrell County. Workers traveled between counties for meetings and to help each other as needed.[239]All field staff from Southwest Georgia met in Albany on May 14 and decided to focus their efforts exclusively on Albany to make it an "open city." In the meeting, SNCC staff agreed that success in Albany would be beneficial to all individual counties.[240]

Barrett wrote a letter to Fellowship House on May 14, addressed to "Family":

> We've just decided to go all <u>out</u> ourselves and raise hell….Sherrod has said I'll be one of the first ones to go to jail – which may mean today or tomorrow. If I go, I'll probably stay a while. Do whatever you can for publicity for us, especially if Prathia or I are involved (she may lead a night march).
> We're sitting on a powder keg down here. The Birmingham riots are being felt across the nation. Students fighting in Knoxville, Nashville, sitting-in in Raleigh. Some kids shot at the police last night here – and threw bottles. We have no choice but to <u>move</u> now. I love you all.
> Joyce [241]

---

[238]Jack Chatfield, Field Report, March, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

[239]Chico Neblett, Field Report, April 16-23, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[240]Ralph Allen, Field Report, May 13-26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.
Pulling workers from rural counties into Albany had a variety of effects on the still-new projects in those rural counties. The county best-equipped to self-manage was Terrell County. The rebuilding of the churches burned in Summer, 1962 was a symbol of hope and strength for the African American community in Terrell County. Lee County had a number of willing canvassers, but struggled without transportation or strong local leadership. Sumter County boasted high registration numbers.

[241]Joyce Barrett, Letter to Fellowship House, May 14, 1963, Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:8.
After lunch, SNCC actively recruited at area schools, seeking volunteers to be arrested, and five went to jail after a mass meeting that evening. Meetings and marches continued the next day as well. At Terrell County's mass meeting, Hall and Holsaert reported that Terrell County was "carrying on fine without them" and that the meeting was well-attended: "a full tent without the Albany kids to swell the numbers." Ralph Allen, Field Report, May 13-26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

Upon receipt of Barrett's letter, Marjorie Penney shared at a Fellowship House meeting: "The girls expected they would be arrested very soon as activities get hotter in Albany. They had little money available at the time of their last letter." A board member motioned to send $100 to Hall and Barrett from the Board, which was "overwhelmingly approved."[242]

Within a week of this aggressive new recruitment campaign in Albany, both Hall and Barrett were arrested, along with Joni Rabinowitz, W.G. Anderson, and Slater King. They were distributing leaflets in front of the Dougherty County Courthouse early in the morning on May 21, which urged African Americans to vote against a $7.9 million bond which would fund the construction of new city facilities. When voters had inquired whether the new facilities would be integrated, city leaders gave only vague answers or changed the subject. Ten civil rights workers had been arrested between May 14 and May 21.[243] The "Big Push" in Albany struggled, however, to find brave people willing to be arrested. The Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, a group of ministers from area churches, met to coordinate efforts and marches, but "the real problem behind the whole meeting was that none of the folk there outside of SNCC were prepared to go to jail."[244] Workers continued nurturing the mass meetings out in the counties, and pressing for increased voter registrations.

In June, 1963, the SWGA Project was nearly halted when twenty-two of its twenty-six staff were arrested within one week in a police attempt to deter SNCC's daily

---

[242]"Fellowship House, Meeting of Board of Directors, May 16, 1963," Fellowship House Papers, Acc. 723:1.

[243]SNCC News Release, May 21, 1963, Albany, Georgia, SNCC Papers, Reel 13; Ralph Allen, Field Report, May 13-26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[244]Ralph Allen, Field Report, May 13-26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

demonstrations.[245] Arrests began June 20, and by June 22, more than 140 demonstrators had been arrested: "They were picked up singly and in twos and threes, during marches, while canvassing, or as they entered a local church to attend a mass meeting." Police "slapped and manhandled" women, and white integrationists were jailed with other whites, who would physically assault them for betraying their race.[246]

When Cathy Cade's father came to Albany in June, 1963 after his daughter's arrest, he went to the SNCC headquarters, where he encountered Hall and her friend Joyce Barrett. He described their interaction: "I was introduced to Joyce Barrett, Prathia Hall, and the rest. Joyce was a young white girl very pretty, delicate face and good figure. Prathia was a young colored girl about 20-25 with a good mind and very commanding presence – somewhat masculine in her authority, I should say." Sherrod arrived, and the four conversed about the project and the status of Cathy. Cade continued: "During the next two hours of conversation interrupted by the phone ringing every 5 minutes, Joyce and Prathia constantly said to Sherrod, Don't you think this is right and he always agreed. It was apparent that the two girls were running the show." The next day, Cade attended a mass meeting at Arcadia Church at 8:00 p.m., led by Hall: "Prathia Hall started the meeting with a reading from the bible about the torture and martyrdom of the Christians according to Paul. Prathia is an excellent preacher with a beautiful contralto voice. She led several freedom songs and also introduced me as the father of Cathy who was one of the girls in jail."[247]

---

[245]Annette Jones White, "Expression of My Discontent," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 117.

[246]Untitled Document, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[247]Cathy Cade, "Caught in the Middle," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 202, 204.

In June, 1963, Chief Pritchett moved twenty-two imprisoned SNCC workers to Lee County. The remaining students, including Hall, hid in the SNCC offices "to avoid wholesale arrests by the Albany police on charges ranging from 'distributing leaflets without a permit' to 'investigation of suspicion of vagrancy.'" A phone call informed the students to move to the home of Aurelia Noble, with no suggestion for how to get there. The group disguised themselves in dark coats and smeared soot on their faces so they could hide under the cover of night. They escaped through a back door and walked in absolute darkness, hiding from police cars whose lights were casing the SNCC office and nearby alleys. When a dog barked at them, its owners turned on backyard lights, and the group froze in an alley for almost an hour until the lights were turned off.[248]

Arriving at the safe house, they were "offered sanctuary" at Beulah Baptist Church. Rev. Samuel Wells and schoolteacher McCree Harris drove the students (white students lied down in the seats) to Beulah. The males slept "in a room on one side of the church with the deacons, females on the other side with the deaconesses." After one of the students from the North played "jazzy blues piano," Buelah "evicted" the students. They hid in Shiloh Church for eight days. Joann Christian Mants' father, James Christian, and her cousin, Monroe Gaines, guarded the backdoor of the church, "under a spotlight, with their guns across their laps" to protect the workers from the Klan, which had been "circling" the church after dark.[249]

---

[248]"Frustration, Bitterness Mount in Albany, Georgia," *The Student Voice*, 4, no. 2 (August, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 72; Annette Jones White, "Expression of My Discontent," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 117-118; Claude Sitton, "Albany, Ga., Faces 3d Racial Crisis in 18 Months: Brutality Charged," *New York Times* June 23, 1963.

[249]Joann Christian Mants, "Right Side Up," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 135-6.

Hall and childhood friend Joyce Barrett spoke to SNCC reporters: "We are afraid here. We are afraid that this community may explode."[250] Demonstrations – met with police intimidation, arrests, and brutality – were the only way to communicate with city leaders or draw national attention to racial injustice in the South. Chief Pritchett stayed "one jump ahead" of SNCC's plans, however, and with insufficient funds to post bail for everyone arrested, some remained in jail "long past their time."[251] Without masses of people to back up the core 200 local volunteers, demonstrations did not reach the potential Sherrod hoped they would.[252]

Prathia Hall shared Sherrod's idealism, speaking often of the inherent good in people and with faith that justice would win the day. Ralph Allen, after returning to Southwest Georgia from Atlanta on July 12, said he found "Prathia on cloud 6 ½ telling me from up there" that their next demonstration on July 13 "was the day."[253] In the same report, Allen described a July 14 meeting about Albany's strategy: "For instance, it came out that Prathia had completely and utterly, if genuinely, deluded herself into actually

---

[250]"Frustration, Bitterness Mount in Albany, Georgia," *The Student Voice*, 4, no. 2 (August, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 72.

[251]Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[252]As Ralph Allen described, "Factually and tangibly, nothing was accomplished except the destruction of the impact of much of Sherrod's idealism….This is not to say that Sherrod's theories about the people are not true, but rather to say that they must be taken along with an honest assessment of their context, i.e., tyranny of Pritchett, and his rather studied policies of suppression." An important consideration to keep in mind is that Ralph Allen was a young, African American volunteer who worked with Don Harris in Sumter County after having worked with Sherrod in Dawson, and Allen had some significant differences of opinion with Sherrod concerning strategy. Certainly not all SNCC workers in Southwest Georgia held such strong view against Sherrod or his tactics. Allen even suggested that Sherrod relinquish his administrative duties to someone better skilled in this area and focus his time on vision and planning. Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[253]SNCC had planned the following mass demonstrations for July 13: prayer meeting at a church near the pool, followed by a series of demonstrations, pickets, and boycotts across the city according to a master plan.

believing that hundreds were going to demonstrate the day before, despite the fact that the 'canvassers' kept telling her that they could get no responses from the people."[254]

Mass demonstrations like the multi-site event planned for July13 required hundreds of volunteers, which SNCC had not had in Southwest Georgia since early 1962. Hall clearly had a vision for large civil rights project leadership, which may be why James Forman recognized Hall's potential for project leadership within SNCC and moved her to the burgeoning Selma, Alabama project by Fall of 1963. Hall's optimism may be a combination of her theological training, outlook on the project, and pastoral skills. Part of leadership is motivating others to follow, so sounding positive and hopeful may have been a reasonable technique for recruiting local volunteers and maintaining their own resolve. From Hall's intellectual and theological upbringing, such idealism seems in line with her understanding of Freedom Faith, the assurance that God would assist those who strove for justice.[255]

---

[254]Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[255]At a subsequent mass meeting, the SWGA SNCC team was discussing their strategy to protest segregation at the Tift Park swimming pool, one of the projects that put Hall on "cloud 6 ½." On July 13, 1963, when police thwarted the planned attempt to integrate the pool, Randy Battle, Phil Davis, and Pete DeLissovoy started running toward the pool: "We turned around – and when we started running, we hit that fence and were over that fence and in that pool in a second. And we swam on cross that pool to where the ladder came up and then we went out that back gate." As they ran, a collie chased them, accelerating their getaway from the police. They ran to Arcadia church and hid in a tree. As the water dripped from their clothes and shoes, three deacons noticed them in the tree and sheltered them inside the church building. Battles described white reaction to the great pool jump:

> Look here, though, the funny part of it, the best part of it all, when we hit that water in the pool, when they looked over there and saw "them niggers" in that pool, goddam it them white folks and kids went straight up in the air, they didn't climb out, they went straight up in the air and *flew* over to the sides – I mean that's what it seemed like to me. I bet you in half a minute there wasn't nobody in the pool but the three of us. And they started screaming and hollering, "Niggas! Niggas!" Them white folks hit the air like *dolphins*, you know, right up in the air they flew."

After the jump, the city drained the pool and spent three days scrubbing the entire pool with disinfectant. Not long after, Battles and Daniel snuck back into the pool and poured Army dye into the water. "In the morning Tift pool was bright yellow and they had to drain it all over again! A second time." Randy Battle, Dennis Roberts, Curtis L. Williams, and Pete DeLissovoy, *The Great Pool Jump & Other Stories*, 11-15; SNCC News Release, "Negroes Swim in White Only Pool," July 13, 1963, Albany, Georgia, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

In the afternoon of July 13, Hall, Holsaert, Barrett, and Ralph Allen met with C.B. King to discuss criticisms of staff relations. At a staff meeting the following day, several themes emerged. Taking stock of the situation in Albany, namely the lack of new local volunteers, the Southwest Georgia SNCC team decided to move from mass demonstrations toward radical, small demonstrations with a higher probability of victory, such as the Great Pool Jump. Leaders who pushed for this change did so based on their belief that "Albany could no longer bear the burden of the movement without some kind of victory." By focusing their limited resources on "smaller, more specific goals," they believed that "a series of victories may rebuild the power of the Albany movement." One of their first implementations of this approach was to delegate research projects to discover potential sites for focused efforts.[256]

The interracial nature of the Southwest Georgia project remained a sore spot even for some within SNCC and the Albany Movement. While Sherrod, Hall, and SNCC Executive Chairman James Forman, remained committed to integration as necessary, others expressed more subtle resentment at the increasing number of whites in SNCC. For example, at the end of the July 14 Albany meeting, Prathia Hall returned from Atlanta with news that two new students, both white, would, in Ralph Allen's words, "descend from the heavens above to bestow their 'creativity' upon us." Allen believed that the growing number of whites in Southwest Georgia aggravated white Albany, resulted in more frequent and more expensive arrests, and enabled "a detached melancholy" spectator-mentality in Albany's African American community.[257]

[256]Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[257]Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

Throughout summer, 1963, the SWGA Project received new workers, and with the Albany "Big Push" plan gathering workers from rural areas, the population of SNCC workers in Albany was at an all-time high. The SNCC house became overcrowded with people, causing inconvenient and dangerous situations for the workers.[258] Certainly having an interracial team was more difficult for Sherrod and Hall to lead than an all-black team would have been. Hall played a key role in educating Northern whites in the culture of the rural black South, particularly the necessity of leaving the comforts of the SNCC house to do voter registration canvassing and sensitivity to behaviors which could endanger SNCC workers and local volunteers.[259]

After mass arrests throughout the summer, including that of several dozen teenage girls held in the Leesburg Stockades for several weeks without clean water and basic amenities in August, 1963, the Justice Department got involved, convening a federal grand jury in Macon, the first ever to examine civil rights in Southwest Georgia. The whole affair, however, turned out to be a trial against civil rights workers for demonstrations at a white-owned grocery store in April, 1962.[260] Great Pool Jump co-conspirator Joni Rabinowitz was convicted of perjury for denying her presence at the demonstration; multiple witnesses testified that Joyce Barrett was present at the grocery store, not Rabinowitz, who was likely targeted because her father Victor Rabinowitz

[258]Ralph Allen elaborated on the difficulties of the larger staff in a letter to James Forman: "Actually, you take all the problems raised above in connection with the detrimental effects which whites have had upon the people of Albany, and you add to that the number ten, -- ten or so people who aren't self-sufficient and who have to be told when it's time to eat and where, have to be kicked out of the Big house at night so Prathia can get to sleep, ten people who have to be closely watched because they aren't sensitive enough to know what they are doing in the eyes of the community, don't know that they should be afraid of being seen alone with a black chick, or that they should be afraid and wary of certain types of social intercourse." Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[259]Ralph Allen, Field Report, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[260]Untitled Document, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

represented Fidel Castro in US trials concerning the American embargo on Cuba.[261] Five other Albany civil rights workers were charged with perjury associated with the case. Demonstrations erupted in Americus after the verdict, and police started shooting into the crowd as they sang freedom songs, trampling and attacking demonstrators with cattle prods and other weapons.[262] Police brutality in Americus escalated, and four civil rights workers were charged with insurrection, facing the death penalty.[263]

By Summer and Fall, 1963, the "solid movement people in Albany" were tired. Police had mastered the art of mass arrests, and the city had instituted discriminatory policies to interfere with voter registration and integration.[264] By the end of 1963, however, SNCC workers in cooperation with local civil rights workers had raised the number of registered African American voters in Terrell from the fifty-one in 1960 to 140 (a 270% increase). The statistics remained harrowing, however, as African Americans still only comprised less than 5% of voters in Terrell County.[265]

---

[261]Joann Christian Mants, "Right Side Up," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 136; Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U," *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 193; Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*, 211-212; SNCC News Release, "Attorney Questions Federal Concern for Law and Order," Albany, Georgia, August 16, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13; Barrett, Interview with Lyons; Ernest Goodman, Letter to James Forman, March 6, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8.

[262]"In Americus, Georgia: Police Smash Demonstrators, Four Face Death Penalty," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 3 (October, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 74; Claude Sitton, "Strict Law Enforcement Stifles Negroes' Drive in Americus, Ga: 4 Integrationists Face Death Penalty as Result of Riots and Demonstrations," *New York Times* (September 29, 1963); Horace Julian Bond to Emanuel Coller, October 21, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 1; "Georgia Jail Holds Denverite," *The Denver Post* September 4, 1963; SNCC News Release, "3 SNCC Workers Face Death Penalty," August 20, 1963, Americus, Georgia, SNCC Papers, Reel 13; Special Report of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Americus, Georgia, August 8-15, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

[263]Don Harris, Ralph Allen, John Perdew, and Zev Aelony were held for several weeks under these charges before they were released in November, 1964.

[264]Barbara Schwartzbaum, Memo to James Forman, "Long Overdue VR memo," July 20, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 19; Peter DeLissovoy, Field Report, July 18, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 6.

[265]"Night Riders Shoot Worker," *The Student Voice*, 89.

SNCC's work continued in SWGA. Some improvements occurred in Albany by late 1963 and early 1964, but police harassment of movement activists continued in the rural counties.[266] In Spring of 1964, Albany attorney C.B. King announced his candidacy for Congress for the Second District, which included Dougherty, Baker, Randolph, Terrell, and Worth counties. SNCC's SWGA Project expansion covered nearly every county of the Second District, which sparked exponential growth in voter registrations.[267]

Freedom Faith Matured

Hall described her work in the rural South as the best education she ever received. "I had been to school, I had been to college before I went South, and I've been to school a lot of years since. But the most important lessons that I ever learned, I learned in those rural counties from people who could not read or write their names."[268]

Hall often described this as "mutual educational exchange." SNCC workers had information about how to vote, and the local people "had learned the system and how to stay alive in the system morally, mentally, and spiritually—how to live in an oppressively crushing system without being crushed."[269] She met people who had supported their families on less-than-subsistence wages earned by back-breaking labor and had weathered discrimination, threats, and violence with "strength and nobility."[270] Women like Daniels inspired Hall, "just knowing that they had endured this treacherous brutality

---

[266]Joyce Barrett Memo to SNCC, October 4, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

[267]Don Harris, "Southwest Georgia," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 10; King Campaign Spurs Voters," *The Student Voice*, 5, no. 18 (July, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 175.

[268]Greenburg, *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*, 60.

[269]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 176.

[270]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 176.

for generations, and yet it had not killed their spirit. They were not crushed, they were not victims. They were survivors. They were overcomers."[271] Elsewhere she said:

> The primary lesson I received from those black sages was that of faith for living in life-threatening circumstances. It was a faith first made manifest by our slave fore-parents who defied the teachings of the slavocracy….Those profoundly spiritual women and men developed their own moral critique of the slaveholders' oppressive brand of religion and expressed the slaves' absolute conviction that slavery was contrary to the will of God and that God definitely intended them to be free. These sons and daughters of those enslaved ancestors continued to hold on to that freedom-faith. The freedom-faith fired and fueled the fight.[272]

Hall's father had inculcated the theological understanding that God meant all people to be free, that "freedom and faith were woven together in the fabric of life," and that "service to people was service to Christ." In Albany, however, Hall learned that Freedom Faith meant facing one's fears with courage and confidence that the God who led her there would deliver her from there. Hall was by no means naïve to suffering when she arrived in Georgia, but her experiences among the local people educated her in the real meaning of Freedom Faith, trusting God fully with one's life for the sake of justice. Hall's extended incarcerations added rich hues to her theology of suffering for freedom: "You can never appreciate the peace, the solace, the quiet appalling silence. You read about it in the Bible. But you can't appreciate it unless you've been in jail. Been in jail for a just cause. There is such a purging of the soul that you feel as though you have been relieved of all of your sins. The burdens of the world have been taken off of you."[273]

When a person's faith in God could lead them to persevere in courage in spite of their fear, Hall viewed that "as profoundly religious as saying a prayer or doing any kind

---

[271]Ransby, Interview with Hall.

[272]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 176.

[273]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 172. British SNCC volunteer John Papworth made a similar comment in a field report, calling jail a "morale booster" John Papworth, Field Report, Albany, Georgia, February 18-19, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

of religious discipline." The person who trusted God to assist them in their pursuit of freedom in spite of their fears was "now willing to walk face to face with the forces of death in the struggle for life."[274]

Hall contextualized freedom faith during the movement. Hall directly connected efforts toward liberation with God's will for God's children, implying God's favor and provision for those who opposed oppression: "This sense that I'm not a nigger, I'm not gal, I'm not boy. I am God's child. And as God's child, that means that I am everything that I'm supposed to be." Hall praised the courage and resilience of generations of African Americans who survived the brutality of slavery and Jim Crow because of their faith in God: "How had they done that? They had done that because each generation had passed on to the next generation this thing that I call freedom faith." This same freedom faith that sustained generations of African Americans would continue to sustain them as they opposed Jim Crow: "It may cost my job, it may cost my life, but I want to be free, and I want my children to be free. So I'm going down to the courthouse, and I'm going to sign my name. And I'm going to trust God to take me there, and I'm going to trust God to bring me back. That's courage. That's faith. That's freedom faith."[275] Freedom faith persevered in the midst of fear, trusting God.

Howard Thurman's *Jesus and the Disinherited* (1959) made a similar statement. Thurman's grandmother heard from a slave minister who led secret religious meetings for the slaves: "You-you are not niggers. You-you are not slaves. You are God's children." Thurman explained this saying to mean that having an identity as a child of God gave hearers of this message "a profound sense of personal worth" which could "absorb the

[274]Hall, Interview with Woods, 5-6.

[275]Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc., "Freedom Faith."

fear reaction." Validating personal dignity offered that person "the confirmation of his roots, and even death becomes a little thing."[276]

Hall admired Thurman greatly from a young age. The similarity of her definition of freedom faith to Thurman's grandmother's minister's saying is remarkable. Perhaps the saying became an element of folk religion among slave communities, which Richard Lischer's study of King's preaching suggests.[277] Perhaps Hall had closely read Thurman as a teenager under the tutelage of her father. Perhaps Hall heard King's frequent use of the phrase, whether from Thurman or slave folk culture, and recognized its potential to encourage and empower African Americans.

Hall's credit to the "local people" having the "wisdom of the ages" supports the phrase as a colloquialism of slave folk culture. If so, in incorporating the phrase into their writing and speaking, Thurman, King, and Hall affirmed the wisdom of the voices of the marginalized. By drawing from African American folk sayings in their work, Thurman, King, and Hall practiced their message of inclusive society without prejudice between races, genders, or classes.

Hall's time in Georgia refined her understanding of freedom faith from romanticized ideas of braving evil for the sake of good to a more spiritual understanding of courageous faith in the midst of fear, faith capable of facing death for the sake of life: "There's the courage that's lived when one *lays down one's life* for a cause, and there is that other courage that is lived when one *lives one's life* for a cause." She called "living in the face of death…the most powerful expression of freedom-faith." Hand in hand with

---

[276]Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1959), 50.

[277]Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 30-31.

the black sages of Southwest Georgia, Prathia Hall "walked face-to-face with the forces of death in the struggle for life."[278]

[278]Hall, "Freedom-Faith," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow*, 180.

CHAPTER FOUR

"Equality Now": Prathia Hall in Selma and Atlanta

Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), continued planning its next demonstrations after leaving Albany with dashed hopes. Fred Shuttlesworth, director of the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights, invited SCLC to Birmingham in late 1962, where he guaranteed King that nonviolence would succeed.[1] Project "Confrontation" would aim at disrupting the city's economy rather than its politicians. As demonstrations filled the streets, police continued with mass arrests. Unlike Albany, Birmingham had only its own jails to hold arrested demonstrators, and the jails soon filled. King and Shuttlesworth recruited new flanks of marchers constantly, and James Bevel's suggestion to recruit children and teenagers to march – called the Children's Crusade – ensured that the movement never depleted its supply of marchers. The growing economic and infrastructure burden from the mass arrests – more than 3,000, and more than 1,200 children – quickly brought the city of Birmingham to its knees.

On Good Friday, April 16, 1963, King marched on City Hall, knowing he would be arrested. Later that day, he drafted his "Letter from Birmingham Jail," outlining his

[1]The definitive biography of Fred Shuttlesworth is Andrew Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999), which is also a helpful history of the Birmingham demonstrations. For more on the Birmingham movement, see also Glenn T. Eskew, *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996) and Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham Alabama, Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001).

commitment to nonviolence and projecting heightened tension if racial justice did not come quickly.[2] Graphic footage of Police Chief Bull Connor's policemen assaulting women and children with high-pressure water hoses and police dogs was broadcast into homes nationwide via the evening news. Pressure mounted on the federal government to intervene to protect the demonstrators. Additionally, city merchants whose business had suffered from the demonstrations demanded that city leaders negotiate with civil rights leaders. The KKK took drastic action against movement leaders, including bombing homes and hotels, which increased pressure for President Kennedy to throw his support behind King by federalizing the Alabama National Guard to protect demonstrators in Birmingham.

To thwart an attempt to integrate the University of Alabama, Governor George Wallace demanded that two African American students be denied entry into the university. Wallace's campaign slogan – "Segregation forever" – and his personal involvement in preventing African American students from entering the University of Alabama once again compelled President Kennedy to nationalize the Alabama National Guard to protect the students as they integrated the university. In a June 11, 1963 televised speech, President Kennedy supported stronger legislation for civil rights: "Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them."[3] Later that evening, Medgar Evers, a civil rights

---

[2]See S. Jonathan Bass, *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the 'Letter from Birmingham Jail'"* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002).

[3]John Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," June 11, 1963, in *Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1963* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), 469.

leader in Jackson, Mississippi, was murdered in his driveway in front of his family. In Summer, 1963, the Department of Justice reported more than one thousand demonstrations in over two hundred cities across three dozen states.

Also in 1963, civil rights leaders from the six major civil rights organizations – SCLC, SNCC, CORE, NAACP, National Urban League, and Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters – as well as other labor groups pooled their efforts to plan a national demonstration for civil rights.[4] President Kennedy was not immediately supportive of the march, but because of what had happened in Birmingham, ultimately permitted it.[5] The August 28, 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Justice gathered over 250,000 people of different races and faiths at the Washington Mall and gained international media attention for the movement.[6]

As SCLC expanded into Birmingham, SNCC expanded into Mississippi and Selma.[7] Both Mississippi and Alabama had active White Citizens Councils. SNCC

---

[4]The "Big Six" leaders were Martin Luther King, Jr. and Ralph Abernathy (SCLC), Roy Wilkins (executive secretary of the NAACP), James Farmer (national director of CORE), John Lewis (chairman of SNCC), Whitney Young (executive director of the National Urban League). The other organizations involved added four remaining leaders to make the "Big Ten": Joachim Prinze (chairman of the American Jewish Congress), Eugene Carson Blake (vice chairman of the Commission on Race Relations of the National Council of Churches of Christ in America), Mathew Ahmann (executive director of the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice), and Walter Reuther (president of the United Automobile, Aerospace, and Agricultural Implement Workers of America, AFL-CIO).

[5]For more on the relationship between Martin Luther King, Jr. and John F. Kennedy, see Eric Sundquist, *King's Dream* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009); Harris Wofford, *Of Kennedys and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992); and Taylor Branch, *America in the King Years*, 3 vols. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998-2006).

[6]See Charles Euchner, *Nobody Turn Me Around: A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2010); Patrik Henry Bass, *Like a Mighty Stream: The March on Washington, August 28, 1963* (Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 2002); and David Garrow, "King: The Man, The March, The Dream," *American History* (2003): 26-35.

[7]For more on Civil Rights projects in Mississippi, see surveys of SNCC, mentioned previously in this dissertation, as well as Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Viking, 2010); Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of

leaders realized by 1963 that "dependence on the federal government to render assistance is becoming impossible" and that successful integration in deep-rooted Southern cities would require sending federal troops, as in the integration of Ole Miss and the University of Alabama.[8] Also during 1963, SNCC increased its recruiting of Northern college students to help with voter registration work in the South, which would lead to the 1964 Freedom Summer, in which over one thousand Northern college students campaigned for voter registration across the state of Mississippi. On June 21, 1964, the murder of Mississippi Freedom Summer volunteers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, as well as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's tension with President Lyndon Johnson at the 1964 Democratic National Convention, drew national attention to

---

California Press, 1995); J. Todd Moye, *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945-1986* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); Emilye Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom: The Black Freedom Struggle in Claiborne County, Mississippi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995); Carolyn Renee Dupont, *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); and James P. Marshall, *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest Politics and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013).

For more on Civil Rights projects in Alabama, see Hasan Jeffries, *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Susan Youngblood Ashmore, *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008); Frye Gaillard, *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004); Wayne Greenhaw, *Fighting the Devil in Dixie: How Civil Rights Activists Took on the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama* (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011); Cynthia Griggs Fleming, *In the Shadow of Selma: The Continuing Struggle for Civil Rights in the Rural South* (Landham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); Charles Eagles, *Outside Agitator: Jon Daniels and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000); Robert J. Norrell and Arieh J. Kochavi, *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Sheyann Webb and Rachel West Nelson, *Selma, Lord, Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980); Mary Stanton, *From Selma to Sorrow: Life and Death of Viola Luizzo* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000); David Garrow, *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); J. Mills Thornton, *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002); Charles E. Fager, *Selma, 1965: The March that Changed the South* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1974, 1985).

[8]James Forman, "Statement by James Forman, Executive Secretary of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)," November 11, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

racial injustice and added momentum to pressure for the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

In the midst of this season of the civil rights movement, Prathia Hall continued to live by freedom faith working for SNCC in the South. After her work in Southwest Georgia, Hall was asked to help lead SNCC's new Selma, Alabama project in 1963. The growing momentum in Atlanta and Hall's aptitude as a leader led James Forman to move Hall into Atlanta from late 1963 to 1964. She continued speaking on behalf of SNCC across the country, raising support and awareness for SNCC's work with voter registration and non-violent direct action.

The Selma, Alabama Voter Registration Project

A slave market before the Civil War, Selma later became a military hub for the Confederate army, a well-known center for lynching until the 1950s, and the birthplace of the White Citizens Council in Alabama. The seat of Dallas County, Selma's population was nearly sixty percent African American by 1961, yet less than one percent of African Americans were registered to vote. Sixty-four percent of the eligible white voters were registered.[9]

[9]Howard Zinn, *On Race* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011), 79; SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10; SNCC, "SNCC Work in Central Alabama," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

Two adjoining counties, Wilcox and Lowndes County, had never registered a single African American voter even though 78% of its population was African American. The US Department of Justice filed suit to enjoin intimidation tactics against African American voter registration, but by late 1963, the suit had still not come to trial (SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.)

Voter Registration Demographic	Dallas	Wilcox
Population Total	56,667	18,739
African American Population (% of Total)	32697 (57.7%)	9.894 (52.8%)
Eligible African American Registered (% of African Americans)	130 (0.9%)	0 (0%)
Median Family Income – All	$2,846	$1,550
Median Family Income – Nonwhite	$1,393	$1,031

SNCC explored the possibility of working in Selma in 1962, but decided that the city was too backward to start a project there. When Bernard Lafayette visited Atlanta in 1962 during a break from study at American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville, he asked Jim Forman about starting a SNCC project. Forman was hesitant, but gave Lafayette the go ahead.

When Lafayette and his wife, Colia, arrived in Selma in February, 1963 to begin voter registration and freedom schools, they faced immediate backlash from the white community.[10] Initially, few in the community supported their work, and churches refused to host mass meetings. Lafayette was attacked and frequently targeted for arrest.[11] SNCC

Median Grade Level Completed – All	8.7	6.7
Median Grade Level Completed - Nonwhite	5.8 (78% of illiterate population was African American)	5.5

[10]Literacy was a major element of the Selma freedom campaign due to exceptionally high illiteracy rates among African Americans there. Freedom schools educated people in reading, writing, and American history and politics so that they could successfully pass voter registration exams. These schools indirectly benefitted its students by boosting their marketability for employment. SNCC saw its adult literacy program as following an international trend by the National Union of Students of Brazil, Ghana, and Chile.

Economic disparity was clearly present in Selma, which was a key motivator for strong white opposition to the enfranchisement of African Americans. Fifty-two percent of families in Dallas County earned less than $3,000 annually, or less than $54 per week, whereas 6% of families earned $10,000 or more annually. The president of one of the largest manufacturing businesses in Selma was also president of the White Citizens' Council. Other Council members held strategic positions in banks and city government and regularly used their power to force other white business owners to participate in the Council. The Council ran ads with taglines such as: "Ask Yourself This Important Question: What have I personally done to Maintain Segregation?" The ad encouraged whites to contribute financially to support Governor Wallace and the Dallas County Citizens Council. SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

[11]J.L. Chestnut, Jr., and Julia Cass, *Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J.L. Chestnut, Jr.* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990), 151-4.
Jim Forman came to Selma in May, 1963 to speak at a mass meeting. Sheriff Clark had his men surround Tabernacle Baptist Church during the meeting, making a scene about recording license tag numbers, and those gathered remained in the building until 1:00 a.m. until they felt safe to exit. James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 318.

workers were followed, beaten, fired upon, and unfairly sentenced, as were local volunteers who supported voter registration.[12] Police did nothing to protect the civil rights workers or local sympathizers from segregationist violence.[13] Between September 15 and October 2, 1963, more than three hundred were arrested because of voter registration work. School attendance dropped from 1,500 to 480 in the week of September 15 alone.[14] During that time, Sheriff Clark ordered fifty state patrolmen to Selma to surround the First Baptist Church, where mass meetings were being held.[15] Even though the federal government filed suit against the arrests, local Sheriff Jim Clark maintained authority in Selma, which included armed police using intimidation tactics on a regular basis. Sheriff Jim Clark attended every mass meeting "with his gun on his hip and frequently, an electric cattle prodder in hand," retaining some 300 militia men –

[12]SNCC News Release, "Alabama Vote Leader's Home Shotgunned Vows Drive Will Continue," Selma, AL, April 17, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[13]In mid-September, nearly 1,000 African American students boycotted classes in protest of segregated public education. By September, 1963, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals mandated that the District Court of the Southern District of Alabama enjoin the Dallas County Board of Registrars for racial discrimination in their voter registration procedures, including enforcement against intimidation tactics by White Citizens Councils. SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10; "SNCC Work in Central Alabama," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

One of the strengths of voter registration canvassing in Selma was its outreach to young people. SNCC built upon the pre-existing gang structure of Selma to harness the influence of these organized young people to assist with canvassing and freedom schools: "With the help of these students and a group of interested adults, the entire town of Selma has almost been canvassed for the first time." See "SNCC Work in Central Alabama," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 10 and Voter Education Project Newsletter, "Dallas County, Alabama," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

A wonderful example of segregationist propaganda against civil rights movement activists is Albert C. Persons, *Sex and Selma: The True Selma Story* (Birmingham: Esco Publishers, 1965), which made explicit accusations of sex, exploitation, and greed against civil rights workers.

[14]Rev. B.L. Tucker, Field Report, Selma, Alabama, September 16-24, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10; SNCC News Release, "Alabama Officials Arrest Negroes Trying to Get Vote," Selma, Alabama, September 25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13; SNCC News Release, "Alabama Officials Arrest Negroes Trying to Get Vote," Selma, Alabama, September, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[15]Tucker, Field Report. Several demonstrators were also hiding in First Baptist Church because of warrants for their arrest.

donning army fatigues and helmets – to oppose civil rights and union activism.[16] Just before his September 24, 1963 arrest, SNCC staff worker Worth Long reported: "Selma is in a state of siege. Everywhere you look you can see state patrolmen or members of the special posse brandishing clubs and cattle prods."[17]

Prathia Hall described the Boynton family, and Amelia Boynton in particular, as pillars of the Selma project: "In my experience she was the leader of the local movement. There were men and others who were leaders, but it seemed to me that she was clearly respected as a peer among them. And she certainly was by the SNCC people." Sam Boynton, an entrepreneur, opened his office to civil rights workers in Selma. Bernard Lafayette worked out of Sam Boynton's office, and frequently visited Boynton as he was dying. The first mass meeting in Selma was held on the occasion of Sam Boynton's death. Amelia opened her home and office to SNCC workers.[18]

In Summer, 1963, Bernard and Colia Lafayette took a leave of absence from SNCC's Selma project to test integration in Chicago for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC). Forman did not hesitate to name Prathia Hall the new leader of the

[16]SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10; Rev. B. L. Tucker was hiding in First Baptist Church to avoid a warrant. Sheriff Clark entered the church without regard for the prayers or singing of the more than 300 people gathered there, grabbed Rev. Tucker by the neck from the pulpit during a prayer, and pulled him to the car. Tucker, Field Report; Clarence Clyde Ferguson, Jr. of the United States Commission on Civil Rights, Letter to Julian Bond, October 10, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

When the county jail filled, Clark sent the arrested to Camp Selma and Camp Camden, State Prison Road Camps. Tucker, Field Report.

[17]SNCC, "Special Report: Selma, Alabama," September 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[18]Prathia Hall, quoted in Belinda Robnett, *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 112.

Selma project. She had shown excellent leadership and poise in Southwest Georgia, and Forman was confident in her ability to manage Selma.[19] Hall described her appointment:

> Jim Forman and I (and I don't even know why I was asked to go, but Jim asked me) went to Selma. It was an extremely dangerous time. I remember the first mass meeting and how the church had been ringed by the sheriff on horseback and carrying those huge carbines and rifles and Al Lingo and the Alabama State troopers surrounding the church….In the week…which followed…all of the men who had been involved in the project were in jail and at that moment I became the project director….Need determined how people were utilized.[20]

In October, 1963, after five civil rights workers were convicted in the Dallas County Court for the September 25 demonstrations, SNCC decided to wage a mass voter registration day, bringing hundreds to the county courthouse to register to vote on October 7. Selma project leaders held mass meetings every night in anticipation of Freedom Day, and several high-profile leaders such as Jim Forman and comedian Dick Gregory came to Selma to support their work.[21]

The night before Freedom Day, Prathia Hall and others of the SNCC workers gathered at Amelia Boynton's house awaiting the arrival of James Baldwin. They fellowshipped in Boynton's kitchen, Forman continuing to address the group even as he scrambled eggs in a frying pan with the other hand. When Baldwin arrived with his brother, David, the group waited to hear what he would say, but he wanted to just listen

---

[19]Worth Long, Field Report, August 19, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 5; Sandra Hayden, Letter to Patti Driscoll, September 25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 26.

[20]Prathia Hall, quoted in Robnett, 111.

[21]SNCC News Release, "SNCC Chairman and Dick Gregory's Wife Convicted," Selma, AL, October, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

Whereas Gregory's speech was more politically charged and biting, Forman's remarks were practical. He instructed those present to look through the phone book for African Americans – "You'll know who's Negro, because they won't have Mr. or Mrs. in front of their names!" – all of whom needed to be called about coming downtown on Freedom Day. He delegated each letter of the alphabet to the crowd.

to what they had planned. Forman spoke first, and then the entire room was buzzing with conversation and debate.[22]

Aside from her appearance at Boynton's the night before Freedom Day, October 7, 1963, Hall had been hiding in the days prior to Freedom Day, expecting to be arrested. Howard Zinn, a Spellman professor who supported SNCC and was present on Freedom Day, was impressed by Hall when he met her at Boynton's:

> I wondered if Patti [*sic:* Prathia] Hall would show up at the courthouse. She was a field secretary for SNCC, a pleasant, very intelligent young woman from Philadelphia, with a reputation for fervent oratory at mass meetings. She had gained her experience in the movement the preceding year in Terrae [*sic:* Terrell] County, Georgia. Now she was directing the voter registration campaign in Selma. She'd been absent from the mass meeting Saturday night: word was out that a warrant had been issued for her arrest. Yesterday, Sunday, I had spoken to her at Mrs. Boynton's house and was going to interview her at length, but we delayed it so she could get some rest.[23]

Knowing that only thirty or forty of the people in line would have opportunity to register to vote, nearly 300 gathered at the courthouse. Sheriff Clark harassed those in line and denied them access to food or water.[24] Just before noon, Forman informed some in the line that Sheriff Clark and two deputies had just arrested Hall at Mrs. Boynton's house. Clark returned to the courthouse to gloat over the arrest, calling Hall "his catch." Clark started arresting many of those gathered for "unlawful assembly."[25] Just after noon, Forman walked to Boynton's to alert the Atlanta SNCC office of the arrests. En route to her house, he grabbed six SNCC workers and insisted they come with him because the

---

[22]Zinn, *On Race*, 80-82.

[23]Zinn, *On Race*, 85.

[24]Pete Seeger and Bob Reiser, *Everybody Says Freedom* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 185-187; Zinn, *On Race*, 86-89.

[25]Untitled Document, October 7, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Quill, 1987), 218.

project could not afford for them to be arrested as well. When J.L. Chestnut arrived at Boyton's, Forman told him: "We've got to get Prathia out of jail *today*. We need her, man."[26]

Fourteen civil rights workers, including Prathia Hall, were arrested during the October 7 Freedom Day. Hall was to be tried on November 14 for contributing to the delinquency of a minor and picketing. The trial was delayed until December after the Justice Department attorney refused to appear.[27] On February 17, 1964, all fourteen were convicted for violating city ordinances – unlawful assembly and provocation – and fined $300 each.[28]

The Dallas County Voters League and SNCC maintained momentum for voter registration through the mid-1960s. As SNCC's team helped potential voters pass the exams, Alabama issued a state law requiring that voter registration exam questions be changed monthly.[29] The KKK and White Citizens Council held considerable power in Dallas County and continued to harass those active in the movement, particularly its

[26]Zinn, *On Race*, 89.

[27]WATS Report, Selma, Alabama, November 5, 13, 14, 15, February 12, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 15.

[28]SNCC News Release, "Rights Workers to Appeal," Selma, Alabama, February 20, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; SNCC News Release, "Two Beaten, Three Jailed As Selma Negroes Try to Register to Vote," Selma, Alabama, October 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

Hall may have also been part of a group of twenty-six arrested in Wilcox County regarding alleged discrimination against those who applied to register to vote there. See Reel 15:7992, WATS December 7. SNCC workers from Southwest Georgia traveled to Selma in December, 1963 for a conference between the two SNCC teams, but many from the Southwest Georgia team found the event to be "a complete waste, except for one work session," since Selma's team was meeting with lawyers, in court, or traveling to Birmingham. Don Harris, Field Report, Americus, Georgia, December, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 17.

[29]Leslie Dunbar and Wiley Branton, "Second Annual Report of the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council," Fiscal Year April 1, 1963 – March 31, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

leaders and activists who had come to Alabama from out of state.[30] SNCC applied for additional Voter Education Project funds for their expanding work in Alabama.[31]

Atlanta

Although Hall was involved with the Selma project by early 1963, SNCC called her to Atlanta in late 1963 to help with a growing demonstration campaign there. One reporter identified Hall as "the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's chief of the Atlanta campaign."[32] At a SNCC meeting in Atlanta, Hall made the following statement in her address to local civil rights activists and leaders:

> Negroes must also bear the blame for the desecration of humanity that is segregation. For we have been silent much too long. We've been preoccupied with telling our city power structure not what it needs to know, but what it wants to hear. We are here today because we can no longer bear the shame of our guilt, because delay means compromising our dignity…we are here today to serve notice on the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia. We are tired of segregation and we want equality now.[33]

Twenty-one SNCC workers, including Hall, landed in Atlanta jails over Christmas, 1963. On Saturday, December 21 and Sunday, December 22, Hall was among the two dozen SNCC workers gathered at the Peachtree Manor hotel to meet with Kenya's Minister of Home Affairs, Oginga Odinga, invited by the State Department to

---

[30]James Forman, Letter to Robert Kennedy, October 1, 1963, and Horace Julian Bond, Letter to David Marlin, July 1, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[31]James Forman, Letter to Wiley Branton, October 19, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[32]Claude Sitton, "Atlanta Whites Act to End Crisis: But Negro Protest Leaders Get New Adult Support," *New York Times* (January 29, 1964).

For a helpful summary of the civil rights movement in Atlanta, see the introduction to Tomiko Brown-Nagin's *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). Brown-Nagin's introduction offers a concise assessment of the complex relationships between the various civil rights organizations at the local and national level, the movement and the government, and the movement and the American public.

[33]PBS, "Prathia Hall," http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/prathia_hall.html (accessed 5/21/2008); King, *Freedom Song*, 218-9.

visit the US to celebrate his new position within the United Nations.[34] "Freedom songs of both countries had been exchanged, and the students escorted Mr. Odinga to his car amid goodbyes of 'Uhuru.'"[35] After the meeting, the students went to a Toddle House restaurant to eat, but were denied entrance, in plain sight of Minister Odinga.[36]

On December 23, Prathia Hall, Roberta Yancey, Lillian Gregory (wife of comedian Dick Gregory), and other SNCC workers returned to the Toddle House on Peachtree Street. When the restaurant refused to serve them coffee, they sat-in at the counter. Seventeen were arrested on the spot; according to *The Tri-State Defender*, state attorneys were waiting on the scene. The next morning, Christmas Eve, 1963, Hall, Gregory, and Yancey were arrested. "Misses Hall and Yancey, who refused to cooperate with police as did most protestors arrested at the eating place, were dragged and carried to a paddy wagon. Mrs. Gregory, who is expecting a child in April, 1964, walked." Hall, Gregory, and Yancey were stockholders in Dobbs House, Inc, which owned the Toddle House chain, and made national headlines – "Stockholders Accused of Trespassing," "New Civil Rights Tactic – Buying Stock," and "New Type of Woman in Civil Rights

[34]Presidents Kennedy and Johnson made strident efforts to befriend leaders of newly independent African nations to prevent their potential alliance with Russia. America's racial segregation proved a sore spot in these negotiations.

[35]Dinky Forman, "Notes on Atlanta Arrests (From Dinky), December 21, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37. "Uhuru" is the Swahili word for "freedom."

[36]"Workers Spend Xmas in Jail," *The Student Voice* 4, no. 10 (December, 1963), in *The Student Voice*, 97, 99; Dinky Forman, "Notes on Atlanta Arrests (From Dinky)," December 21, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

Work" – for being arrested on their own property, held at $100 bail.[37] The three were held in solitary confinement at "Big Rock" jail in Atlanta.[38]

The Executive Committee of SNCC wrote Mayor Ivan Allen a heated telegram concerning the arrests. "We hold you totally responsible for any harm that comes to the three prisoners who are now in the Fulton County Jail, Miss Prathia Hall, Miss Roberta Yancey, and Mrs. Lillian Gregory." The telegram urged Allen to pass an ordinance for full integration of public facilities in Atlanta.[39] SNCC appealed to Allen's desire for Atlanta to look like a modern city in its correspondence, contrasting Atlanta's "liberal image" with throwing demonstrators in jail on charges of trespassing.[40] SNCC also telegrammed President Kennedy in protest of the arrests.[41]

Also on December 24, SNCC workers staged demonstrations at the home and office of Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen with signs reading, "Black is Not a Vice or Segregation a Virtue; Atlanta's Image is a Fraud." SNCC workers also protested at the airport, waving signs bearing: "Welcome to Atlanta, a segregated City." On Sunday, December 29, SNCC workers repeated their demonstrations at Allen's home, singing freedom songs, demanding a public accommodations integration law, and protesting the

---

[37]"Gregory in Ga." *Tri-State Defender* [Memphis, TN] (January 4, 1964); "Workers Spend Xmas in Jail"; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 360; UPI, "New Civil Rights Tactic – Buying Stock," *The Daily Mail*, December 27, 1963; AP, "Stockholders Accused of Trespassing," *The News*, December 27, 1963; AP, "New Tactic Used in C-Rights Court Hearing," *The Post*, December 28, 1963; Sue Cronk, "Race Barriers Break Down over Coffee and Doughuts: New Type of Woman in Civil Rights Work," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 10, 1964.

[38]King, *Freedom Song*, 186.

[39]Executive Committee of SNCC, John Lewis, and James Forman, Telegram to Mayor Ivan Allen, December 26, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[40]SNCC, Telegram to Ivan Allen, January 18, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[41]SNCC, Telegram to Robert Kennedy, January 18, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

unsanitary conditions Yancey, Gregory, and Hall faced behind bars, where they were held until January 2.[42]

Attorney Howard Moore represented Hall, Yancey, and Gregory in their municipal court hearing for their Christmas Eve, 1963 arrests. The Atlanta manager for Toddle House Corporation, Harold D. Furrow, testified in court that "the three were creating a disturbance." Though bail was set at $100 each, they opted to remain in jail rather than pay.[43]

After ten days, Hall, Yancey, and Gregory were released from jail on January 2. On January 6, 1964, SNCC announced that John Lewis and the management of Dobbs House, Inc. had reached a satisfactory agreement, following demonstrations which closed twelve of its locations and resulted in the arrest of twenty-four demonstrators.[44] January, 1964 marked an "all-out drive to make Atlanta an 'open city,'" and SNCC took actions which were "more provocative than any civil rights campaign the city had ever witnessed."[45] Nearly 200 were arrested for civil rights demonstrations within the month, however, and over 300 had been arrested since December.[46]

---

[42]"Workers Spend Xmas in Jail," and "Agreement Reached with Dobbs Houses," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 1 (January, 1964) in *The Student Voice*, 97, 99, 103-104.

[43]Associated Press, "New Civil Rights Tactic – Buying Stock."

[44]SNCC News Release, "Agreement Settles Atlanta Sit-Ins," Atlanta, Georgia, January 6, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[45]SNCC News Release, "Atlanta 'Open City' Drive Begins," Atlanta, Georgia, January 11, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 19; "Why We Protest," SNCC Papers, Reel 19; Brown-Nagin, 214.
For more about the relationship between civil rights organizations and the tension between SNCC's dependence on the NAACP and Len Holt's "MASH unit" approach for legal defense of civil rights workers, see Tomiko Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent.*

[46]"Ga. NAACP Presses Governor on Banning Bias in Hotels," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, January 18, 1964; "Agreement Reached with Dobbs Houses"; "Meeting Set to Air Atlanta Racial Dispute," *Kingsport Times*, Wednesday, January 29, 1964, 18; Claude Sitton, "Atlanta Whites Act to End Crisis: But Negro Protest Leaders Get New Adult Support," *New York Times* (January 29, 1964); SNCC News Release, "Atlanta 'Open City' Drive Continues," January 16, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

On January 11, immediately after a meeting of the Atlanta Summit Leadership Conference, a coalition of national and local civil rights groups, thirteen people – John Lewis, Wyatt Tee Walker, Martin Luther King, Prathia Hall, state NAACP field secretary Leon Cox, six SCLC workers, and Gary Robinson – were arrested during a sit-in at the segregated Heart of Atlanta Motel.[47] After her release from jail, Hall returned to Albany for demonstrations at the city's Toddle House restaurant. On January 15, she, Eddie Brown, Slater King, Joyce Barett, and two others asked to see the manager of the Albany Toddle House when they were asked to leave. The manager "called (or pretended to call)" the police, so the group left. The next day, Hall, King, and Richard Morris met with a "boss man from Toddle House" who expressed a willingness to integrate rather than risk losing his business. The man asked for fifteen days to make his decision and to allow his employees time to adapt.[48]

Nationally, the NAACP and the Legal Defense Fund did not approve of jail-no-bail because this approach weakened their ability to battle segregation through the legal system. These organizations encouraged the students to post bail and leave the attack on segregation to the lawyers through the court system, but SNCC remained committed to jail-no-bail regardless. See Brown-Nagin, *Courage to Dissent*.

[47]"13 Arrested in Atlanta," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 1 (January, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 101, 103; "Atlanta 'Open City' Drive Continues"; Judy Richardson, "Affidavit of Judy Richardson," 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37; "Ga. NAACP Presses Governor on Banning Bias in Hotels"; The United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, *The State of Georgia v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, "To the Judges of the United States District Court…", National Archives and Records Administration.

[48]Phil Davis, Field Report, January 8-16, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.
On January 18, two demonstrations took place in Atlanta, one targeting desegregation of a Krystal restaurant and another protesting the police brutality against those arrested in the Krystal demonstration. Police Sargeant Mahler cordoned an area outside of the Krystal restaurant for the "protection" of the demonstrators, and the spectacle of the picket in light of robed Ku Klux Klan members waiting inside the restaurant attracted African Americans on the street to join the demonstration. Police Captain Hamby arrived and demanded that demonstrators disperse. Many were arrested. After learning of the unanticipated arrests at the Krystal demonstration, SNCC rushed to the scene and refused to leave in spite of police demands to clear the area. Police violently beat some of the demonstrators present and arrested many others. Before the night ended, seventy-five students were in jail, but newspaper coverage of the event failed to mention any police brutality. The next day, students repeated these demonstrations at Leb's and the police station. All demonstrators were arrested. A second demonstration at Leb's ensued on January 27 as picketers formed a line circling the block, marching single-file to remain in compliance with an agreement signed January 26 between James Forman and Police Chief Herbert Jenkins. In spite of this

Both black and white organizations on all sides of the issue of segregation struggled with the demonstrations.[49] Conflict even ensued between various civil rights organizations regarding strategy, particularly the stark contrast in demonstration approaches between the more conservative NAACP and SCLC versus the more radical SNCC.

On January 23, 1964, SNCC issued a news release naming Prathia Hall as the leader of SNCC's project in Atlanta. The announcement read: "Miss Prathia Hall, 23, from Philadelphia, Pa., will direct SNCC efforts in Atlanta. Miss Hall has worked for SNCC for over a year, and has been active in voter registration work and direct action in Albany, Ga. and surrounding counties, Selma, Ala. And Greenwood, Miss. She is a 1962 graduate of Temple University and studied political science and religion."[50]

The Atlanta project involved demonstrations, including at the home of Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen. On January 28, 1964, "demonstrations began with a march of about 75 Negroes and a few whites on city hall. The group sang 'freedom songs' for about an hour, then trooped upstairs to the office of Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. They waited outside the mayor's office while he conferred with Prathia Hall, one of their leaders," about a thirty-day moratorium on protests. In the meeting, Hall read the following statement: "Despite its 'liberal' reputation, Atlanta is still a segregated city. Businessmen are permitted complete discretion whether or not they will perpetuate the continuous insult of

---

agreement, police arrested demonstrators en masse. See "Atlanta Fact Sheet," SNCC Papers, Reel 19; Untitled Document, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[49]Untitled Document, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

[50]SNCC News Release, "Dick Gregory to Arrive, Atlanta SNCC Head Announced," Atlanta, Georgia, January 23, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

segregation and discrimination." Many public businesses had announced desegregation in summer of 1963 but had returned to segregation since then.[51]

Hall and Forman represented SNCC at a January 29 meeting at the Butler Street YMCA between white and African American leaders in Atlanta at Mayor Allen's invitation. Allen called the meeting to address "a racial dispute that has resulted in picketing, mass arrests, and scattered incidents of violence during the past four days." Hall and Forman offered to grant Allen's request for a thirty-day cease to all demonstrations in exchange for the release of all jailed demonstrators, but Mayor Allen rejected the deal.[52]

Federal officials and Georgia state courts quickly became embattled over jurisdiction concerning civil rights cases. Demonstrators were at the mercy of Atlanta's Fulton County Superior Court Judge Durwood T. Pye, notorious for excessive bail

---

[51]"Meeting Set to Air Atlanta Racial Dispute"; Sitton, "Atlanta Whites Act to End Crisis"; Herman Mason, Jr. *Politics: Civil Rights, and Law in Black Atlanta, 1870-1970* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 114-115; Untitled Advertisement for January 28, 1964, 3:30pm Demonstration for Release of Demonstrators, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

Forman had written to President Johnson about the Atlanta demonstrations, insisting that the Administration press for desegregation of public facilities. An assistant to the president responded to Forman that Johnson's administration was prepared to advocate strongly for desegregation, though they feared desegregation would be "vigorously challenged." Don C. White, Assistant Special Counsel to the President, Letter to James Forman, February 3, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[52]"Meeting Set to Air Atlanta Racial Dispute"; Sitton, "Atlanta Whites Act to End Crisis"; Untitled Notes from Atlanta Board of Education Meeting, January 20, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; "Dick Gregory to Arrive."

While Allen believed he was promoting integration, scholar Stephen Tuck characterized Allen as more trying to avoid publicity of racial discrimination, a non-confrontational form of white resistance. Stephen Tuck, *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001), 119-120; M. Charles Bakst, "Atlanta: A Study in Strife: 'The City Too Busy to Hate' Begins to Realize It Cannot Wish Away Its Racial Unrest," *Brown Daily Herald*, February 3, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

SNCC's repeated demonstrations at Toddle Houses, which closed twelve locations for several days, led to dialogue with the company, resulting in the successful integration of more than fifteen Dobbs and Toddle Houses in Atlanta. Toddle House refused to press charges against the twenty-four civil rights workers arrested. Locations in Florida, Texas, and Tennessee integrated as well. See "Agreement Reached with Dobbs Houses," and "Restaurant Chain Integrates," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 2 (January, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 103-104, 106; SNCC News Release, "Agreement Settles Atlanta Sit-Ins," Atlanta, Georgia, January 6, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

amounts and harsh sentences. He "insisted upon approving all bonds himself," and the Georgia Supreme Court mandated he reduce his bonds more than once.[53] Judge Pye, "a scholarly white-supremacist," was quick to act against anything he thought contributed to "the mongrelization of the races" and was known for giving maximum sentences to white civil rights workers.[54]

Though Pye could have tried all of those arrested at Heart of Atlanta together, he insisted on trying them individually and required that they all attend each trial. Joyce Barrett described the tactic as "trying to tie us up" from further demonstrations during the trial.[55] Prathia Hall was to be the second defendant tried. After the first student's trial, the

---

[53]"'Open' Atlanta Still Closed," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 5 (February, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 119.

Judge Pye required appeal bonds be posted with "unencumbered property located in Fulton County," refusing to accept cash payments. He fined the Atlanta branch of the NAACP $25,000 for refusing to release financial records. He obtained indictments against 101 civil rights demonstrators in Atlanta, dating back to 1961, claiming that Georgia's antitrespass law was "flouted, defied and violated." Even for defendants who had been previously freed on bonds of $300 or $500, Pye often "acted on [his] own motion" to raise bail to $3,000 or more. See "Ga. Judge Gives Coed 18 Months," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 7 (February, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 125, 128; "Shoofly Pye," *Time* (April 17, 1964). He held Georgia native and Emory graduate Rev. Ashton Bryant Jones of San Gabriel, California for sixteen months on $20,000 bail for "disturbing worship" by attending the all-white First Baptist Church of Atlanta on June 30, 1963, with an African American boy. Rev. Jones waged a hunger strike for one month of his sentence, which was his fourth related to the movement. See Horace Julian Bond, Letter to Sen. Thomas Kuchel, October 2, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 7; SNCC News Release, "67-Year-Old Minister Held in Atlanta Jail," Atlanta, Georgia, November 20, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; Untitled Document, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 37. The Georgia Supreme Court reduced Jones' bail to $5,000. He was sentenced to one year in prison, for which the 188 days he spent in jail before posting bond did not count, six months on public works, and a $500 fine. During Jones' time behind bars, First Baptist Atlanta desegregated. SNCC News Release, "Judge Refuses to Accept $5,000 Cash to Free Elderly Minister; Reverend Jones Behind Bars Since August 28, 1963," Atlanta, Georgia, February 17, 1964; "Reverend Jones Released from Jail," Atlanta, Georgia, Undated; "Rev. Jones Still Behind Bars," Atlanta, Georgia, Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 19.

[54]"Ga. Judge Gives Coed 18 Months"; "Shoofly Pye."
He served as head of the Georgia Education Committee, an openly pro-segregation organization. SNCC News Release, "Judge Refuses to Grant Coed New Trial," Atlanta, Georgia, July 9, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[55]Joyce Barrett, Interview with Courtney Lyons, Prathia Hall Special Project, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, June 12, 2012; "Judge Refuses to Grant Coed New Trial"; "Ga. Judge Gives Coed 18 Months"; "Shoofly Pye"; SNCC News Release, "White Girl Gets 18 Months, $1,000 Fine in Sit-In Case," Atlanta, Georgia, February 20, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

group's lawyers found precedent to remove local cases to the federal court. The US District Court filed a petition on February 17 for seventeen of the sit-in cases to be moved to federal jurisdiction. The move angered Pye. "The Federal-state showdown began when Judge Pye refused to surrender jurisdiction of SNCC worker Prathia Hall, who was held for 14 days under $4,500 bail."[56]

The charges stemmed from the January 11 sit-in, and Hall was held in jail for two weeks for failing to pay $4,500 bail. Hall anticipated Judge Pye sentencing her to the maximum extent allowed: six months in jail, one year in the county work camp, and a $1,000 fine. Although she had appeared in all of her calls to court, the trial court delayed proceedings for irrelevant reasons. Hall's lawyers claimed that she was being subjected to "cruel and inhuman punishment by virtue of the fact that she is not actually being detained and held in the custody of the Sheriff of Fulton County, Georgia, on excessive, unnecessary, and unreasonably high bail pending trial upon an indictment charging a misdemeanor violation," which was in itself an unconstitutional act of racism. US District Judge Boyd Sloan, in Gainesville, Georgia, issued a second temporary restraining order against state courts trying Hall on March 19, 1964.[57]

Pye even sentenced one of her character witnesses, Melvin Drimmer, a Spelman College professor of history, to twenty days in jail for elements of his testimony Pye considered to be contempt of court.

[56]Fulton Superior Court, Case #48619, *The State of Georgia v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall,* "Exhibit C", National Archives and Records Administration.

[57]The United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, *The State of Georgia v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, "To the Judges of the United States District Court…", National Archives and Records Administration.

Judge Pye insisted he had rightful jurisdiction, that she belonged to him, "hide, hair, and talon."[58] He stood by the January 28, 1964 indictment of Hall by the Grand Jury of Fulton County, claiming legal right to detain her until she posted bond: "This Court declines to surrender jurisdiction….Under no circumstances whatsoever is the Sheriff to deliver her to the United States Marshal."[59]

On March 20, Hall and other defendants issued a motion appealing for US District Judge Sloan's help on the basis that they would not receive a fair trial in Fulton County because Pye set excessive bonds and sentences related to civil rights cases. Sloan issued a restraining order against the Fulton County Solicitor, Sheriff, and any others working under Pye's orders to take action against any existing civil rights defendants. Hall was already in custody, however.[60]

US District Judge Boyd Sloan demanded to take Hall's case after a brief hearing where he determined that she was being illegally held for not posting bond. He censured the court for not allowing Hall to sign her own bond even though she was not a property owner, reduce the bond amount, or proceed with the hearing of her case. Sloan charged Fulton Superior Court with violating Title 26, Section 3005 of the Georgia Code. He issued an injunction prohibiting Judge Pye and the county prosecutor from trying or prosecuting Hall: "Armed with a writ of habeas corpus, US marshals whisked her out of her cell and freed her on $1,000 bond" around 1:30pm. Sheriff T. Ralph Grimes did not

[58]Criminal Docket, Case #23886, *The State of Georgia vs. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, National Archives and Records Administration; John Herbers, "Atlantan Scores Conduct of Judge," *New York Times*, March 22, 1964; "Civil Rights Leader Free," *The Gettysburg Times*, March 24, 1964; "Alabama Judge Yields 58 Cases: Rights Actions Are Recessed After US Court Move," *New York Times*, March 25, 1964.

[59]"In the Superior Court of Fulton County, Georgia," Exhibit "B," *The State of Georgia v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, National Archives and Records Administration.

[60]Julian Bond, Letter to Charles Waltner, April 6, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

impede federal marshals from taking Hall, though Pye's court filed a motion to remand the cases back to Fulton County the same day.[61]

Sloan ordered Hall to be held by federal commissioners and issued a temporary restraining order against Fulton County officials until she could post bail. Pye was enraged when Hall failed to appear for her misdemeanor trial on March 23 because she had been "taken from him by the United States court and…was no longer in his custody. The court is physically unable to proceed with the trial."[62] Hall was released on $1,000 bail on March 24 and was quoted by the Associated Press: "It feels very good to be out."[63] The case went through various stages of appeal between Fulton County and the State of Georgia and was not fully dismissed until April 2, 1968.[64]

In total, federal court orders prevented the trial of fifty-eight civil rights defendants by removing them from Fulton County jail cells.[65] Pye reluctantly recessed Hall's case and told reporters, "The United States government, which has taken the defendant (Miss Hall) away, should bring her back. When that is done – if it is ever done

---

[61]United States District Court of the Northern District of Atlanta, *The State of Georgia v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, "Response of Defendant, T. Ralph Grimes," "Response, and Motions to Remand Cases to Fulton County Superior Court," "Writ," March 21, 1964, and "Order," March 24, 1964, National Archives and Records Administration; Barrett, Prathia Hall Special Project, June 12, 2012.

[62]"Shoofly Pye: The Bench," *Time* 83, no. 16 (April 17, 1964); "In Atlanta, US Court Forbids State to Try Sit-Ins," *The Student Worker*, 5, no. 9 (April, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 139, 142.

[63]United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, *United States v. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, Appearance Bond, March 23, 1964, National Archives and Records Administration; John Herbers, "Atlantan Scores Conduct of Judge," *New York Times*, March 22, 1964; "Civil Rights Leader Free," *The Gettysburg Times*, March 24, 1964; UPI, "State Judge Yields Cases to U.S. Court," *The Independent*, March 23, 1964; AP, "One Dead in Florida Race Violence," *Burlington (NC) Daily Times-News*, March 24, 1964; UPI, "Groups Protest Segregation," *The Billings Gazette*, March 23, 1964; UPI, "Southern Negroes Resume Race Campaigns," *Oakland Tribune*, March 22, 1964; AP, "Civil Rights Leader Free," *The Gettysburg Times*, March 24, 1964.

[64]*The State of Georgia vs. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, NARA.

[65]"In Atlanta, US Court Forbids State to Try Sit-Ins; Ga. Court Backs Judge Pye in Jones Case," *The Student Worker*, 5, no. 9 (April, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 139, 142.

– the trial will resume."[66] Pye quickly scheduled trials for forty-two more, but these were also removed from his jurisdiction, and a March 25 court order enjoined Sheriff Grimes, Judge Pye, and any taking orders from either of them, from taking action against any civil rights petitioners.[67]

The showdown between federal and state courts, initiated by Hall's case, was in rare form. The US Code allowed a defendant to petition for removal of their case from state to federal court "if his civil rights are nullified by the state's legal apparatus." Although violated civil rights are difficult to prove, and federal courts are hesitant to accept such appeals, the swarm of civil rights cases in Georgia in 1962 and 1963 and Pye's reputation for racial prejudice aided the successful appeal to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals. Judge Pye counter-appealed to the Supreme Court against federal seizure of civil rights cases from his jurisdiction.[68]

While Hall was being held under Judge Pye's orders, A *Washington Post* article on the organizational prowess of women in the movement, "New Type of Woman in Civil Rights Work," recognized Hall's significance:

> The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee's Prathia Hall, 23, a Philadelphian, presently is in jail for violating Georgia's anti-trespass law by trying to register at the Heart of Atlanta Motel. Miss Hall, who has been arrested a dozen times, is a tall, stately woman who sees the whole civil rights movement as "one human being's treatment of another." She often speaks of the "sense of

[66]United Press International, "State Judge Yields Case to US Court," *The Independent* (Pasadena) (March 23, 1964).

[67]"Shoofly Pye"; "In Atlanta, US Court Forbids State to Try Sit-Ins," *The Student Worker*, 5, no. 9 (April, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 139, 142; *The State of Georgia vs. Prathia Laura Ann Hall* and The United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, *The State of Georgia vs. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*, Response of Defendant, T. Ralph Grimes, NARA.

[68]"Shoofly Pye,"; "Sit-In Cases Near High Court Hearing," *The Student Voice*, 5, no. 14 (June, 1964), in *The Student Voice*, 161; Judge Elbert P. Tuttle Interview with Cliff Kuhn, Georgia Government Documentation Project, Georgia State University, April 10, 1992.

dignity and nobility" Negroes in the rural south have acquired through voter registration campaigns.[69]

The SNCC Executive Committee, of which Hall was a member, issued a strongly worded statement supporting continued demonstrations: "Negroes across the country…one hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, find themselves half slave in the South and half free in the North….As long as injustice and racial discrimination exist in this country, demonstrations will continue."[70]

Africa

In 1964, Harry Belafonte financed a six-week trip to Africa for select SNCC workers to demonstrate that SNCC was part of a worldwide movement for freedom.[71] The list of travelers was by invitation only and included James Forman, Ivanhoe Donaldson, Courtland Cox, John Lewis, Fannie Lou Hamer, Unita Blackwell, Ruby Doris Smith Robinson, and Prathia Hall. The women were recognized as the four top female leaders of SNCC.

This SNCC team made a two-week visit to the Republic of Guinea, September 12 to October 5, as guests of President Sekou Toure. While in Guinea, SNCC's travelers met the National Revolutionary Council and met with President Toure three times.[72]

---

[69]Sue Cronk, "Race Barriers Break Down Over Coffee and Doughnuts: New Type of Woman in Civil Rights Work," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 10, 1964.

[70]SNCC Executive Committee, "Statement of the SNCC Executive Committee," April 19, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[71]James Forman had been intentionally connecting SNCC's work in America with freedom initiatives worldwide and promoted SNCC's trip to Africa in the context of the African independence movement. SNCC News Release, "SNCC's Forman May Tour Africa," Atlanta, Georgia, April 30, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[72]SNCC News Release, "SNCC Chariman Visits African States," Accra, Ghana, West Africa, October 18, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

One of the most formative experiences of the trip for Hall was seeing Black people with self-determination. Through seeing luxury living designed, managed, and occupied by Black people to witnessing the lowering of the British flag and the raising of the new Zambian flag, for the first time, Hall saw Black people in authority, proud of their culture.[73]

Hall's connection to Africa persisted long after the trip, evidenced by Hall's inclusion in a group of SNCC workers who stayed abreast of news from South Africa, particularly of the mutual benefit the American Civil Rights Movement and South African self-determination could offer each other. Hall remained abreast of news of the South African freedom movement well past her involvement with SNCC.[74] She received selectively addressed memos concerning potential SNCC projects in Africa. For example, an August 17, 1965 memo from Don Harris, drafted upon hearing that South Africa was developing a nuclear reactor, was addressed to "Prathia, Ruby [Doris Smith Robinson], John [Lewis], and Jim [Forman]."[75]

Executive Committee and Hall's Other Service to SNCC

Prathia Hall's exemplary leadership and dependable character were widely recognized within SNCC. By March, 1964, Hall had been arrested ten times and was

---

John Lewis and Don Harris remained in Africa for several additional days, traveling to Liberia, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, and Egypt during which time they met with a number of political officials, political activists, newspaper reporters, and Malcolm X, as well as attended the Zambian Independence Ceremonies. See John Lewis and Don Harris, "The Trip," December 14, 1964 SNCC Papers, Reel 1.

[73]Lewis and Harris, "The Trip"; SNCC News Release, "SNCC Head at Zambia Independence Celebration," Lusaka, Zambia, October 27, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; John Lewis, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998), 284.

[74]Arthur I. Waskow, Memo, SNCC Papers, Reel 1.

[75]Memo from Don Harris to John Lewis, August 17, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 1.

elected to SNCC's Executive Committee.[76] Hall's leadership and understanding of the complexities of civil rights activities were so well respected that SNCC asked her to train volunteers in its 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer. Having seen "what happens when white folk come into the South and work with black people," she recognized the possibilities for a large influx of white volunteers for the movement. Her unique ability to bridge Northern, Southern, white, black, urban, and rural culture made her indispensable to SNCC's work. Hall was a trainer for the nearly 1,000 college students who volunteered for Mississippi Freedom Summer, headed by Robert Moses. Beginning June 21, 1964 at Western College in Oxford, Ohio, Hall worked with other SNCC leaders in a two-week training orientation, sponsored by the National Council of Churches, preparing volunteers for voter registration canvassing and Freedom Schools.[77] Hall's unique background as a Northern African American, educated in predominantly white schools, with Southern African American relatives, gave her the insight and vocabulary for guiding Northern white college students in navigating Southern African American culture.

Hall became a highly sought speaker for SNCC. After the shooting at Carolyn Daniels' home in September, 1962, Hall spent the Fall of 1962 fundraising for SNCC throughout the Northeast. Hall's first engagement was a rally at Tindley Temple Methodist Church in Philadelphia; she shared the podium with Albany's Dr. Anderson. Hall spoke for the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in December, 1962, and Naomi Bernstein, the program chair "felt particularly moved to help SNCC in

[76]"Annual Spring Conference," March 27-29, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 1; "Prathia Hall," SNCC Papers, Reel 14. Ella Baker, Marion Berry, Julian Bond, Courtland Cox, Jim Forman, Don Harris, Bernard Lafayette, John Lewis, Bob Moses, Gloria Richardson, and Howard Zinn were also on the Executive Committee.

[77]SNCC News Release, "Volunteers Trained for Mississippi Freedom Summer," Oxford, Ohio, June 30, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

some way partly because [she] was so impressed with the courage and strength of Praethia [*sic*] and her co-workers….Praethia is a very eloquent and sincere young lady." Bernstein sent Hall a copy of her letter to Jim Forman "so that she will know what listening to her for a half-hour meant to us and others like us."[78] Jerry and Naomi Bernstein requested Hall to speak at a September 7, 1963 rally in Philadelphia to begin an AFSC group there, and Hall shared important Philadelphia activist connections with the Bernsteins to assist their work.[79] Fund-raising and student activism picked up significantly in Philadelphia, particularly through the joint efforts between SNCC, Philadelphia's AFSC, and Fellowship House and Farm; Hall's speaking and connections laid a strong foundation for establishing this work.[80]

Hall spoke at the 1963 Methodist Conference on Human Relations in Chicago, which she found particularly meaningful and "well worth the time taken from the work to be done in the field down here"; Dr. King also spoke at this meeting, held August 27, the night before the March on Washington. Hall watched the March on television from her Chicago hotel room.[81]

---

[78]Naomi Bernstein, Letter to James Forman, May 31, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34.

[79]Sandra Hayden, Letter to Jerry Bernstein, July 9, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Casey Hayden, Letter to Joyce Barrett and Prathia Hall, August 6, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Sandra Hayden, Letter to Harry Takiff, August 10, 12, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34.

[80]Joy Takiff, Letter to James Forman, September 25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; James Forman, Letter to Harry Takiff, October 3, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Dinky Romilly, Letter to Diana King, October 11, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Diana King, Letter to Casey Hayden, October 18, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Patti Driscoll, Letter to Sandra Hayden, October 21, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Sandra Hayden, Letter to Patti Driscoll, October 23, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Naomi and Jerry Bernstein, Letter to Jim Forman, December 1, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 34; Barbara Jones, Letter to Wallington & Cooper, November 16, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 34.

[81]A. Dudley Ward, Letter to SNCC, September 10, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 25; Sandra Hayden, Letter to A. Dudley Ward, September 11, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 25.

Immediately after, she was hired to speak at several national religious events.[82] After Hall spoke at a number of engagements in October, 1963 for National Council of the Churches of Christ in South Dakota and Nebraska, Dr. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, their coordinator of special events, wrote to Forman: "It was my privilege to hear Prathia Hall in Nebraska and she is one of the most moving speakers I have heard in my life."[83] Hall also spoke for the North Iowa Conference of the Methodist Church' "Race Dialogue Seminars" in November, 1963, offering comment on social aspects of racial tension.[84]

Hall continued speaking at Friends of SNCC gatherings across the North during the Spring and Summer of 1964, raising support for the Movement in the South. These rallies also mobilized Northern sympathizers to become politically involved in support of

---

[82]Hall spoke at the 1963 Lutheran Student Association national conference in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, as well as the National Federation of Catholic College Students in Minneapolis. She also spoke at the September, 1963 Baptist Student Ministry General Assembly of the American Baptist Assembly. Hall's speech at the National Student Christian Federation, September 5-11, 1963, at the Chicago Theological Seminary brought her into high demand as a speaker for SNCC, and she was described as "a brilliant speaker." See Ronald Ferguson, Letter to Prathia Hall, July 2, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 25; Sandra Hayden, Letter to Patti Driscoll, September 25, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 26; William Lovell, Letter to Prathia Hall, July 18, 1963 and Sandra Hayden, Letter to William Lovell, July 20, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 26.

[83]Sandra Casey Hayden, Letter to Anna Hedgeman, September 28, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 8; Dr. Anna Arnold Hedgeman, Letter to James Forman, October 10, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 25; Ed Boulton, Letter to Prathia Hall, October 11, 1963; Sandra Hayden, Letter to E.C. Boulton, September 28, 1963; and Ed. Boulton, Letter to Sandra Hayden, October 1, 1963, SNCC Papers; "Religion, Race Speakers," *The Daily Plainsman*, Huron, South Dakota, October 20, 1963; "Huron Groups to Hear Race Leaders Monday," *The Daily Plainsman*, October 20, 1963; This organization so connected with Hall that they raised funds to aid her legal defense when she was being held by Judge Pye in Atlanta. See Associated Press, "Ask Funds to Aid Civil Rights Worker," *The Daily Plainsman*, January 5, 1964.

[84]Ed Boulton, Letter to Prathia Hall, September 18, 1963, SNCC Papers; "Racial Seminar Speakers Named," *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 8, 1963; UPI, "Seminars Scheduled for Iowa," *Ames Daily Tribune*, November 1, 1963; "Seminar on U.S. Racial Situation Set," *Globe Gazette*, November 2, 1963.

Upon meeting Hall in Spencer, Iowa at the seminars, the pastor of First Methodist, Sheldon, Iowa wrote to her: "We did like your spirit and know you are bearing a witness that many of us are unable to do." The Spencer District Methodist Youth Fellowship invited Hall to speak at their District Rally in 1964. See J. Heber Miller, Letter to Prathia Hall, December 1, 1963, SNCC Papers, Reel 25; "Travel Schedule for SNCC Staff to Student Meetings," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 25.

Hall also was the keynote speaker at the Kansas Baptist Student Movement's state convention in December, 1963. See James Shafer, "Students Attend BSM Confab," *The Ottawa Campus*, December 11, 1963. Earlier that month, she spoke at St. Benedict's College in Minnesota about her experiences in Albany, Georgia. See Drew Pearson, "Washington Merry Go Round," *Atchison Globe*, December 8, 1963.

civil rights legislation.[85] On August 9, 1964, Hall was the final speaker at an ecumenical memorial service for slain SNCC workers Andrew Goodman, James Chaney, and Mickey Schwerner, hosted by the Philadelphia Friends of SNCC at St. Thomas Episcopal Church in Philadelphia.[86]

The Bernsteins of Philadelphia were so taken with Hall's speaking abilities that they frequently requested her as a speaker.[87] Hilda Wilson, of Philadelphia Friends of SNCC, wrote: "The woman who contacted me had heard about Praethia [*sic*] Hall and wondered if she might be available. I think Prathia would be ideal for this kind of group." The meeting organizer hoped to give the 500 women who would attend the meeting specific ways to assist the southern civil rights movement: "Because of the strength this group could give if they wanted to, I feel, as I said before, Prathia would be most ideal."[88] Hall was deeply involved in SNCC's Selma project at the time, but Betty Garman, Northern Coordinator for SNCC, affirmed that the meeting would be worth Hall's time if Hall was available.[89]

---

[85]"SNCC Rally to Discuss 3 Workers," Delaware County Daily Times, July 7, 1964; "6 Members of Lake Park Senior M.Y.F. Attend Rally in Spencer Saturday," *The Lake Park News*, April 9, 1964; Courier News, "Clubs in Northeast Iowa are Busy Meeting During April," *Waterloo Sunday Courier*, April 2, 1964.

She also spoke at club meetings, such as the Mason City District Woman's Society of Christian Service meeting in Osage, Iowa, April 7, 1964. See "District Meeting of WSCS Slated," *Globe-Gazette*, March 30, 1964.

[86]Hilda Wilson, Letter to Philadelphia Friends of SNCC, September 23, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 34.

[87]Naomi Bernstein was a member of a large Reformed Jewish Congregation in Philadelphia and requested Hall to speak at their annual Social Action Sisterhood Meeting, held March 1, 1965.

[88]Hilda Wilson, Letter to Betty Garman, February 7, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 34. The letter includes more than five requests for Hall's availability to speak at the March 1, 1965 meeting. See also SNCC Calendar, March, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 25.

[89]Betty Garman, Letter to Naomi Bernstein, February 9, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 34.
Hall spoke at a number of college campuses and community organizations during 1965, including Bennington College in New York. See "SNCC Worker Visits at the College," *Bennington Banner*, March 29, 1965.

In addition to Hall's own speaking, James Forman and Julian Bond often recommended Hall to speak in their place. When Vincent Harding asked Julian Bond to appear at his February 29, 1964 Student Conference on Religion and Race, Bond responded, "I think Prathia Hall would make a better presentation. I will be there, however, if I can prevail upon her to appear in my stead, I would prefer it."[90] A civil rights organizer in Manhattan, Kansas began her letter to SNCC: "Prathia Hall was in Manhattan this Fall and that will be a never-to-be-forgotten evening."[91]

The United Presbyterian Church in the USA's Commission on Ecumenical Mission and Relations, which enjoyed a strong relationship with SNCC, hosted an orientation for "Christian leaders from this and other countries who have shared the experience of social upheaval in our time." The meeting would focus on the theological issues of the civil rights movement in America (held at the International Theological Center in Atlanta, May 7-9, 1964). The Commission had initially asked Forman to help them plan and had written to Hall specifically to invite her to be part of the conversation, requesting her "theological insights" from the Movement. Because Forman was going to be in England for those dates, the Commission inquired about Hall's availability. She was invited to join in planning and speaking for the event.[92] Hall accepted the invitation and helped with logistical and content planning for the meeting.[93]

---

[90]Julian Bond, Letter to Vincent Harding, February 9, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 13

[91]Mrs. Ernest Goertzen, Letter to Freedom Fighters, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 13.

[92]Margaret Shannon, Letter to Prathia Hall, April 3, 1964; Margaret Shannon, Letter to James Forman, April 20, 1964; and Margaret Shannon, Letter to Prathia Hall, April 20, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

[93]Prathia Hall, Letter to Margaret Shannon, April 30, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 5.

On June 10, 1964, approximately two dozen SNCC staff met to discuss the Mississippi Summer Project. When conversation steered toward Bob Moses' collaborative relationship with the Council of Federated Organizations for the Mississippi project, Moses' loyalty to SNCC was called into question. Mary King praised Hall's leadership in this meeting: "This was not what Prathia Hall, strong, proud, and always a moving speaker, wanted to talk about." Hall challenged the group: "There are undercurrents not far below the surface that should instead be discussed at this meeting, such as violence and nonviolence, black and white tensions, and Jim Forman's role." King was amazed at Hall's ability to redirect the discussion to productive avenues.[94]

The conversation continued regarding the real and present danger facing civil rights workers in Mississippi. Hall was selective with speaking up in meetings like this, but this topic deserved a response. She wisely stated: "What is happening now is that for the first time we as a staff are coming to grips with the fact that this may be *it*….I don't have a martyr complex; I'm fighting because I want to live. Living in this system has not been life for me. But, I can't take someone else's life knowingly. We must decide what is life and what is defense of it." According to Mary King, every eye in the room was on Hall, waiting to hear her next words. She continued:

> Willie [Peacock] said he was concerned for the people around the office who might die. But at the same time you shoot a person breaking in to plant a bomb, you might shoot someone who broke in because of hunger. I thought we were going to Mississippi because people have been getting killed there for years and no one cared. I thought we were going there to say to the world that if any of us dies, it was not a redneck who shot us but the whole society that had killed us.[95]

[94]King, *Freedom Song*, 310.

[95]King, *Freedom Song*, 314-5.

King captured the reality of that moment: “Prathia was making us confront the probability that there would be deaths as a result of the Mississippi Summer Project.” This was the first time in preparation for that event that the SNCC staff had considered their responsibility for each other and the likelihood that they or the new students they were recruiting might die.[96]

At the November, 1964 meeting of SNCC, Hall’s leadership emerged once again. Various factions within SNCC’s leadership argued concerning SNCC’s purpose, strategy, and best next steps. While others were caught in the minutia, Hall was able to articulate the importance of conversation toward constructive changes for SNCC: “Maybe the past hang-up meetings lead to this serious meeting. Now we’re at least arguing that we have disagreements and that we have a lot to learn. Things were really happening in the workshops, and this is a good sign as to where the retreat is going.” Hall hoped that SNCC would continue to be the “outside force to get other outside forces to bring about change,” and that SNCC should “make it so uncomfortable for the power structure, that it has to deal with the problems.” She also suggested that since direct action was viewed as a component of other strategies, rather than its own strategy, each strategy should discuss direct action campaigns within themselves.[97]

Between late 1964 and early 1965, Jim Forman named Hall as the office manager in the Atlanta office. He described her role: “She should be considered as the person in charge when you want to solve a problem through Atlanta.” Ruby Doris Robinson worked directly under Hall as personnel officer. Forman’s health was suffering, and Hall

[96]King, *Freedom Song*, 314-5.

[97]Notes of Executive Committee Meeting, Waveland Retreat, Waveland, Mississippi, November, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 12.

and Robinson relieved pressure from him so he could rest.[98] During this time, Hall also performed clerical duties as needed, such as making calls on the WATS line.[99]

Hall's exemplary leadership and dependable character were recognized beyond SNCC as well. An October 18, 1965 memo from Bayard Rustin of the A. Philip Randolph Institute included Hall's name on a short but impressive list: John Morsell, A. Philip Randolph, Dorothy Height, Norman Hill, Whitney Young, Prathia Hall, Walter Fauntroy, and James Farmer. The memo summarized a mid-October meeting in preparation for the White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights," scheduled for Spring, 1966.

Following Bloody Sunday, Hall was among the SNCC leadership who strategized SNCC's next steps in Selma. Across the South, by 1965, SNCC prioritized voter registration over direct action demonstrations. Particularly with the momentum built by Freedom Summer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, C.B. King's candidacy in Southwest Georgia, and Bloody Sunday, SNCC ramped up its efforts to register as many African American voters as possible.[100]

"A Bloody Mess": The Selma March

Like in Southwest Georgia, a large portion of SNCC's work in Alabama was helping the local people overcome their fear. Voter registration work in Alabama was dangerous, and Sheriff Clark relentlessly pursued civil rights activists at every turn in Selma. He spied on every mass meeting, taking names and car tag numbers of those

[98]Jim Forman, Memo to All SNCC Staff Members, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 10.

[99]WATS Report, Marion, Alabama, February 5, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 15.

[100]"Julian Bond – Selma, 4:00," Undated, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

involved. Leaders were targeted, and those who attempted to register to vote were often physically assaulted by police.[101] SNCC expanded its work, undeterred, and Selma officials continued mass arrests of demonstrators, often with harassment and brutality, and passed an injunction banning any kind of demonstration, including lining up to register to vote, "in and around" the courthouse in Selma.[102]

As she led a February 4, 1965 meeting in Marion, Alabama, Prathia Hall reported that 200 parents went to jail the day before, protesting against the arrest of over 700 children. At a mass meeting on February 3, Hall told those gathered about the jail conditions for those arrested: 400 in a 50' by 16' space, without a working toilet, heat, beds, blankets, or access to medicine, even for the pregnant women. Jailers gave them ten tubs of water, which was their only access to water.[103]

The escalation of violence – and more than 3,000 arrests – in Selma in February, 1965, inspired SCLC to orchestrate a nationally-advertised march. SCLC planned a fifty-mile march from Selma to Montgomery to demonstrate for racial equality. When SCLC announced their plan for a march in Selma, SNCC decided not to participate. Betty Garman Robinson recalled the SNCC staff meeting about the march, held the night before: "I remember the Alabama staff saying, We have to march with the people, even if

---

[101]Julian Bond, Letter to Robert F. Kennedy, May 22, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 7.

[102]SNCC News Release, "Alabama Freedom Day Slated," Selma, Alabama, June 30, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 14; SNCC News Release, "Selma Vote Drive, Rights Tests to Continue," Selma, Alabama, July 9, 1964; WATS Report, Selma, Alabama, July 4, 1964, SNCC Papers, Reel 15; SNCC News Release, "Selma Vote Drive, Rights Tests to Continue," Selma, Alabama, July 9, 1964; SNCC News Release, "Selma, A Special Report," SNCC Papers, Reel 14; WATS Report, Selma, Alabama, February 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 15.

Malcolm X visited Selma in early February, 1965 to support the movement there. In one of his final speeches, he said: "If white people realize what the alternative is, perhaps they would be more willing to listen to Dr. King." X was referencing the rising militarism within the movement and the potential for retributive violence should white authorities in Selma continue to assault the African American community. X was assassinated in New York City on February 21, 1965, two weeks after visiting Selma.

[103]Untitled Document, February 4, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 37.

SNCC is not going to take a position in favor of this march….If we've been working with the people and the people are going, therefore we are going to stand with the people, and we're going to be a part."[104] John Lewis and John Love left immediately after that meeting to return to Selma by the morning.

King initially second-guessed the march upon learning that Governor George Wallace planned to use any means necessary to prevent a march. King wanted to delay the march. Hosea Williams, one of his aids in SCLC, and John Lewis, of SNCC, agreed to lead the march.[105]

On Sunday, March 7, 1965, at 3:00 p.m., around 2,000 marchers set out to walk from Selma to Montgomery. As they reached the Edmund Pettus Bridge over the Alabama River in Selma around 4:00 p.m., they saw that Clark had blockaded the bridge with armed state troopers. Clark demanded they desist their march, but the marchers continued to cross the bridge. With the call of "Troopers advance," Clark and his officers waged war on the marchers. Marchers huddled together for protection and prayer, but horseback officers trampled them and blinded them with tear gas.[106] Even as the marchers ran from the scene, "troopers and posse men, mounted and unmounted, went after them."[107] Police waged war against the marchers for more than two straight hours, no holds barred. Between 2,000 and 3,000 wounded marchers sought refuge at Miller

---

[104]Betty Garman Robinson, Interview with Courtney Lyons, May 4, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[105]Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 385.

[106]Seeger and Reiser, *Everybody Says Freedom*, 193-194; SNCC News Release, Selma, Alabama, March 7, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 14.

[107]Roy Reed, "Alabama Police Use Gas and Clubs to Rout Negroes," *New York Times*, March 8, 1965, p.20; quoted in Roberts and Klibanoff, 385.

Chapel. Minor injuries were treated, but the most urgent need was spiritual and emotional support for the tragedy of injustice they had just encountered. These marchers had just been attacked by the police for peacefully trying to walk across a bridge. As grass-roots resistance to non-violence had already been escalating, leaders of SCLC and SNCC needed to address what had happened and calm the marchers before retaliatory violence erupted.

As SNCC received word about the beating at the Edmund Pettus Bridge, its leaders were still meeting in Atlanta. They quickly chartered a plane to get key leaders to Selma. Judy Richardson worked at the national office in Atlanta that organized the flight. Richardson realized that SNCC was sending only men and told Forman, "We need to get Prathia there." Alongside Forman and four other SNCC leaders, Hall traveled to Selma to assist with the aftermath of Bloody Sunday; she never forgot Richardson's sisterhood in getting her on that plane.[108]

The memory of arriving in Selma haunted Hall: "When we got there, it was a bloody mess. The church was a bloody mess. People were bleeding and in pain."[109] Hearing the people talk about being "ready" for the next police attack, two SCLC staff members started singing, "I love everybody in my heart, I love Jim Clark in my heart, I love the state troopers in my heart." Seeing blank stares from the people, one staff member demanded that everyone sing "I love Jim Clark" and mean the words in their hearts, or they wouldn't see Jesus when they died.

---

[108]Judy Richardson, Interview with Courtney Lyons, April 30, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Barbara Ransby, Interview with Prathia Hall, June 25, 1997, in Denver, Colorado, Prathia Hall Papers; WATS Report, Selma, Alabama, March 7, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 15; James Forman, "Report on Selma," March 7, 1965, SNCC Papers, Reel 15.

[109]Ransby, Interview with Hall.

To Hall, this was "spiritual extortion." She continued, "These were people who had lived their whole lives with only the hope of seeing Jesus when they die…That particular incident was an abuse of the people's faith." Even in nonviolence, Hall believed there had to be "a place for the expression of legitimate rage." She understood that SCLC was afraid that the people's anger would lead to violent behavior, but Hall also understood that "at that time they were too brutalized to become violent. They had been beat. They had been really beat."[110]

Between the assassination of Malcolm X, the murder of Rev. James Reeb in Selma, Bloody Sunday, and the consistent emotional and physical violence toward activists at the hands of law enforcement and community leaders, many in the nonviolent movement were growing in anger. As leaders like SNCC's Stokely Carmichael promoted Black Nationalism, and as African American communities continued to suffer terrible costs for their involvement in the movement, their commitment to nonviolence was severely challenged.

As SNCC moved toward Black Nationalism, eventually expelling all of its white personnel, Hall found herself in stark disagreement with the organization.[111] She remained committed to non-violence and cooperation. Everything in her religious and intellectual background nurtured her in interracial, intercultural, and ecumenical cooperation for social justice. While Hall supported the success of African American

---

[110]Ransby, Interview with Hall; Emilye Crosby, "That Movement Responsibility: An Interview with Judy Richardson on Movement Values and Movement History," pp. 366-384 in *Civil Rights History from the Ground Up: Local Struggles, a National Movement*, ed. Emilye Crosby (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 378.

In the same interview, Hall compared this incident of spiritual abuse to the larger problem of clergy abusing laity, "accepting monetary gifts from very poor people and not doing anything to significantly change the quality of life of the people."

[111]Many SNCC activists opposed the radical new direction of the organization under Carmichael, including John Lewis.

men, the post-Waveland "Black macho rhetoric" of SNCC disturbed her.[112] She did not support the expulsion of whites from SNCC, nor did she support the marginalization of women from leadership roles.[113] For Hall, the civil rights movement was about "one human being's treatment of another," advocating for the right of every human being to be treated with a "sense of dignity and nobility."[114]

Between the rising influence of Black Power in SNCC and her "traumatizing" experience of spiritual extortion after the Selma march, Hall decided to return to Philadelphia to continue her work there. She continued to support the Movement, but she declined all speaking engagements for a season. She worked in the New York Friends of SNCC office but described this season of her life as "a season of silence" and later likened her emotional experience to post-traumatic stress disorder. She described this time in her life as coming home from war.

Hall was back in Southwest Georgia after Bloody Sunday in Selma, and was arrested with Barrett in May, 1965. In a letter to Fellowship House on their eighth day in jail and the second day of their fast, Barrett reported Hall's strength of faith: "Prathia and the gang have just finished singing 'Near the Cross' – and it seems very fitting. Today I don't feel very idealistic….I guess my faith needs strengthening." Barrett described their cell mate, a prostitute and crack addict who, after overdosing on smuggled pills, was

[112]Waveland, Mississippi was the location of the November, 1964 SNCC annual staff retreat. At this meeting, SNCC workers shared thirty-seven pre-written position papers reflecting on the direction in which SNCC should be headed for the future. The papers revealed several majors strands of tension: the role of non-violence in the Movement, the interracial nature of SNCC, Black Nationalism, and sexism. The origins of the 1966 expulsion of white activists from SNCC can be traced back to Waveland. See Matthew Pronley, "Waveland: Mississippi, November 1964: Death of SNCC, Birth of Radicalism," (Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 2008).

[113]Prathia Hall, quoted in Robnett, 180.

[114]Prathia Hall, quoted in Sue Cronk, "Race Barriers Break Down Over Coffee and Doughnuts: New Type of Woman in Civil Rights Work," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 10, 1964.

given a shot at the hospital and returned to the jail where she convulsed in withdrawal for hours. Just as Barrett and Hall had fallen asleep for the night, the addict hung herself using a blanket; Barrett and Hall could not loosen the blanket, but a jail guard did eventually pull the victim down. The days turned to weeks in jail without food or rest, but Hall and Barrett never lost their "non-violent curl."[115]

For a brief period during Summer, 1965, Hall also helped with AFSC school desegregation efforts in Georgia and Mississippi for federal agencies. In July, 1965, Hall traveled to Houston, Wheeler, and Telfair Counties in Middle Georgia. School systems employed multiple intimidation tactics to prevent African American students from desegregating white schools, such as strictly limiting when students could register and publishing the names of those who registered. Local police did little to protect families of registering families, and many families feared registration because of white reprisal.[116]

Hall networked between local ministers and NAACP leaders and national organizations, spoke at meetings, educated the community on procedures for school desegregation, and organized lists of interested families to register for white schools. A growing number of students had transferred from the African American school in Perry to white schools in Warner Robins, but after her three day visit, Hall felt that she "had just gathered enough information to put in two or three more days at full steam with very

[115]Joyce Barrett letter to Fellowship House, May 28, 1963; Fellowship House Papers, Temple University, Special Collections, Urban Archives, Acc. 732, Box 7.

[116]Constance Curry, To Jean Fairfax, "A Report on a Trip to Middle Georgia, April 20-24, 1965," April 29, 1965, June 15, 1965, Papers of the AFSC Constance Curry, Letter to Francis Keppel US Commissioner of Education, May 6, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Winifred Falls, Letter to Francis Keppel, July 1, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Prathia Hall Wynn, To Jean Fairfax, "Wheeler and Telfair Counties, Georgia, Report of Visits," July 16, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Prathia Hall Wynn, To Jean Fairfax, "Houston County, Georgia – School Desegregation Trip – June 15, 16, 17, 1965," July 16, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Constance Curry, To Jean Fairfax, "Houston County, Report of June 21-25," July 23, 1965; Papers of the AFSC.

good results." Hall recommended an "intensive campaign" for school desegregation in Warner Robins to Connie Curry, who returned to Houston County later in June, 1965. From the list of contacts that Hall had gathered, Curry was able to help fourteen students apply for transfer. The students who applied were denied, and AFSC field representatives helped these students appeal through the court system.[117]

Jean Fairfax, the AFSC's lead for southern programs, specifically requested Hall to report on Sunflower County, Mississippi. Hall had heard about the Carter family, the only family to sign the freedom of choice forms for school integration, and the subsequent shooting into their home on August 16, 1965. While no one was injured in the shooting, Hall had been warned by other SNCC workers not to venture into the Carter's hometown of Drew in Sunflower County unless she was prepared for arrest. Hall reported to Jean Fairfax: "A Mr. Jones who lives on a plantation near the Carter family came into Ruleville to talk to me. He talked about the fear that kept people from transferring their children. He said that many families discussed the matter when the forms were first sent out. They were afraid of reprisals. The shooting incident had ruled out the choice completely."[118] Fairfax immediately called Assistant Attorney General John Doar, who contacted the FBI about investigating desegregation in Drew public schools.[119]

Very soon after returning to Philadelphia in 1965, Prathia Hall married her long-term boyfriend, Ralph Wynn, whom she had met in Philadelphia before she joined the movement. She and Ralph were engaged by Fall, 1962, but remained on-again and off-

[117]Curry, "A Report on a Trip to Middle Georgia"; Constance Curry, Letter to Francis Keppel US Commissioner of Education, May 6, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Winifred Falls, Letter to Francis Keppel, July 1, 1965, Papers of the AFSC; Wynn, "Wheeler and Telfair Counties"; Wynn, "Houston County"; Curry "Houston County."

[118]Connie Curry, *Silver Rights* (Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1995), 39.

[119]Curry, *Silver Rights*, 23, 39.

again while Hall was working in the South. Hall wrestled with the idea of marriage on two levels. As a strong woman, Hall worried that marriage might interfere with her career goals or be incompatible with her calling and personality. She also worried about Ralph in particular, since he was more conservative than she was on several issues. Hall sought counsel from her mentor, Ella Baker, about the realities of marriage for strong women. Hall told Baker's biographer:

> I was trying to deal with whether or not to marry….I kind of thought that I probably wouldn't marry. I had been engaged and then broke the engagement. And then later we kind of reconciled and I ended up married. But during that time I talked to Miss Baker and that was when she just shared a little bit of her experiences about being married and about how men had difficulty being able to accept strong women. And how difficult it was. At the same time, she would never tell me what to do, she just said what her experience was and the choice was mine.[120]

These conversations gave Hall a strong sense of companionship that another woman understood the dilemma she faced and could relate to her: "It was the gift of talking to a woman who really understood my struggle, one that I didn't have to explain myself to." Reflecting on the importance of these conversations with Baker, Hall said, "The more I talked to her, the more I understood myself." Hall had always felt "different" from even close members of her family, but in Baker, Hall found "a kind of daughterhood." Baker "understood the being different and how passionately committed I was. It was in every fiber of my being, it wasn't something that I was just down there doing. It was my identity."[121]

Hall did decide to marry Ralph, almost immediately after leaving the Movement. Ralph's job moved their family to New York, where Hall worked for the National

[120]Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Ransby, Interview with Hall.

[121]Ransby, Interview with Hall.

Council of Negro Women and the AFSC. Hall did accept a few speaking engagements, such as the Mississippi Freedom Labor Unions and their Effect on the Southern Economic System on October 28, 1965 at the Loeb Student Center of New York University Friends of SNCC, but these were rare.[122]

Freedom Faith in Transition

Arrests did not frighten Hall. They provided opportunities to proclaim freedom faith: "In jail we drove the jailers crazy by singing. They wanted us out of these jails more than we wanted out—there was no stopping us. We're already in jail, what are they going to do? Many times there were beatings, but they happened anyway."[123]

From 1963-1965, which were quite possibly the most violent years of the modern Civil Rights Movement, Hall fearlessly allowed her freedom faith to guide her as she worked for racial justice. She repeatedly faced arrest, police harassment, and the threat of death. As Hall accepted higher levels of leadership within SNCC, she accepted the accompanying increased danger, such as Sheriff Clark's determination to arrest her in Selma in October, 1963. Hall showed freedom faith in Atlanta when she was arrested and held by Judge Pye. After hearing that police had brutally attacked marchers in Selma in 1965, Hall's freedom faith carried her to the scene to care for the wounded and help however she could. When the nature of SNCC shifted from nonviolence to militancy, Hall's freedom faith empowered her to leave SNCC, return North, and explore what social justice activism would look like for her future as she transitioned into pastoral ministry.

---

[122]Teach-In, October 28, 1965, New York University Friends of SNCC, Ella Baker Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, F4, B8.

[123]"Prathia Hall, Interview with Meredith Woods.

CHAPTER FIVE

Who Had the Dream?: Prathia Hall and the "I Have A Dream" Speech

Introduction

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s civil rights organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), moved into Birmingham in 1963 upon Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth's invitation, guaranteeing King that nonviolence would succeed.[1] Project "Confrontation" would aim at disrupting the city's economy, rather than its politicians. On Good Friday, 1963, King was arrested for demonstrating and drafted his "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Alabama Governor George Wallace physically blocked the entrance of two African American students to the University of Alabama, obligating President Kennedy to send the National Guard to facilitate integration. In Summer, 1963, Medgar Evers, a civil rights leader in Jackson, Mississippi, was murdered in his driveway in front of his family. The cumulative effect of these events added to the momentum of the 1963 events in Alabama, upon which the movement in Selma built.[2]

Civil rights leaders from the six major civil rights organizations – SCLC, SNCC, CORE, NAACP, National Urban League, and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters – as well as other labor groups pooled their efforts to plan a national demonstration for civil rights, spearheaded by A. Philip Randolph.[3] Randolph previously attempted to organize a March on Washington in 1941 to protest economic discrimination against African

[1]See Chapter 4, Footnote 1.

[2]See Chapter 4, Footnote 2.

[3]See Chapter 4, Footnote 3.

Americans. President Franklin Roosevelt declared such a march illegal, which prevented Randolph from executing his plan. President Kennedy was not immediately supportive, but because of Birmingham, ultimately permitted the march. The August 28, 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Justice gathered over 250,000 people of different races and faiths at the Washington Mall. Since each organization coordinating the march contributed a speaker for the event, all speakers agreed to limit their remarks to five minutes each.[4]

At the March on Washington, John Lewis spoke on behalf of SNCC, delivering his "Which Side is the Government On?" address. Several March organizers pressured Lewis to modify his address because of its bold statements against the government, but Lewis and his SNCC constituents insisted on keeping the speech as originally worded. Only after A. Philip Randolph spoke with Lewis privately about the potential detriment that radicalism might cause the movement did Lewis agree to soften the tone of his speech.[5]

Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech at the March on Washington, which has been considered one of the most significant public speeches of the twentieth century.[6] Interestingly, King's sermon draft for the event did

---

[4]See Chapter 4, Footnote 4.

[5]John Lewis, *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Mariner, 1990): 221-222.

Prathia Hall was one of Lewis's speech advisors, "a great help" in refining early drafts of his speech. See Lewis, *Walking with the Wind*, 214, 233.

[6]See Drew D. Hansen, *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) and Sundquist, *King's Dream*. For rhetorical and oratorical analysis of King's speech, see Mark Vail, "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9, no. 1 (2006): 51-78; Keith D. Miller, "Voice Merging and Self-making: The Epistemology of 'I Have a Dream,'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 19 (1989): 23-31; Martha Solomon, "Covenanted Rights: The Metaphoric Matrix of 'I Have a Dream," 66-84 and John H. Patton, "'I Have a Dream': The Performance of Theology Fused with the Power of Orality," 104-26, in *Martin Luther*

not include his "I Have a Dream" set piece. Mahalia Jackson, the gospel singer, was seated near him on the podium and as he was nearing the end of his speech, shouted "Tell them about the dream, Martin."[7] King improvised from his manuscript to share his dream. News media broadcasted King's speech across the country.

A number of women were involved with planning the March on Washington but were omitted from its program. Women like Dorothy Height, Ella Baker, and Pauli Murray were not invited to speak, though they carried significant leadership and influence. When women leaders asked that a woman speak during the March, the March organizers told the women that they were already represented through the organizations involved and through Mahalia Jackson, who would be singing. Organizers gave the women seats on the platform, and some of the women were deeply disturbed that their organizations did not rally behind them like SNCC had behind Lewis. Ultimately, most women decided that the March's success would be worth tabling the gender issue, but the gap between the Movement's rhetoric of freedom and equality for all and its sexism became increasingly apparent.[8]

Prathia Hall the Preacher

Prathia Hall received wide recognition for her preaching abilities from a young age. Even as a young twenty-something in the movement, Hall's peers quickly recognized her uncharacteristically mature preaching abilities and spiritual leadership. In

---

King, Jr., and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse, ed. Carolyn Calloway-Thomas and John Louis Lucaites (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993); and Al Weitzel, "King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech: A Case Study of Incorporating Orality in Rhetorical Criticism," *Communication Reports* 7 (1994): 50-56.

[7]Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 14.

[8]See Chapter 4, Footnote 6.

interviews with Hall's movement colleagues about her preaching during the movement, more often than not, the first thing narrators mentioned was amazement at Hall's preaching during the movement, that she had a captivating "presence" about her and was a "powerful" speaker, even at twenty-two. She spoke often in mass meetings, and Charles Sherrod frequently selected Hall to speak on behalf of the Southwest Georgia Project, choosing her over himself, a seminary-degreed ordained minister. One of SNCC's fund-raising posters prominently displayed a photograph of Hall behind a pulpit, preaching at a mass meeting.

Many of Hall's SNCC colleagues who were not religious relayed feeling spiritual stirrings around her, that something about her oration and demeanor invited them into the presence of God. Faith Holsaert, from a nominally Jewish family, was "blown away" by Hall's preaching, which she found to be "of a caliber and intensity and seriousness comparable" to major movement speakers like King. While transcribing one of Hall's sermons given in Birmingham, SNCC secretary Judy Richardson was moved to tears from hearing Hall on a tape: "She was so powerful, even from this little tape recorder, that I started crying….The tears started just dripping down my face…It's an image that I will always have….And I am not churched, so for Prathia to get to me meant a whole lot." She described Hall as "a woman who could absolutely magnetize a mass meeting….such a command of the language."[9]

Peggy Dammond Preacely saw Hall as a pastor in the movement, even before Hall realized her calling; Preacely immediately recognized her spiritual leadership and

[9]Judy Richardson, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 30, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

felt that the SNCC team "were a part of her early ministry."[10] Sherrod heartily agreed that Hall was "already a minister. She knew more Scripture than I did."[11] Richardson agreed that Hall had both beautiful oratory and pastoral vision, which Hall communicated very clearly.[12] Childhood friend Joyce Barrett described her as a "very powerful speaker to say the least."[13] SNCC historian Wesley Hogan described Hall as "one of the movement's most powerful young preachers" and listed her with Lawson, King, and Sherrod as leaders of the African American church in the 1960s.[14]

Faith Holsaert wrote the following anecdote: "[Sherrod] selected a female staff member, Prathia Hall, the daughter of a minister, to preach at the Albany Movement's first anniversary program, a night when Dr. King spoke from the same pulpit. I was bowled over by Prathia – I had not imaged a young woman my age could possess such oratorical power."[15]

Martha Prescod Norman Noonan described Hall's sermons as "filled with humor, and at the same time, they had a depth, an unusual depth of meaning….It was amazing that someone that young had that level of poise and confidence and competence all

[10]Peggy Dammond Preacely, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[11]Charles Sherrod, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[12]Richardson, Interview by Lyons.

[13]Joyce Barrett, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 12, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[14]Wesley Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 73, 229.

[15]Faith Holsaert, "Resistance U," *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*, edited by Faith Holsaert, Martha Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dottie Zellner (Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010), 187.

together."[16] Sherrod recalled that Hall often prayed at mass meetings: "She prayed a lot at meetings. Long prayers."[17] When Penny Patch pictures Hall, "She is talking in a mass meeting, or saying a closing prayer."[18] "Prathia would pray, and pray, and pray. And we would tease her that her name was, you know, *Prayer*-thia Hall."[19]

Mary King was particularly taken by Hall's preaching, the pacing of her words, her imagery, and her "grasp of words and their emotive power." King recalled SNCC's respect for Hall's preaching: "In SNCC, we were not interested in hierarchies, but in authenticity. So Prathia was completely accepted. And whenever she would rise to speak, everybody gave her rapt attention. She was a riveting speaker. And nobody ever would talk, whisper, or cough while she was talking. She had such a strong, powerful presence."[20]

Bob Zellner recognized Hall's commitment to Christian non-violence and the social gospel early in the Movement. He argued that her spiritual maturity gave her rapport with King and other ministers in the movement: "[King] was actually captivated in some ways by Prathia, because she was a woman with a voice, a woman with great power and presence. And he couldn't help but be admiring of her ability as a communicator, even as a preacher." Zellner believed that King "learned a great deal from

[16]Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[17]Sherrod, Interview by Lyons.

[18]Penny Patch, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[19]Preacely, Interview by Lyons.

[20]Mary King, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 15, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Prathia" in developing his preaching abilities.[21] Wyatt Tee Walker believed King connected with Hall because of her maturity and wisdom.[22]

Hall "was like a female Dr. King, because she had such a prayerful and statuesque way of standing and being," commented Preacely. "She had a calmness about her, but she also had a fire. And when she spoke, you listened, because she had a wonderful speaking voice." Amazed at Hall's presence, Preacely elaborated: "It didn't seem like anything really frightened her. It was as if she was coming from kind of an inner guidance and an inner light; and as if her spiritual house was in order."[23]

When Holsaert and Robinson shared their impressions of Hall's preaching with Hall later in life, she was shocked because she did not perceive herself doing anything different from what she did at home. Hall realized that she "had more access to the speakers' platform than others because that was [her] home territory but for them it was alien territory. It was very different." Northern students in the Movement, white and black, found the pulpit intimidating, but for Hall: "Even for the blacks, not all blacks had church backgrounds, but those who did, their religion was much more distant from the church so they would not have ventured there quite so easily as I did." When asked about being nervous speaking before a crowd, Hall laughed as she responded: "Oh, Lord, I'd been doing that since I was three!"[24]

---

[21]Bob Zellner, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 15, 2011, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[22]Wyatt Tee Walker, Interview by Courtney Lyons, May 1, 2012, in Waco, TX, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[23]Preacely, Interview by Lyons.

[24]Prathia Hall, Interview by Sheila Michaels, February 25, 1999, Film and Media Archive, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

Hall's mother was instrumental in providing opportunities for Hall to speak before the congregation of Mt. Sharon Baptist Church, directing programs for the children to perform for the church. Mrs. Hall "had taught children to read who the school system had said couldn't be taught, and taught them to speak and to perform plays and do poetry." Hall remembered, even when she was "too small to be seen," being lifted onto a chair or table top to recite her part in children's productions at church. "We'd always forget it and mess it up, and they would just applaud and say, 'You're wonderful. You can do anything you want to do.'" Hall's parents both stressed the importance of learning "to speak well and to handle the language well."[25]

Given that Hall and Martin Luther King, Jr. knew each other through Fellowship House in Philadelphia and shared similar theological and philosophical convictions about the movement, there is little surprise that King recognized Hall's giftedness as an orator and movement leader. They both grew up as the children of preachers and in predominantly white schools. They both competed in Elks and Masons sponsored debate competitions. They were trained for the Civil Rights Movement in similar ways by many of the same people. Hall sensed her calling to ministry as a young girl but resisted a life of ministry because of the guaranteed adversity for a woman in ministry, whereas King embraced his future as a minister even as he struggled with his own faith.

Hall and King interacted on numerous occasions through the Albany project including the first anniversary celebration in 1962, for which they were both speakers, and the 1962 prayer vigil following the church burnings in Southwest Georgia. They continued to share speaking platforms as long as Hall was in the Movement.

[25]Hall, Interview by Sheila Michaels.

Prathia Hall the Dreamer

In late summer, 1962, there were a string of four church burnings in Southwest Georgia, all churches associated with the Movement in some way. SNCC workers received a phone call that King wanted to come to Albany, to attend a prayer vigil at the ashes of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Sasser, Georgia. Jack Chatfield recalled arriving before King did, standing around the road from Sasser, and seeing King's driver, former Alabama student Bernard Lee, pull up to the site. Lee opened the door for King. Chatfield remembered that King made his way to the stage for a microphone check without greeting any of the students: "King said, '1-2-3-4.' [News cameras] shot him saying something about the church, and this took a very, very short time….Prathia prayed….He unhooked the microphones and was gone."[26]

Claude Sitton was also at the vigil and wrote a moving article for the *New York Times* about the ceremony. "As the sun sets across the cotton fields, some fifty Negroes and two whites met at Mount Olive for a 'prayer vigil.' Joining hands, they sang softly, 'We Shall Overcome.' A wisp of smoke rose from the ashes of the church….The whites in the automobiles that shuttled slowly past looked on and said nothing."[27]

After the song, Hall led the group in prayer: "'Lord, help us keep our heads up,' Miss Hall said, her voice breaking. 'Help us, Lord, as Mount Olive, Shady Grove, and

---

[26]Jack Chatfield, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Chatfield well-articulated the difficulties many within the Freedom Riders and SNCC had with King's presence among them: "They thought he had identified himself as a kind of Christ figure who had to immunize himself from attack," which was the genesis of calling King "Da Lawd." This resentment grew with the fact that while the young students were living in the counties with the local people, facing ever-present danger, King would come into town for media exposure and quickly leave. For many in SNCC, resentment mounted between King's desire to remain the primary leader of the Movement and King's unwillingness to labor and suffer alongside the people, without cameras or reporters to observe him.

[27]Claude Sitton, "2 Negro Churches Burned in Georgia: FBI Men Attacked: Robinson Visits Site," *NYT* (September 10, 1962).

Mount Mary Churches rise again out of the ashes. Lord, we're going to be free. We want to be free so our children won't have to grow up with their heads bowed."[28] According to oral tradition, throughout the prayer, Hall repeated the phrase "I have a dream," each time followed by a specific vision for racial equality and justice.[29] Though Sitton did not include the entire text of her prayer, he was obviously moved by the power of her words to record significant portions of what she said. Sitton did not include any text from King's remarks at the same vigil, nor did Sitton customarily quote prayers.[30] Larry Rubin vividly remembered her speaking at this event: "She was really quite a powerful speaker. I remember being awestruck."[31]

Hall recalled that after the service, King sought and received her permission to use the phrase "I have a dream" in his own preaching. Hall was a fairly private person in general and certainly not an attention-seeker. She did not boast about her connection to King, though, later in life, when friends asked her about her role in "I have a dream," she did admit that King initially heard the phrase from her. She had the utmost respect for King and did not want to discredit him in any way. She was quick to say that King made the speech his own and did not plagiarize her.[32]

---

[28]Larry Rubin, Interview by Courtney Lyons, November 18, 2010, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[29]Though there are no written sources verifying that Hall used the phrase "I have a dream" in her prayer at the Mount Olive Baptist Church vigil, there is substantial oral history evidence from eyewitnesses that she originated the phrase "I have a dream." Three studies of King's sermons, discussed later in this chapter, mention Hall's potential involvement with the phrase due to oral history evidence. See my collection of oral history interviews on the subject, Prathia Hall Special Collections Project at Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX, which are the most extensive research on this idea to date.

[30]Sitton, "2 Negro Churches Burned in Georgia."

[31]Rubin, Interview by Lyons.

[32]Prathia Hall, Interview by Drew Hansen, Private documents of Drew Hansen, shared with Author, November 15, 2001.

One important consideration is the difference between African American and Western culture concerning ownership. African American culture has historically differed from Western individualism in its prioritization of the community. Bernice Johnson Reagon explained that the act of saying something would not make that phrase "yours," but would become part of the community.[33] Major King scholars such as Clayborne Carson and Keith Miller have examined the larger ties between King's rhetoric and its roots in African American history and folk culture. Both have placed King firmly in the African American folk preaching tradition, in which drawing upon the words of predecessors – called "voice merging" – was a legitimizing form of identifying oneself as a member of a community. Many of King's set pieces and memorable phrases are merged from African American historical and folk sources such as oral tradition, preaching, and music, as was common for many preachers.[34] If King overheard a phrase, such as "I have

[33]Bernice Johnson Reagon comment to Author, "The Religious Leadership of African American Women," *Association for the Study of African American Life and History*, September 26-30, 2012, Pittsburgh, PA.

[34]Miller, "Voice Merging and Self-making," 23-31, 24.
Richard Lischer labeled King's corpus of written material, including his dissertation, as plagiarized and most of his work as "derivative." Further, Lischer placed King fully within the Western intellectual tradition, explicitly stating that in so doing, King had left the African American intellectual tradition, to which he returned later in his career "with his horizons considerably widened" by the vocabulary and theological values of Western intellectualism. At the same time, Lischer placed King's preaching firmly within the African American tradition, particularly his use of allegory and typology and his delivery style. Because King was both African American and trained in the Western intellectual tradition, he was able to communicate prophetically with mainstream American society in language that mainstream white society could understand and appreciate. Lischer called this King's "gift of metaphor," which should be appreciated regardless of what we know about King's sources. See Richard Lischer, *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr, and The Word that Moved America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7, 10.

Sundquist grouped King's womanizing and plagiarism together as little-known facts about King that would have discredited King's reputation had they been more widely known during King's lifetime. See Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 201. However, many African American scholars correct labeling King as a plagiarizer based on the African and African American cultural understanding of knowledge as belonging to the community rather than to an individual.

The question of King's cultural understanding of knowledge ownership has also raised significant questions about King's primary theological and preaching influences. King scholars such as David Garrow, Stephen Oates, and Taylor Branch have often described King as a product of his seminary education, emphasizing the Western theologians whose liberal Protestant ideas influenced him, namely, Reinhold

a dream" from Hall, voiced in a communal setting, he would not have been expected to ask permission to use the phrase or to cite its source, just as he would not have been expected to cite the Amos and Isaiah passages he quoted in the March on Washington speech.[35] King seeking Hall's permission to use "I have a dream" spoke volumes of his respect for her, affirming her as a preaching peer.

Niebuhr, Paul Tillich, Walter Rauschenbusch, and Harry Emerson Fosdick, whom he read in graduate school. Those who cite liberal white Protestant influences typically find King guilty of plagiarizing. See David Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986); Stephen Oates, *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Harper Perennial, 1994); and Taylor Branch, *America in the King Years*.

Clayborne Carson's work as editor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers, rejected traditional white interpretations of King's influences and work. If King was most deeply influenced by "the Great White Thinker," meaning Western white theologians, Carson argued, then so was the African American Civil Rights Movement. Carson argued for the origination of the civil rights movement and its liberation impulses from within the African American community itself, a conclusion of the collective wisdom and spirituality of African Americans. Scholars like Carson typically do not blame King for plagiarism, even when he repeats others' words verbatim without citation. See Clayborne Carson, Stewart Burns, Susan Carson, Adrienne Clay, Peter Holloran, Ralph E. Luker, Dana Powell, Virginia Shadron, Penny A. Russell, and Kieran Taylor, eds. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 7 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994-2007) and Clayborne Carson, ed. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: IPM/Warner Books, 1998).

Keith Miller's work reached a Hegelian synthesis, acknowledging that King was influenced by liberal white preachers like Niebuhr, Tillich, and Rauschenbusch, but siding with Carson that African American folk preaching was ultimately the most influential for King. In defense of King, Miller argued that King's borrowing material from other preachers or spiritual music was part of African American folk pulpit heritage and culturally *laudable*. Miller argued that while in school, King learned to navigate intellectual print culture out of necessity, and that the ideas of Western White liberal Protestantism did shape his theology, but once graduated, he returned to his African American folk preaching roots. Particularly as King developed his preaching voice in southern African American churches, Miller argued that African American folk preaching remained the most formative influence on his preaching: "Resisting his professors' rules about language and many notions of the Great White Thinkers, King crafted highly imaginative, persuasive discourse through the folk procedures of voice merging and self-making" (123). Miller's work has also contributed a well-articulated explanation of the differences between writing theology from a unique worldview (citations) versus preaching and the important relationship between speaking from within the African American oral tradition (communal knowledge) to prevent marginalization as an outsider. See Keith D. Miller, "Redefining Plagiarism: Martin Luther King's Use of an Oral Tradition," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 20, 1993): A60. See also Keith D. Miller, "The Roots of the Dream: The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr." *New York Times* (March 15, 1992): BR13.

[35]Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp suggested that King used personal pronouns while quoting biblical prophecy to parallel his role in the movement with biblical prophets. See Kenneth L. Smith and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986) and Elizabeth Vander Lei and Keith D. Miller, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech in Context: Ceremonial Protest and African American Jeremiad," *College English* 62 (1999):83-99.

King quoted from Amos 5:24 and Isaiah 40:4-5.

The word "dream" had long been used in African American literature and hermeneutics, used to contrast the American ideal with the African American reality. Frederick Douglass: "I had dreams, horrid dreams of freedom through a sea of blood. But when I heard of the Anti-Slavery movement, light broke in my dark mind. Bloody visions fled away, and I saw the star of liberty peering above the horizon."[36] W.E.B. DuBois: "This is a wonderful world, which the founding fathers dreamed until their sons drowned it in the blood of slavery and devoured it in greed."[37] Langston Hughes: "Let America be the dream the dreamers dreamed."[38] Howard Thurman: "[Jesus'] words were directed to the House of Israel, a minority within the Greco-Roman world, smarting under the loss of status, freedom, and autonomy, haunted by the dream of the restoration of a lost glory and a former greatness….Deep from within [the then-established religious order] he projected a dream, the logic of which would give to all the needful security. There would be room for all, and no man would be a threat to his brother."[39] Lillian Smith: "How many dead dreams will it take to destroy us all?"[40] Certainly, "dream" was a biblical metaphor as well, through which God spoke to figures like Joseph, Daniel, and the prophets, and would have been extremely familiar language to a preacher.[41]

---

[36]Frederick Douglass, *The Light and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner, 5 vols. (New York: International Publishers, 1950), 1: 276-77.

[37]W.E.B. DuBois, *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century* (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 422-23.

[38]Langston Hughes, "Let America Be America Again" (1935), in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, ed. Arnold Rampersand and David Roessel (New York: Knopf, 1996), 189.

[39]Howard Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited* (Boston: Beacon, 1996, reprint), 21, 35.

[40]Lillian Smith, *Killers of the Dream*, rev. ed. (1961; rpt. New York: Norton, 1978), 20.

[41]Miller has suggested that King's "dream" set piece emerged from the biblical language of 'dream' and 'vision' evident from his use of Amos and Isaiah. See Miller, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' in Context," 83-99; Keith D. Miller, "Second Isaiah Lands in Washington, DC: Martin

While the language of "dream" was not particularly inventive, Hall did shape familiar language into a dynamic new form, taking the "dream" to the next level. The repetition of "dream" guided her listeners into reflection on what was and what could be, what had been promised and what had already been fulfilled, what God actually said and what people did in the name of God. Her use of the phrase was inventive, thoughtfully crafted, and dynamically powerful to nurture freedom faith.

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" Speech

King's "I Have a Dream" speech, originally drafted to last around five minutes and without the "I Have a Dream" section, merged several of his "set pieces," or "successful passages from his own sermons, sections from other preachers' works, anecdotes, Bible verses, lines from favorite poets," that he could string together to form a sermon.[42] In fact the speech was more constructed set pieces than original text. The delivered speech differed greatly from King's prepared transcript, largely because he relied on memorized set pieces that seemed appropriate to his point and to his particular

---

Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' as Biblical Narrative and Biblical Hermeneutic," *Rhetoric Review* 26, no 4 (2007): 409; Vail, "'Integrative' Rhetoric," 51-78; and Keith D. Miller, "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Folk Pulpit," *The Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 120-123.

[42]Hansen, *The Dream*, 70.

Richard Lischer's homiletical study of King importantly distinguished the number of King's sermons from the number of King's set pieces, which King "patched together in a bewildering number of combinations under a variety of sermon titles." While King did construct some of these set pieces, many were derived or borrowed; Lischer qualified this statement with a note that even when using borrowed material, King did make [it] his own. King's genius, according to Lischer, was not necessarily in his ability to compose phrases or sermons but in his ability to recognize pregnant phrases and piece them together into a sermon with captivating delivery, which Lischer credited to the legacy of oral tradition within the African American church. In other words, "His originality was an originality of effect, not composition." For more about King's formation, use of sources, and development as an orator, see Licher, *The Preacher King*, 8-9, 93-118.

audience. Initially, he modified the prepared speech slightly, but by the end of the address, he had abandoned his manuscript completely.[43]

The speech began with his "bad check" set piece, in which he compared the Emancipation Proclamation to a bad check, since African Americans still did not experience full equality or freedom in America.[44] King transitioned into the "urgency of now" set piece, at the end of which, he made his first sentence-length addition to the manuscript, adding: "Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children."[45] King reiterated the importance of nonviolent demonstration: "Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force."[46] He acknowledged that the freedoms of white and black Americans were "inextricably bound" and that as long as "the Negro is the victim of the unspeakable horrors of police brutality," the movement cannot stop, which he used to transition into his "We can never be satisfied" set piece.[47] King drifted from his manuscript, asking those gathered to return to their communities as activists to continue the work of the movement. Modifying the

[43]King rarely used a manuscript or notes of any kind when speaking. His preaching and speaking relied heavily on the arrangement and adaptation of memorized set pieces and extemporaneous speech, rather than manuscripted text. King was required to submit a manuscript for the March on Washington because of the television broadcast. See Garrow, "King: The Man, The March, The Dream," 31.

[44]The speech was originally titled for the "bad check" set piece but later changed to "I Have a Dream" because of the overwhelming popularity of that section.

King's opening reference to the Emancipation Proclamation was strikingly similar to President Kennedy's "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," June 11, 1963. Both began with references to the unfulfilled promises of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation. Mark Vail suggested that the three documents – the "Letter from Birmingham Jail," Kennedy's civil rights speech, and King's "I Have a Dream" speech – share a call and response relationship. See Vail, "'Integrative' Rhetoric," 60.

[45]Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," in Hansen, *The Dream*, 75-76.

[46]Note the identical phrasing between King's speech and the Fellowship House campaign to promote King's methods in 1962. See Chapter 1.

[47]King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," in Hansen, *The Dream*, 75-76.

"Let us go back" set piece he previously omitted, King alternated the imperative for the hortatory: "Go back" instead of the manuscripted "Let us go back."

Perhaps after hearing Mahalia Jackson's suggestion, King abandoned his manuscript: "I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream." With repetition of "I have a dream," King voiced hope of reconciliation, justice, and peace. King later reflected on his decision to insert the "I have a dream" set piece into his speech: "I started out reading the speech, and I read it down to a point, and just all of a sudden, I decided – the audience response was wonderful that day, you know – and all of a sudden this thing came to me that I have used – I'd used it many times before, that thing about 'I have a dream' – and I just felt that I wanted to use it here. I don't know why. I hadn't thought about it before the speech."[48] "I have a dream" first appeared in King's speeches in November, 1962.[49]

King first shared a dream that America would faithfully implement equality for all people. No doubt, King realized the importance of connecting the values of the movement with American values and wanted to help white and black Americans understand the critical link between domestic freedom and international freedom.[50] King's Dream set piece also drew upon biblical language and familiar lyrics to spiritual music, connecting the movement with Christian orthopraxis.

---

[48]Garrow, "King: The Man, The March, The Dream," 31, 35; Carson, *Autobiography*, 223.

[49]David Garrow echoed Drew Hansen's argument that King's speech up until this point had been good but unremarkable; when King switched to his extemporaneous preacher voice with "I have a dream," America was able to see his preaching power. (Garrow, "King: The Man, The March, The Dream," 35; Hansen, *The Dream*.

[50]Especially given the accusations abetted by J. Edgar Hoover's FBI that King was a Communist, and given the intentional setting of his speech to connect 1963 with the 1863 Emancipation Proclamation, King connected his message of civil rights with the founding principles of the United States. This shrewd tactic was certainly reminiscent of Frederick Douglass and W.E.B. DuBois, who frequently did the same.[50] See Miller, "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' in Context," 91-93; Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 49, 184-186.

The next line was of Georgia: "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood."[51] In the two previous set pieces that referenced specific movement events, King began with Mississippi, no doubt recalling the June 12 assassination of Medgar Evers in his driveway in front of his family, just two months prior to the March on Washington. In the dream set piece, King mentioned Georgia first, and Mississippi second. Perhaps this was coincidental. Perhaps King favored his home state. Or, perhaps King began with Georgia because he first heard "I have a dream" in Georgia, from Prathia Hall, locking the association between the two in his mind.

Another repetition device King utilized was "all of God's children." Quite possibly from Gandhi's name for the untouchables, *Harijans*, meaning "children of God," King used the phrase three times during the speech, emphasizing that all humans are children of God. First in the urgency of now set piece – "Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children" – second at the end of the 'I have a dream' set piece – "This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing" – and in the final sentence of the speech – "We will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing."[52] Prathia Hall and King's predecessor, Howard Thurman, also frequently used the phrase "God's child," which often appeared in her definition of

[51]Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," in Hansen, *The Dream*, 81.

[52]Martin Luther King, Jr. "I Have a Dream," in Hansen, *The Dream*, 71-85.

freedom faith.[53] Perhaps Hall picked up this phrase from King or from reading Gandhi first-hand. Perhaps this is a common phrase for preachers, no doubt connected to the "children of Israel" in the Bible.

One of the most brilliant aspects of the speech was King's merging of social justice and economic justice. The March on Washington was originally conceived as an economic protest, but with the large influx of civil rights organizations, the focus shifted to civil rights. King's rhetorical merging of social and economic justice in the culturally familiar language of America's founders, President Lincoln, and biblical prophecy, made a radical message highly accessible to his diverse audience.[54] The setting of the March at the Lincoln Memorial and the connections King drew between the Movement and Abraham Lincoln were intentional and powerfully effective.[55]

Who Had the Dream?

While King made "I have a dream" internationally famous, there is evidence that Prathia Hall originated the phrase "I have a dream" in Southwest Georgia. King heard Hall use the phrase and adopted her words into his own set pieces.[56]

Though Hall's connection with the phrase had been a matter of rumor within civil rights activist circles for some time, Rev. James Bevel's public acknowledgement of the

---

[53]Thurman, *Jesus and the Disinherited*, 50-51.

[54]King conflated Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the Emancipation Proclamation in his introduction: "Fivescore years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, signed the Emancipation Proclamation."

For a thematic biography of King as a radical, see Harvard Sitkoff, *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2008).

[55]For more detail on the connections King made between Abraham Lincoln and the Civil Rights Movement, see Sundquist, *King's Dream*, especially the chapter entitled "Lincoln's Shadow."

[56]Though there are no known written sources that Prathia Hall used "I have a dream" in the Mount Olive Baptist Church prayer vigil, there is substantial oral history evidence for this claim. See the Prathia Hall Special Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History in Waco, TX.

phrase instigated increased interest in tracing the roots of the connection. Bevel, Director of Nonviolent Education of the SCLC, explained that he and King traveled to Southwest Georgia to attend the prayer vigil at Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Terrell County in September, 1962. Most scholarly references to Hall's origination of the phrase point to Bevel's account of the event, including Richard Lischer's *The Word that Moved America*, Drew Hansen's *The Dream*, and Eric Sundquist's *King's Dream*.[57]

Lischer's monograph in 1995 relayed Bevel's account:

> In the service a young woman, a college student and member of SNCC, led the prayers of the community. She spoke with the conviction King had come to expect from the SNCC activists, but also with an innocence and idealism peculiar to the young. The students often spoke of their dream for black people in America, and, as she prayed, the young woman began to intone her own vision of the future with the phrase, "I have a dream." That evening, the whole church, including its most distinguished visitor, swayed to the phrase "I have a dream."[58]

Lischer confirmed Bevel's story through his own interview with Bevel. Lischer also interviewed Hall, and from this conversation he recollected, "While acknowledging that she used the 'dream' metaphor in her prayer, she, modestly, didn't claim to be the inspiration of King's speech."[59] Lischer seemed skeptical of Hall's modest denial, however, in his treatment of the influence of the prayer vigil on King. Specifically, because Hall denied being the inspiration for King's speech, Lischer included Bevel's

[57]James Bevel (1936-2008) was a student activist who transitioned into SCLC leadership. He was a key leader behind the 1963 Birmingham Children's Crusade, the 1965 Selma Voting Rights Movement, and the 1966 Chicago Open House Movement. Bevel was also involved in the planning of the March on Washington. He married fellow Nashville Student Movement alum Diane Nash, one of the most prominent student activists among the Freedom Riders and the Nashville Student Movement that sparked the advent of SNCC. Nash and Bevel divorced after Bevel's infidelity. Bevel and Nash had two children, and Bevel had fourteen more in his next three marriages. In April, 2008, Bevel was convicted of incestual rape of one of his daughters, freed on bail seven months later, and in December, 2008, he died of pancreatic cancer.

[58]Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 93.

[59]Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 93, 287; Richard Lischer, Email to Author, March 16, 2009.

account as a vignette but did not seriously consider Hall as the origination of King's historic phrase.

Hansen's 2003 monograph acknowledged Lischer's retelling of Bevel's account in an endnote but dismissed its credibility based on a lack of written evidence substantiating Hall's use of the phrase at the prayer vigil.[60] Sundquist also included Bevel's account in his 2009 study but only through a cursory mention rather than a serious investigation of Hall as the potential genesis of King's phrase: "As a young woman prayed, Bevel recalled, [Hall] began to intone, 'I have a dream,' and soon the whole congregation, King included, were swaying to its rhythm."[61]

Bob Zellner believed that Hall's modesty led her to deny involvement in coining the phrase when asked, even though she did originate the phrase.[62] Zellner elaborated:

> There was an un-credited inspiration that he had received, probably first by hearing Prathia do that "I have a dream" as a great part of sermons or messages that she delivered in Georgia. Because, you know, Dr. King was from Georgia, and sometimes those ringing phrases would be shared between ministers, and so forth. And I think that – what I understand from our folk understanding of that influence between Prathia and Dr. King, was that Dr. King actually asked her – we understood that he had actually asked her if he could borrow that, if he could use that. Since she had popularized it, in a sense, among us before it got to Dr. King."[63]

Rep. John Lewis, former Executive Secretary of SNCC and recognized as one of the "Big Six" leaders of the civil rights movement, also suggested Hall as the source of "I

---

[60]Hansen, *The Dream*, 249-250.

[61]Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 22; Roger Fritts, "The Most Famous American Sermon of the 20th Century," sermon given at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church, Bethesda, MD, January 13, 2002; http://www.cedarlane.org/02serms/s020113.html Accessed September 29, 2008.
Lischer's study of King's Dream speech acknowledged multiple sources which led to King's set piece. Lischer acknowledges Hall as likely one of these sources, in addition to the biblical connection of dreams with prophecy. Lischer, *The Preacher King*, 9.

[62]Bob Zellner, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 15, 2011, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[63]Zellner, Interview by Lyons.

have a dream." He shared: "As a matter of fact, it was Prathia, some people felt, that gave Dr. King the idea of the 'I Have a Dream' Speech….Because she would talk about, 'I have a dream,' about 'over my head, I see such and such a thing; I see freedom.' And I've – some people in SCLC as well as the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee felt that maybe he got that idea from Hall."[64]

When questioned in recent interviews, other narrators either had not heard the theory of Hall's origination but found this plausible, or were uncertain. Charles Sherrod attended the September 14, 1962 prayer vigil and remembered that Hall spoke at the meeting, though he did not recall hearing Hall say "I have a dream."[65] Sherrod did, however, recall being asked about her origination of the phrase on several occasions. Similarly, Judy Richardson, involved behind the scenes with the production of *Eyes on the Prize* (2006) and *This Far By Faith* (2003), did not remember SNCC rumors about Hall coining "I have a dream," but did recall hearing researchers for those documentaries discuss Hall as the originator in their research for the documentaries.[66]

Though Sherrod and Richardson gave neutral answers since they did not recall Hall originating the phrase, only one narrator, Larry Rubin, answered the question with a negative answer. Rubin hesitated about Hall as the origin of the phrase on several grounds. First, the Movement developed a shared vocabulary of phrases, drawn from

---

[64]John Lewis, Interview by Courtney Lyons, August 11, 2009, in Atlanta, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[65]Sherrod, Interview by Lyons.

[66]Judy Richardson, Interview by Lyons.

Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A. DeVinney, Madison Davis Lucy, et. Al. 2006. *Eyes on the Prize* (Alexandria, Va.): PBS Video; Cross, June, Dante J. James, Lorraine Toussaint, Lulie Haddad, Alice Markowitz, Valerie Linson, Leslie D. Farrell, and W. Noland Walker, 2003. *This Far By Faith: African American Spiritual Journeys* (Boston: WGBH).

lyrics of spirituals, freedom songs, and biblical themes, which circulated widely. Rubin argued that no one would have thought of these phrases as their intellectual property, and certainly no one would have expected others to ask permission to adopt another person's phrase. Second, Rubin raised the issue of Bevel's lack of credibility, namely, his record of incest, womanizing, and other inappropriate sexual relationships. Third, Rubin argued that both Bevel and Zellner may have had personal issues with King and sought to promote Hall's origination in attempt to reduce King's significance. Fourth, Rubin mentioned the debate concerning the origination of "Black Power" between Stokely Carmichael and Willie Ricks. Carmichael and Ricks both argue that they used "Black Power" first, but, according to Rubin, they started using the phrase around the same time, independently of each other. Rubin suggested perhaps the same dynamic existed between Hall and King, minus public debate. Ultimately positive in his recollection of Hall's preaching and relationship with King, Rubin said: "It would be nice to think that she originated it."[67]

In 2011, Wake Forest University undergraduate student William Murphy found a speech by fifteen-year-old King with strikingly similar language to King's "bad check" set piece which begins the "I Have a Dream" address. A critical consideration is that the speech by adolescent King, titled "The Negro and the Constitution" (1944), closely resembled the "bad check" set piece, and not the "dream" set piece. King wrote the speech for a high school Elks Society competition, which he won.[68] The speech drew

[67]Rubin, Interview by Lyons.

[68]Lacey Johnson, "A Student's Surprising Discovery about Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream for America," *Chronicle of Higher Education* 58, no 8 (2011): A25; Martin Luther King, Jr. "The Negro and the Constitution," *The Cornelian* (1944), (http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/volume_i_april_1944/) Accessed January 21, 2013.

heavily from the unfulfilled promises of the Emancipation Proclamation and the failure of America's founding values if African Americans continued to be excluded from freedom. While he developed this idea over time, the idea of his "bad check" set piece was clearly present in his 1944 "The Negro and the Constitution" address. Murphy's finding does not discount the argument for Hall as the creator of the phrase.

Charles Euchner's *Nobody Turn Me Around: A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington* (2010) also upheld Bevel's account of King overhearing Hall use the phrase "I have a dream" at the Sasser, Georgia prayer vigil in September, 1962. Euchner argued that King resonated with Hall's words because of the significance of dreams in his own spiritual pilgrimage. He cited King's kitchen vision during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in which God confirmed King's calling to persevere in the movement against racism. Euchner also cited King's affinity for drawing upon Old Testament prophets in his preaching, which was typical in African American preaching and matched King's understanding of himself as a social justice prophet.[69]

Drew Hansen's *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation* (2003), a homiletical study of King centered around the "I Have a Dream" speech, acknowledged the significance of Albany in the history of the phrase, which first appeared in King's set pieces in November, 1962, after the Southwest Georgia church burnings in September, 1962. The earliest time "I have a dream" appeared in writing was November 27, 1962, in King's speech in Rocky Mount, North Carolina. The first dream example King provided in that address was of Sumter County, Georgia, specifically to

[69]Euchner, *Nobody Turn Me Around*, 5-6.

the church burnings, which lent significant credibility to the argument that "I have a dream" originated in Albany.[70]

Hansen presented two versions of the Albany origination theory. Dorothy Cotton, a SCLC staff member, remembered hearing a white SNCC volunteer, Kathleen Conwell, use the phrase in an Albany mass meeting: "I have a dream one day that my child can reach out and hold hands with your child…and that it won't matter."[71] Cotton claimed that she told King about Conwell's speech during a ride to the airport the next day, after which King adopted the phrase. The alternative account was that Prathia Hall used the phrase "I have a dream" repeatedly in her prayer at the September 14, 1962 prayer vigil at the site of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Sasser. Georgia, which Hansen based on Richard Lischer's interview with James Bevel.[72]

Hansen interviewed Ralph Allen, Jack Chatfield, and Faith Holsaert about the use of "I have a dream" in Albany, which he argued lent "indirect support" to the Albany origination theory, both of Hall and Conwell. The chronology of the September prayer vigil, Cotton's visit, and King's first known use of the phrase supported the Albany origination theory.[73]

Bevel's account of Hall's prayer failed at two places, according to Hansen. First, in his interviews with SNCC's Southwest Georgia team, Hansen asked specifically about

---

[70]King gave a sermon entitled "The Negro and the American Dream" in September, 1960 in Charlotte, North Carolina, in which he compared America to a dream since its promises for equality were not yet reality. However, the use of dream was more of an unfulfilled hope, used in the biblical prophetic sense, than the repetitious use of the word in the 1963 "I Have a Dream" speech. For more, see Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 27.

[71]Sundquist, *King's Dream*, 22.

[72]Hansen, *The Dream*, 114-115.

[73]Hansen, *The Dream*, 109-110, 114-115.

Bevel's claim. Chatfield did not remember Bevel's presence at the September 14 vigil, which was the event King attended where he would have heard Hall's prayer. King's aide Wyatt Tee Walker did not remember hearing the phrase there at all nor did he associate the phrase with Albany. Walker suggested that King could have used "I have a dream" prior to September, 1962, perhaps unrecorded. Hansen also cited the "SNCC whisper line," a nickname for the high rates of gossip within SNCC's ranks, which would have been atwitter about the phrase coming from Albany had that been the case. Second, all of the Albany SNCC workers interviewed by Hansen denied any recollection which matched Cotton's account regarding Conwell.[74]

While Hansen did not completely reject the Albany origination theory, he suggested that even if King did initially hear the phrase there, he certainly customized the dream with his own language and flair. Hansen cited precedent of King using similar phrases such as having a "vision," which King used as early as 1956, and which would have been familiar biblical language as well.[75]

Even though Hansen somewhat dismissed Hall's involvement, his work actually made great strides toward supporting the argument that King first heard the phrase from Hall. Hansen spoke with Hall in 2001 about the phrase, during which Hall began the interview with a carefully worded disclaimer, "making sure that [he] knew that if she did have a part in King's use of the phrase, she was 'greatly honored,' and that King 'did far more with it than [she] could have done.'"[76] Defending the borrowing of material

[74]Hansen, *The Dream*, 115-116, 249-251.

[75]Hansen, *The Dream*, 116.

[76]King certainly did make something of Hall's phrase. Much research has analyzed reasons for the success of King's speech. Most traditionally, scholars like Mark Vail have noted the integrative effect of the speech by suggesting "two pivotal rhetorical events" leading up to the March: "that the speech's

common between preachers, Hall told Hansen: "I as much as anyone else would overhear and would also offer something that someone else would use." However, Hall does not remember hearing King use "I have a dream" before she used it in the prayer, which she confirmed: "I remember saying 'I have a dream' in the prayer." She elegantly explained her inception of the phrase: "When there's a raging nightmare, you need a dream."[77] Because of the horrific violence she and others faced in Southwest Georgia, she knew that those gathered for prayer needed to hear a word of hope. She told them about her dream of "being free from the bullets and the burnings, being free to worship and free to learn."[78]

In her interview with Hansen, Hall did not deny that King heard the phrase from her. In fact, she acknowledged King as a preaching colleague and that they had appeared together at several preaching engagements, including an event in Chicago on August 27,

---

rhetorical force is due as much to the shifting goals and the dynamic spectacle of the event as to the speech itself, and that the oration's success can be explained in part by the convergence of antecedent events and dynamic spectacle….The spectacle and the speaker exhibited a consonance that fostered a favorable reception of King's message." In other words, because of King's notoriety and the momentum of success in Birmingham, combined with Kennedy's sanction of the March on Washington, King's sermon framing the civil rights movement as protection of core American values was an instant success. Moreover, the March was well-attended and had a "friendly and easygoing tone," which contributed to the success of its speakers' messages. Most of what King said was very familiar, but there was something about the delivery at the March, in historical context, that created a spark. Vail has also suggested that the close link between the "Letter from Birmingham Jail" and "I Have a Dream" evidenced his argument for the integrative rhetoric as key to the success of "I Have a Dream." Strictly as text, the Birmingham letter "lacked the potency and power that only King's orality could supply" (59). The March on Washington gave King a platform to voice the rhetoric established by the Birmingham letter, aided by the momentum of national attention from Birmingham and support from the Kennedy administration.

[77]Malcolm X, in his response to the March on Washington, independently echoed the dichotomy Hall coined the phrase to transcend: "Yes, I was there. I observed that circus. Who ever heard of angry revolutionists all harmonizing 'We Shall Overcome. . .Suum Day. . .' while tripping and swaying along arm-in-arm with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting against? Who ever heard of angry revolutionists swinging their bare feet together with their oppressor in lily-pad park pools, with gospels and guitars *and "I Have A Dream" speeches? And the black masses in America were--and still are--having a nightmare*" [emphasis mine]. Malcolm X and Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1964: 281.

[78]Prathia Hall, Interview by Drew Hansen.

1963, the night before the March on Washington.[79] She specifically said that she "didn't want to be a King clone," but said: "I knew his lines and he knew a few of mine." Hall characterized their rhythm: "My work in the Northern fundraising was to tell my story, what the experience was. Tell them what happened when shotguns fired at us. So even when we were on the same platform, he had a sermon to preach and I had a story to tell." King's associate Wyatt Tee Walker teased Hall that she had been "preaching without a license for a long time." She said King paid her the "best compliment that anyone could be paid" when he said she was the one platform speaker he would prefer not to follow.[80]

Hall was an extremely private person and would not have been one to boast such a claim to fame; she barely admitted her involvement when asked point blank by close friends. Friends who knew about the dream cited Hall's modesty, even well into her professional career, and her high regard for King as the reasons she kept this information within a select group of friends.[81] Hall's seminary student LaGretta Bjorn recalled a time when another professor at United Theological Seminary was discussing the origin of the "I Have a Dream" speech while Hall was in the room: "It was almost embarrassment. She just sort of quietly walked out of the room."[82]

---

[79]King and Hall appeared together at an event at a Methodist church in Chicago on August 27, 1963, the day before the March on Washington. Hall could not get to Washington soon enough to attend the March, so she watched on television from her hotel in Chicago. See Prathia Hall, Interview by Drew Hansen.

[80]Prathia Hall, Interview by Drew Hansen; Michael Eric Dyson, *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: The Free Press, 2000), 143, 280.

[81]Noonan, Interview by Lyons; Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, Interview by Courtney Lyons, March 21, 2012, in Waco, TX, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX; Zellner, Interview by Lyons; Echol Nix, Interview by Courtney Lyons, Prathia Hall Special Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, March 21, 2012.

[82]LaGretta Bjorn, Interview with Courtney Lyons, June 19, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX. The next chapter will provide more information about Hall's

Hall's close friend Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham asked Hall about her involvement with the phrase.[83] Higginbotham said that Hall told her that she had first used the phrase, that King had sought her permission to use it, and that she admired how he adapted the phrase into his own preaching, that "he did far more with it than [she] ever could."[84] Martha Prescod Norman Noonan remained friends with Hall throughout their adult lives. When Noonan heard a rumor that "I have a dream" may have come from Hall, she asked Hall about the phrase herself. Noonan relayed that Hall remained extremely humble, but did confirm that she had used the phrase at the prayer vigil and that King had asked her permission to use the phrase in his preaching. Noonan collaborated with Hall to include chapters from her about the Albany and Selma projects in a collection of memoirs by women in SNCC, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* (2010). Hall's Albany chapter includes a biographical footnote authored by Noonan listing Hall as the originator of "I have a dream."[85]

Conclusion

When asked, Hall never denied saying "I have a dream," nor did she deny that Martin Luther King, Jr. heard the phrase from her. She admitted using the phrase, in

[83]Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham is the Chair of the Department of African and African American Studies at Harvard University and author of *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), of which Prathia Hall's dissertation is an unofficial sequel.

[84]Higginbotham, Interview by Lyons.

[85]Noonan, Interview by Lyons.

King's presence, in a poetically sermonic way.[86] Hall specifically denied "credit for King's subsequent use" of the phrase.[87]

In light of this evidence, a case can be made that Prathia Hall originated the phrase "I have a dream." Hall was widely admired for her preaching, even as a college student, and was frequently chosen to speak for SNCC at important events. At the prayer vigil for the burned church in Southwest Georgia, King first heard "I have a dream" from Hall's prayer and sought her permission to use the phrase in his own speaking. King made the phrase his own by adding his examples and descriptors, but he ultimately received the idea for the phrase as a repetition device for a sermon from Hall's use of the phrase in her prayer. While King deserves credit for his subsequent use of the phrase, Prathia Hall coined the most important phrase of one of the most important speeches of the twentieth century. The centrality of the Albany origination theory to Hansen's account of sources for "I have a dream," the chronological agreement of the prayer vigil in September, 1962 and King's first recorded use of the phrase in November, 1962, the preaching relationship between Hall and King, and the overwhelming recognition from SNCC workers and King that Hall was a powerful orator, corroborate Hall's origination of the phrase.

Beyond the historian's search to analyze the relationship between the sermonic rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr., and Hall, the phrase "I have a dream" is important to understanding Hall's own identity. When Hall spoke the words "I have a dream" in her prayer, she was enacting freedom faith. Hall was proclaiming that the God who had nourished the Civil Rights Movement would remain faithful even in suffering and loss.

---

[86]Hansen, *The Dream*, 250.

[87]Prathia Hall, Interview by Drew Hansen.

Hall voiced freedom faith that God would provide for and protect SNCC and local activists who would continue their work in spite of violence and brutality. Her father's teaching that God created humans to be free and equips them to resist oppressive forces was being contextualized by the realities of racial violence all around her: shootings, bombings, beatings, and burnings. In the midst of a nightmare, Hall's freedom faith gave her a dream of freedom. Hall transformed the "dream" language of the African American community into a vision of freedom for all people, encouraging and challenging their hearers to persevere by freedom faith in the struggle for justice.

CHAPTER SIX

"Black, Baptist, Preacher, Woman": Prathia Hall as Womanist Preacher

Hall's Life after the Movement

Prathia Hall knew from an early age that she was called to serve others. As a child, she dreamed of mission work in Africa, but as she realized injustices in her own country, Hall decided to serve within the United States. She entered Temple University in 1958 as a pre-law student but later reflected that "a disquieting consciousness of call to ministry produced an ambivalence regarding career choice and preparation." In 1962, before she went South to work with SNCC, Hall enrolled at Conwell School of Theology, but did not remain there long: "Concern regarding the bias within my denomination against women in the ministry and, as I now understand, my own lack of sufficient spiritual maturity to handle that bias, prompted me to withdraw." She also believed that her decision to attend seminary was influenced by grief of her father's death in 1960. The student Civil Rights Movement gave Hall opportunity to wrestle with her understanding of calling and develop spiritually into a more mature freedom faith.[1]

After leaving SNCC, Hall became involved in a number of community organizations. From 1966-1967, Hall was a field representative for Project Womanpower, recruiting and training grass-roots organizers in target cities in the Northeast.[2] From 1967-1968, she served as the Assistant Director of Project Womanpower, coordinating its

[1]Prathia Hall, "Biographical Sketch," 1978, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[2]Project Womanpower recruited and trained local women to participate in social action programs such as daycare, education in African-American culture, and nutrition.

field staff and training in New York. In 1969, Hall transitioned into the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), originally serving as a Program Specialist, developing programs, designing assessments, and grant-writing for funding. In 1971, Hall became the Director of the NCNW's Training Institute in New York. From 1975 until 1979, Hall directed the Hempstead Community Action Program (HCAP), a delegate agency of the Economic Opportunity Commission of Nassau County, New York.[3] Hall was directly responsible for coordinating all of HCAP's programs as well as managing all of its administration. Hall also served as a consultant for the College for Human Services and the Philadelphia Council for Community Advancement. She was very active in the Board of Education of the Union Free School District and the Roosevelt Economic Opportunity Council.[4]

As Hall described her experience: "The agonizing over my true vocation was diminished but not eliminated, as I worked in the South from 1962 to 1966 and thereafter in the human services / community development field in New York." In 1976, Hall endured "a period of intellectual and spiritual restlessness" which prompted her to return to school, this time with certainty of her call to ministry.[5] She confided in a ministerial colleague that "the call to ministry reached the point it could no longer be ignored," that she must "either preach or die."[6] Hall later told homiletics scholar Donna Allen:

> I feel that preaching is a claim of God by which we are possessed. We talk about and use the language of 'my call,' but it is not our call. God has chosen us. This is

[3]HCAP offered Head Start, community revitalization, drug abuse and prevention programs, youth development programs, and other neighborhood services.

[4]Prathia Hall, Resume, 1978, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[5]Hall, "Biographical Sketch."

[6]Ervin Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Undated; Ron Goldwyn, "Pastor earns acclaim as lady of the house," *Philadelphia Daily News*, December 9, 1997.

> a vocation by which I was not even pursued but I was possessed. What I finally realized about my own call was that, all that time I thought I was running from God, God was holding me while I ran. I was running nowhere but into the hand of God. God was using all my experiences to prepare me for ministry….I have known since my childhood that my life was not my own to pick and choose what I wanted to do.[7]

Hall's "decision was accompanied by a deep sense of repentance for the years of reluctance and a sense of urgency regarding 'the Father's business.'" Dr. H.J. Trapp, pastor of Thankful Baptist Church in Philadelphia, supervised Hall's ordination process, complete in November, 1977.[8] In an interview with *Ebony*'s Joy Bennett Kinnon, Hall reflected on her experience of accepting the fullness of her call to ministry:

> Every spring there is a great revival in [Philadelphia]….The church is at least half full of preachers. For a few years, I attended that revival desiring to find medicine for my own needy soul….The revivalist came out and thanked God for…the presence of all the brother preachers; and, then invited all the brother preachers to stand. Sitting in the pew, I was immediately confronted with a crisis of identity. Which do I own, my call or my gender? Do I sit and deny this call, this claim of God on my life decreed by God before I was formed in the womb? Do I sit and now again, another time add to my own history of shame, for the years I tried to do everything else but answer this call? Or do I stand and deny my gender? A preacher I am, a brother I am not. I finally resolved the violent conflict by standing. Because, when I stood I stood as I am. I stood in the total authenticity of my being – black, preacher, Baptist, woman. For the same God who made me a preacher is the same God who made me a woman. And I am convinced that God was not confused on either count.[9]

Hall sought further theological education, initially at Mercer School of Theology in New York in 1977. Through this experience, she felt "a new sense of being 'at home'

---

[7]Prathia Hall, "Biographical Sketch," 1978, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall; Donna Allen, "Toward a Womanist Homiletic: Katie Cannon, Alice Walker, and Emancipatory Proclamation" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2005): 51.

[8]Hall, "Biographical Sketch."

[9]Prathia Hall, quoted in Joy Bennett Kinnon, "Live Well - Wear Your Own Shoes," Sisterspeak interview, *Ebony* (Nov. 2002).

in a field of study" which she described as her "first love."[10] Returning to school was a "joyous, almost therapeutic balance" for her life. In 1979, still residing in New York with her husband Ralph, Hall commuted to Princeton Theological Seminary to earn her Master of Divinity, while she also commuted to Philadelphia each Sunday to pastor Mt. Sharon Baptist Church.[11] Hall remained firmly Baptist, even as she studied in a Presbyterian seminary.[12] She appreciated that her "practical religious involvement" had been ecumenical, and she particularly longed to study in a school which openly affirmed women in ministry. Hall believed that studying "in such an enlightened environment" would grant her "the intellectual and spiritual freedom to confront the real issues which are critical to the Church of Christ in our time." Hall was drawn to urban pastoral ministry, meeting "the personal and social needs of persons through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ."[13]

After completing her M.Div. in May, 1982, during which time she won three awards for scholastic and preaching excellence, Hall applied to the Master of Theology program at Princeton because her M.Div. coursework inspired "a serious desire for further study." She realized that her understanding of faith was necessarily linked with social justice, and she had begun research on the African American "faith tradition related to the contemporary struggle for liberation and wholeness," which she hoped to

[10]Prathia Hall, "Autobiographical Information," 1983, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[11]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Arlo Duba, 1978-1979, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[12]Hall's church membership remained with Mt. Sharon Baptist Church in Philadelphia her entire life. She officially became a member through baptism upon her profession of faith in 1951. While she lived on Long Island, Hall and her family were involved with Faith Baptist Church, Hempstead and Memorial Presbyterian Church, Roosevelt. Throughout her church life, Hall wore many hats: pianist, youth group coordinator, Sunday school teacher, Bible school coordinator, lay speaker, and minister.

[13]Hall, Correspondence with Arlo Duba, 1978-1979.

advance through the Th.M. in anticipation of later doctoral study.[14] In 1982, Hall became the first female member of the Baptist Minister Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity.[15] By Fall, 1983, Hall began Ph.D. studies in Religion and Society at Princeton Theological Seminary, overlapping the completion of her Th.M. in 1984.[16]

Hall's graduate studies were not without obstacle. Hall's Ph.D. recommenders had no hesitations regarding Hall's aptitude to complete her work. Several of her recommenders, however, did express concern at Hall's ability to focus on Ph.D. work given her pastoral ministry, social activism, and family pressures. In the first year of Hall's graduate study, she suffered medical issues, her mother became critically ill, a close family member died suddenly, and her marriage ended. "The traumatic and cumulative impact of these events" interfered with her ability to complete foreign language requirements and apply herself wholeheartedly to her studies.[17] By 1985, Hall returned to her program and found studying to be "not only exciting learning but good personal therapy." Particularly as she encountered coursework on social justice, she resonated deeply with the issues: "I was able to freely engage in dialogue with my colleagues and to raise my own questions."[18]

---

[14]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with PTS Admissions Committee, 1982, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[15]The Baptist Pastors and Ministers Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity was founded in 1943 to facilitate cooperation and fellowship between Baptist pastors in Philadelphia and is most closely affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated.

[16]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Charles West, 1983, Princeton Theological Seminary Student Record File – Prathia Hall.

[17]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 1985, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[18]Prathia Hall, "Evaluation of Progress," April 22, 1985, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

Even so, Hall continued to struggle with maintaining her coursework. On September 10, 1986, Hall suffered severe injuries from a car accident which further distressed her academic progress. Her pain often "incapacitated" her for five to ten days, sometimes requiring hospitalization, unforeseeably delaying her progress.[19] Several of her professors expressed formal concern about her commitment to her Ph.D. program, some even describing her as having "fugitive status" and having a history of being "the kind of student who needs considerable prodding and initiative on the part of the faculty to keep the work on track."[20] While finishing her dissertation, Hall secured a teaching position.

Prathia Hall joined the faculty of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio in 1989, where she remained until 1998.[21] Hall was drawn to United's concern for the ministry of the Black Church as part of the universal Church, rather than an "exotic area of interest."[22] United allowed her to teach Tuesdays through Thursdays, with the

---

[19]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 1989-1991 and Jack Danton, Correspondence with Kathryn Sakenfeld, January 10, 1988, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

The car accident left Hall with multiple herniated lumbar and cervical discs, ordinarily treated through surgery. Hall's physical therapy led to sufficient resolution of her pain that she avoided surgery, though she had significant back pain for the rest of her life.

[20]Albert Raboteau, Correspondence with Gibson Winter, 1984; Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, Correspondence with Prathia Wynn's Committee, 1987; Dick Fenn, Correspondence with Prathia Hall, 1991, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[21]Leonard Sweet and Daryl Ward were primarily responsible for recruiting Hall to United. Prathia Hall taught the following courses at UTS: Introduction to Christian Ethics, Womanist Ethics, African and African American Women in Religion, The African American Religious Experience, Critical Issues in Black Theology, and Women in the African American Religious Tradition.

In 1992, Hall was the keynote speaker for Stanford University's graduation ceremony. From Psalm 85, Hall exhorted that her audience must "take seriously [their] own yearnings for justice and peace." And in a brilliant turn of phrase, Hall called her audience to choose liberation: "There is much talk today about the disappearance of the American dream. It may well be that the dream must disappear, that a greater vision might replace it." (Prathia Hall, Stanford University Baccalaureate ceremony, 1992.)

[22]David Kepple, "UTS Program Earns Rave Reviews Black Church Highlighted," *Dayton Daily News*, March 3, 1990.

remaining time and summers on leave, so that she could complete her Ph.D. in Religion and Society.[23] In 1993, Hall became the first woman to preach from United's chapel. While on the faculty of United, Hall served as the Associate Dean of Spiritual and Community Life, Associate Dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Dean of African American Studies, and Director of the Harriet L. Miller Women's Center. She created retreats on worship and race relations, and she initiated a concerted effort to recruit more African American students to seminary education at United.[24] She also planned public worship for United's diverse population, which she did "with grace and good humor" and "without compromising principle."[25]

Throughout her career, Hall struggled with severe financial hardship. As a single mother of school-aged children and full-time graduate student with mounting legal and medical bills, Hall relied on preaching invitations and student loans for income. Even once she secured a full-time income at United, Hall juggled the expenses of her son DuBois's tuition at Morehouse College and care for her mother and other family members.[26] Hall traveled constantly between preaching engagements, and United student LaGretta Bjorn assisted Hall with scheduling and negotiating contracts. Childhood friend Presstonia Brown described Hall's routine: "She traveled incessantly. I mean, I've known her to come in on a Sunday morning or get in Saturday night, stay at a hotel, be at service

[23]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Newell Wert, December, 1990, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[24]Michael Nickerson, Teacher Placement Form, April 24, 1998 and United Theological Seminary, News Release, Undated, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall; Prathia Hall, Curriculum Vita, Prathia Hall Papers.

[25]Newell J. Wert, Teacher Placement Form, March 18, 1998, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[26]Hall was very proud that her son chose to attend a Historically Black College or University.

at Mount Sharon, and be back on a plane or whatever going back to Dayton or to wherever she had to be on Monday morning." Explaining Hall's sense of calling, Brown continued: "She had it in her mind she needed to accomplish these things, and she had a lot to do in a little bit of time."[27]

While teaching at United, Hall remained firmly committed to her Ph.D. studies, but the personal and pastoral demands on her time and energy often competed with research. She had to apply for extensions on numerous occasions, and reviewing committees sent her strongly worded provisional extensions, insisting that she make progress in order to continue in the program and insisting that she remain in regular communication with Princeton regarding her progress.[28] Peter Paris, her dissertation advisor, strongly advocated for Hall to remain in the program: "I am willing, therefore, to be as helpful as I possibly can to her because I discern clearly (as those of you who know her also do) her multifaceted leadership talents and skills as preacher, pastor, teacher and role model for many….In my judgment, she is destined for a certain greatness."[29]

---

[27]Presstonia Brown, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 20, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX; LaGretta Bjorn, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 19, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

Hall had a number of sermons that she preached regularly in her speaking engagements. She certainly did her due diligence as a preacher in preparing fresh material, however, she had several sermons that she considered among her best that she tended to preach frequently at revivals. Her papers include transcripts of select sermons which Hall specifically asked LaGretta Bjorn to transcribe for her, as well as a number of cassette tape recordings of Hall's preaching. These tapes indicate that Hall had several sermons she preached repeatedly.

[28]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 1987-1991, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[29]Peter Paris, Letter to Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, April 21, 1989, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

In early 1992, Hall's daughter, Simone Denise Wynn, died at age twenty-five, shortly after giving birth to Hall's grandson Michael McMillan.[30] This loss was exceptionally difficult for Hall and delayed the submission of her dissertation proposal almost a calendar year.[31] Though her dissertation proposal was approved in November, 1992, Hall continued to file for extensions. She submitted the first three chapters in April, 1996 and her final chapter in November, 1996. Between 1994 and 1996, Hall suffered more personal and medical tragedies. Her back injuries were exacerbated by another automobile accident in February, 1994, and her diabetes led to severe vision impairments and hospitalization.[32] In 1996, she lost her brother Berkeley, who had struggled with substance abuse and addiction.[33]

In spite of these setbacks, Hall passed her dissertation oral defense unanimously, completing her Ph.D. in 1997. Hall's dissertation, "The Religious Consciousness of African American Baptist Women," analyzed the constructive work, moral leadership, and ministry of mission of the Women's Convention Auxiliary of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Incorporated (WC) from 1916-1961. Bjorn, Hall's son, grandson, and

[30]After Michael turned four, he spent the summers with Hall.

[31]Prathia Hall, Correspondence with Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, 1992, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

[32]Hall struggled so much with back pain that some days she could not get out of bed at all. She would leave her apartment door unlocked in case she needed help, and some of her United students would drop by to check on her. LaGretta Bjorn recalled visiting Hall, finding her in her bed. When Bjorn asked if Hall needed anything, Hall said no, but Bjorn lingered a while. All Hall wanted was a glass of water, but she could not even get out of bed to get herself a glass of water. See Bjorn, Interview by Lyons.

[33]Prathia Hall, Peter Paris, and Katharine Doob Sakenfeld, Correspondence, 1994-1996, and J.A. Danton, November 21, 1994, Princeton Theological Seminary Student File – Prathia Hall.

mother were present for Hall's graduation. In gratitude for Bjorn's assistance with typing Hall's dissertation, Hall took the two of them on a trip to Barbados.[34]

Hall received numerous awards for her preaching. In 1993, Hall was inducted into the Martin Luther King College of Preachers and Scholars at Morehouse College.[35] In 1997, she was named one of the top fifteen greatest African American women preachers in America by *Ebony* magazine. For Hall, the Ebony poll was a humbling honor that she hoped would elevate "credibility and visibility of all women preachers."[36] She was the leading woman considered for its list of fifteen greatest African American preachers, but did not "receive enough votes to crack the magic 15."[37] This issue was the first time *Ebony* had ever expanded its list of greatest black preachers to include a women's category. Hall tied for first place with Rev. Carolyn Knight and Rev. Vashti McKenzie. Rev. Jeremiah Wright, of United Church of Christ in Chicago, told *Ebony* that Hall was "in a class of her own," and "lifts the gospel to new levels, lifting hearers simultaneously

[34]Hall never learned to type or use the computer, so she relied on United seminarian LaGretta Bjorn to type her dissertation. Hall offered to pay Bjorn, but Bjorn volunteered for the work as preparation for her own future doctoral studies. By the time of Hall's graduation, Bjorn and Hall had become so close that Bjorn's son Akil called Hall "Aunt Prathia," and both attended Hall's mother's ninetieth birthday party. Shortly before Hall's death, Hall asked Bjorn to keep her personal papers.

[35]Prathia Hall, Curriculum Vitae, Prathia Hall Papers. Hall won a number of awards including:

- Womanist Scholar Award, International Theological Center, 1999-2000
- Davis-Putter Scholarship Fund, 1995
- Ebony African American Achievement Award, Honorable Mention, 1994
- American Baptist Churches, USA Ellen Cushing Scholar Award, 1985 and 1986
- Black Doctoral Scholarship, Fund for Theological Education, 1983, 1984, 1993
- Hawkins Memorial Award for Scholastic Excellence, 1982, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Blizzard Memorial Award for Social Ministry, 1982, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Jagow Preaching Award, 1981, Princeton Theological Seminary
- Benjamin E. Mays Fellowship, 1981, Fund for Theological Education
- Roosevelt Board of Education Service Award, 1976
- International Theological Center Womanist Scholar Award and Visiting Professorship, 1999-2000

[36]Goldwyn, "Pastor earns acclaim as lady of the house."

[37]*Ebony* Magazine, "The 15 Greatest Black Preachers," *Ebony* (1997): 156.

with an understanding of an awesome God that is unparalleled." Rev. Charles Adams, of Hartford Memorial Baptist Church in Detroit, told *Ebony*, "Better than anyone else in the pulpit today, she combines the best scholarship with keenly precise Biblical interpretation and passionately persuasive delivery."[38]

When PBS developed a documentary series on African American spirituality, which started filming in the late 1990s and aired in 2003, they chose to feature Prathia Hall in the episode about the civil rights movement. In "This Far by Faith," made by Henry Hampton, the creator of Civil Rights Movement documentary "Eyes on the Prize," Hall described her awareness of racial prejudice, even as a small child, and her experiences of working with SNCC in Southwest Georgia. She explained the philosophy of non-violence in the language of freedom faith and the episode ended with Hall preaching in Brown Chapel in Selma, where she had tended to the wounded marchers after Bloody Sunday, 1965.[39]

In 2000, Prathia Hall was named the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chair of Ethics at Boston University in the School of Theology. This was a dream position for Hall on many levels. She moved to a luxury apartment within walking distance of Boston University. She had sufficient resources to generously support civil rights and social justice organizations, as well as to fly her son DuBois and grandson Michael to Boston to visit her.[40]

---

[38]Joy Bennett Kinnon, "15 Greatest Black Women Preachers," *Ebony Magazine* (1997): 102.

[39]"This Far By Faith," Episode 4, Frazier Moore, "Exploring role of the sacred in the lives of black Americans," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 24, 2003.

[40]Brown, Interview by Lyons.

In 2001, Hall was diagnosed with aplastic anemia, a life-threatening illness which required a bone marrow transplant for any hopes of survival.[41] Friends and family donated bone marrow, but none were a correct match. Hall was often hospitalized for her illness, and a number of her friends helped her during this time.[42] Friends also hosted several fund-raising events to help offset her medical costs during treatment.[43] Even as she was dying, Hall used her situation to raise awareness of the difficulty African Americans face finding bone marrow matches and urging African American churches to recruit donors.[44]

Charles McDew, former director of SNCC, visited Prathia Hall in 2002 after learning of her hospitalization from SNCC alum Reggie Robinson, but neither realized the severity of her condition. McDew met two of Hall's scholar friends, including Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, both professors in Maine.[45] McDew was struck by Hall's ability to

[41]Bone marrow matches generally followed racial lines, and since African Americans tended to donate at much lower rates than other Americans, the likelihood of Hall finding a match was very small. See Ron Goldwyn, "She spreads word about donating," *Philadelphia Daily News*, June 27, 2001.

[42]Her Boston University graduate assistant Echol Nix, childhood friend Presstonia Brown, colleague and friend Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, and former student from United, LaGretta Bjorn, were tremendous helps to her during her illness and visited her in Boston often, managed her finances and appointments, ensured she had groceries, and helped her stay connected with her family.

[43]For example, Philadelphia's Triumph Baptist Church held a service on June 26, 2001, which Hall was too ill to attend.

[44]Goldwyn, "She spreads word about donating"; Brown, Interview by Lyons.
SNCC alums lost touch after the movement. Some intentionally stayed in communication with each other, and some found connections through geographic proximity. Since the mid-1990s, SNCC alums have taken great strides to find each other and stay in communication through an email list-serv, crmvets.org, reunion conferences of major events in the movement, and the SNCC Legacy Project effort to safely archive SNCC records.

[45]Cheryl Townsend Gilkes was a reader on Prathia Hall's dissertation committee at Princeton Theological Seminary and remained her close, personal friend.

foster connection between friends from different periods of her life, how she could make everyone feel at home with her and with each other.[46]

DuBois decided to move his mother to Philadelphia in early August, 2002.[47] Hall's health had been declining, but DuBois believed Hall would receive better care in Philadelphia. Her mother and sisters believed she would get better once she was near family. With the move, Hall's condition worsened. She died on August 12, 2002. Prathia Hall's funeral was at Triumph Baptist Church in Philadelphia, and she was buried in Northwood Cemetery. Numerous ministry and SNCC friends took part in Hall's funeral.

Hall's Womanist Preaching

While Hall was highly sought as a guest preacher in her later life, she has received little attention by African American homiletics scholars and womanist scholars.[48] This section will give long-overdue attention to Hall's preaching, arguing that Hall's freedom faith expressed itself most fully through her womanist preaching.[49] While she remained

---

[46]Charles McDew, Interview by Courtney Lyons, June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX

[47]DuBois's daughter was born during Hall's final illness. Hall was able to hold her granddaughter before she died.

[48]A few of Hall's sermons have been published, though most have been since her death. Prathia Hall, "When the Hurts Do Not Heal." In *Those Preaching Women: More Sermons by Black Women*, Vol. 2. Edited by Ella Pearson Mitchell (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985), 95-102. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1988; Prathia Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff," 687-695, in *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*," edited by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010); Prathia Hall, "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," 67-74, in *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare their Sermons*, edited by Cleophus J. Larue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

Donna Allen's Ph.D. dissertation highlighted Hall as a womanist preacher. See Donna Allen, "Toward a Womanist Homiletic: Katie Cannon, Alice Walker, and Emancipatory Proclamation" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2005). Hall is mentioned as a mother of womanism in the introductory matter of Stacey M. Floyd-Thomas, *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

[49]Generally agreed, womanism is a liberation theology of black women committed to the survival, quality of life, and wholeness of all people, male and female; the critique of oppression, sexism, and racism; and the construction of black women's ethics and theology. The term originated from Alice

firmly within the African American preaching tradition, Hall's womanism gave her a unique voice, boldly denouncing sexism and other forms of oppressive injustice. Hall brought authenticity to the pulpit, weaving scholarship, prophetic witness, and her experiences together in beautifully crafted poetic language. The message of the gospel was both personal salvation and social justice. For Hall, bridging the two was critical for preaching:

> God leads us, and all our gifts and energy and skills that we develop to declare the Good News of God in people and in the social world. For me, both of those are critical. If it is only the personal, it is not the Gospel. If it is only the social, it is not the Gospel. But it must be an integrated personal and social order where God is at work for justice and righteousness and salvation. The Good News is Christ. The Good News is Christ – that which stands in stark contrast and graphic opposition to bad conditions and human lives and in the social order. The Good News is possibilities where there have been dead ends. The Good News is life where there is death. The Good News is the Word of life which opposes death.[50]

In her "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff" sermon, Hall said: "For whatever it is that we who mount the sacred desk do when we come to the pulpit, if it is not good news to the poor, if it is not deliverance to the captives, if it is not sight to the blind, if it

---

Walker's *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*: "A black feminist or feminist of color....Usually referring to audacious, courageous, or *willful* behavior….Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female….Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless*" (Alice Walker, *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*, San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983, xi-xii). See also Katie G. Cannon, *Black Womanist Ethics* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 6-9; Katie G. Cannon, *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community* (New York: Continuum, 1997), 34-56, 122-138; Monica A. Coleman, *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), vii-9, 31-38; Marla F. Frederick, *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 5-14; Cheryl Townsend Gilkes, *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001), 184-211; Diana L. Hayes, *Hagar's Daughters: Womanist Ways of Being in the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 49-54; Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *Introducing Womanist Theology* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002), ix; Marcia Riggs, *Awake, Arise, and Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994), 1-8; Raquel A. St. Clair, *Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 1-12; JoAnne Marie Terrell, *Power in the Blood? The Cross in the African American Experience* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998), 6, 134; Delores Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), 1-8.

[50]Prathia Hall, quoted in Allen, 52.

is not freedom to the oppressed, it may be sweet, it may be eloquent, it may even be deep, but it ain't preachin'."[51]

Developing a Womanist Hermeneutic

While Hall had been raised reading the leading African American thinkers, her journey to womanism came through her experiences as a woman in ministry and through her education at Princeton Theological Seminary.[52] Hall initially resisted her call to preach because of her awareness of how difficult her ministry journey would be as an African American female.[53] After leaving the Movement, she continued to hold leadership roles in social justice organizations. By 1976, however, Hall could no longer resist her call to ministry and decided to pursue seminary education.[54] Through her experiences as a woman in ministry and her exposure to liberation theologies in her studies at Princeton Seminary, her womanist consciousness became very evident in her seminary coursework and her preaching.[55]

---

[51]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff," Undated, Prathia Hall Papers. Hall's sermon "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff" was transcribed by Hall's graduate student LaGretta Bjorn sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s. See Lyons, Interview by Bjorn. This sermon can also be found as Prathia Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff," 687-695, in *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*," edited by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010).

[52]Certainly, Hall's upbringing and experiences in the Movement also influenced her preaching. Her father introduced her to the writings of Howard Thurman, Constance Baker Motley, Mordecai Johnson, and other significant African American leaders. As Hall advanced her education, she became increasingly influenced by womanist authors such as Jacqueline Grant, Delores Williams, Katie Cannon, and Kelly Brown Douglas. She also read black liberation theologians such as James Cone, Henry Mitchell, and Gayraud Wilmore. Hall also had a number of preacher friends with whom she was close including Charles Adams, Jeremiah Wright, Samuel Proctor, and James Lawson.

[53]Prathia Wynn, "Accepting the Call to Leadership," *American Baptist*, (July/August 1987): 22.

[54]Hall, "Biographical Sketch."

[55]Significant attention to womanist themes in Hall's preaching follow in the next section. Prathia Hall's papers include several papers from her seminary education that demonstrated her burgeoning womanist consciousness. Identifying information listed where available: "The African American Church in

Hall's dissertation demonstrated her womanist consciousness. She examined the dilemma of the Women's Convention Auxiliary to the NBC, USA, Inc. having independent space, yet being subordinate to the male leadership of the NBC, USA, Inc.: "It was a predicament of often competing and conflicting loyalties to Christ, Church, denominational leadership, family, race, women, and self in which loyalty to others could result in disloyalty to self."[56] As a concrete example of this dilemma, Hall focused on the Nannie Helen Burroughs presidency of the WC and the battle for control of Burrough's National Training School for Women and Girls. Hall utilized a womanist social-ethical methodology in her assessment: "The womanist social-ethical approach seeks consciousness of the multidimensional oppressions which impact black women's social reality, with special attention to the primary forces of racism, sexism, and classism. Each dimension is complex, systemic, dynamic, and cumulative, creating a multiplier effect of racism times sexism times classism in black women's experience."[57] As Hall studied the WC within the African American church's advocacy for racial freedom, she illuminated the moral contradiction of that same church's perpetuation of oppression within itself. Her dissertation research merged her theological education with her own experiences as a

---

Historical Perspective," "The African American Hermeneutic in Conversation with The Philosophical Hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer," (Th.M. Thesis, 1984),"Exodus Interpretation in the African American Context," "Women in the African American Church and Community," "Convergence & Crisis: The Impact of Racism & Sexism on The African American Community" (a paper written for D.S. 57, Dr. Lois G. Livezey), "Theological/Educational Foundations for the Black Church's Ministry to Families," December 7, 1984. Hall utilized her Th.M. thesis in her later publication, Prathia Hall Wynn, "The Bible in the African American Context," In *Called to One Hope – The Gospel in Diverse Cultures*, edited by Christopher Duraisingh, 158-165, (Geneva: World Council of Churches Press, 1996).

[56]Prathia Hall, "The Religious and Social Consciousness of African American Baptist Women," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997): vii.

[57]Prathia Hall, "The Religious and Social Consciousness of African American Baptist Women," (PhD diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997): vii-viii.

woman in ministry, contextualizing her womanist identity, which decried racism, sexism, and classism and advocated for all human beings as made in the image of God.[58]

Hall's preaching covered a broad range of topics throughout her ministry career – many unique to her womanist perspective – yet her message always came back to the connection between faith and justice: "My womanist consciousness is so much a part of me that I bring it to the text. God has put this burden on me of justice – justice as an inclusive metaphor for preaching."[59] She invited her hearers to consider their experiences as part of a larger story of God's work in their lives and in the world around them, as Christians, as African Americans, and as bearers of freedom faith.

One point of brilliance in Hall's preaching was that she spoke boldly from her womanist hermeneutic, but with clear roots in the African American preaching tradition, making her radical message accessible and in line with the historic emphases of African American preaching. Michael Eric Dyson described Hall's unique style as a womanist preacher:

---

[58]Most of Hall's career was spent managing her illness, caring for her family members, and balancing her graduate studies with her teaching load, which did not leave her much time for publication. Hall had hoped to publish her dissertation. Her work continued the conversation begun by Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). In Prathia Hall's papers, I found a document titled "Project Description: Structural Ambiguity, Moral Contradiction, and the Work of Religious and Social Development in the Woman's Convention Auxiliary to the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., 1961-1998," indicating that Hall hoped to expand her own dissertation work in a book project. Her project description cited Higginbotham's *Righteous Discontent* and Hall's dissertation as the "two major documents on black Baptist women." Hall published a review of Higginbotham's work as Prathia Hall Wynn, "Called but Not Chosen Review of Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920." *The Women's Review of Books* 11, no. 12 (September 1994): 31-32. A number of the article drafts in Prathia Hall's Papers also drew on Hall's dissertation research. These documents include neither citation information nor indication of their intended use as article submissions, book chapters, or conference presentations. See "The African American Church at the Crossroad: Facing the Moral Challenge of Gender," "The Church at the Crossroad," "Woman's Space Woman's Place: Structural Ambiguity and Moral Dilemma in the Woman's Convention of the NBC USA, Inc." (1998), "Womanist Moral Leadership and Ecclesial Integrity, or, The Silencing of Women and The Crisis of Morality In the Church."

[59]Prathia Hall, Interview by Donna Allen, November 18, 1997, quoted in Allen, 50-51.

> Hall's powerful preaching introduced me to the genius of black female homiletical artistry. She interwove biblical narratives with stories from her pioneering career as a civil rights activist. Hall topped off her sermons with rhetorical flourishes and stylistic gestures gleaned from her Baptist brethren and refined in her feminist crucible. Her sermons also displayed a thrilling measure of tuneful speech, known colloquially as "the whoop" and more formally as "the changed sermon." As they say in such circles, she had "the learnin' and the burnin.'"[60]

Hall intentionally utilized techniques of the African American preaching tradition – pauses, crescendos, syncopation, repetition, alliteration, and the whoop – so that her message of womanist justice came across in continuity with that heritage "verbally, musically, harmonically," and particularly with its expression of "suffering and celebration."[61] Hall's African American preaching style is clearly evident in her "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff" sermon:

> "So go, sisters, with healing hands. GO with serving hands. GO with blessing hands because they emanate from loving, healing, blessing hearts. Go in the wilderness and at the edge of the cliff. Prepare the way of the Lord. For every valley has been exalted and every mountain and hill has been brought low. Oh, the rough places have been made smooth and the crooked places and crooked people have been straightened out. And all flesh, all flesh, shall see it together, the poor and the powerful, the pitiful, all flesh. The oppressed, depressed, suppressed, repressed, all flesh, shall see it together for the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.

---

[60]Michael Eric Dyson, "Freedom was foremost for Philly activist. Like King she inspired, gifted minister fought oppression wherever she found it," *Chicago Sun-Times*, August 20, 2002.
In my study of Hall's sermons, she occasionally mentions the Civil Rights Movement, most commonly the incident with Deputy Short in Sasser, GA in 1962, but the Movement does not appear to be a major theme of her preaching. One example of Hall's experiences in the Movement emerging in her preaching is the hemorrhaging woman approaching Jesus secretly. Hall writes that this moment in Mark 5 reminded her of when the police officer was shooting at her feet in Sasser. Hall's sermon developed the woman's awareness that "Jesus has the capacity to hear and to be touched by our suffering," which Hall believed is what inspired the woman's courage to touch Jesus in the crowd. Though she mentions an experience in the Movement, she does not develop the connection much and remains rather vague about even what happened. She speaks more broadly on the centrality of justice to the gospel message and the responsibility of all believers to remove the chains and live into the freedom we have in God. Prathia Hall, "Encountering the Text," 59-66 in *Power in the Pulpit: How America's Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare their Sermons*, edited by Cleophus J. Larue (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002): 63-64.

[61]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 65.

> Hallelujah to the lamb. Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah. Oh, thanks be to God."[62]

Hall also occasionally followed the African American homiletical pattern of preaching from Genesis to Revelation in one sermon. In "Journey with Jesus" (1990), she described the two disciples on the Emmaus road recognizing Jesus:

> Suddenly, they saw him. They knew him. They knew who he was. They knew where he'd come from. They knew suddenly they saw him as he is. Judah's Shiloh, Jacob's star, Deborah's wisdom, Jeremiah's balm in Gilead, Esther's courage, Zerubbabel's signet ring, Ezekiel's wheel, Israel's highway to God, Rachel's comforter, Mary's magnificat, Calvary's lamb, risen, risen, risen, risen, risen as he said. Oh, they saw him, and they knew him. The women were right. It was not gossip. It was gospel. The best news this sin-cursed world has ever heard. The Lord is risen.[63]

Hall's womanist hermeneutic valued a firm understanding of the past as critical for understanding the present: "When we learn our past – that we have already come through – then we are empowered with respect to what we must go through to cure the social ills of the twenty-first century."[64] Hall was unafraid to address death, domestic abuse, racism, financial difficulty, physical illness, disease, public policy, education, and sexism from the pulpit. She intentionally spoke to the reality of her listeners. Hall knew that her messages had to connect with the economic, cultural, and family hardships that her congregation faced on a daily basis. Comparing Hall to other recognized preachers, Jeremiah Wright said: "Prathia was infinitely better trained than nine-tenths of them and

[62]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff."

[63]Prathia Hall, "A Journey with Jesus," a sermon preached at Trinity UCC, Chicago, Illinois, May 15, 1990. She used the same kind of device at the end of this sermon, about Jesus' journey to earth, to the cross, and risen.

[64]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 66.

had a ministry that was an authentic ministry with integrity. No whistles or buzzers and the B.S. and hype – all solid, all genuine."[65]

Hall's style of preaching offered fresh and provocative readings of biblical texts, focused on social justice and equality, rooted in her womanist convictions. Donna Allen described Hall's deep engagement with the text using womanist hermeneutics: "As Hall interrogates the Scripture, she explains how others have misinterpreted the text through superficial and gender-biased translations. She then reclaims the text by exploring with the audience what a more 'accurate' interpretation reveals….Hall's rhetorical strategy demonstrates that just as Scripture has been used to oppress women, Scripture can be used to liberate women."[66]

For example, in Hall's "Beyond Eden" sermon (1989), Hall examined Genesis 1-3 in much detail and then asked her congregation: "So those theories and rationalizations that regard priority and hierarchy and order and domination have got to come from somewhere else. Did you see it anywhere in the text?" Hall offered a new understanding of humanity and of the consequences of sin.[67] Similarly, in Hall's "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life" (1999) sermon, she recognized that talking about menstruation might offend some, but she thought that "describing the issue of blood to my listeners, then the obvious would become profound":[68]

> Imagine this poor woman's condition – 365 days of checking for stains, worrying about overflow, and planning what she would wear based on what was happening in her body. Twelve years times twelve months – that is 4,380 days of life

[65]Jeremiah Wright, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 3, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX ; Bjorn, Interview by Lyons.

[66]Allen, 67.

[67]Prathia Hall, "Beyond Eden," 1989, Prathia Hall Papers.

[68]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 60-61.

> dominated by bleeding. Twelve years during which time every day was that time of the month. We do not know the specific duration of each hemorrhage, but suffice it to say that the sister had no rest. Twelve months times twelve years of bloating. Twelve years times twelve months of cramps. Twelve years times twelve months of light-headed weakness. Twelve years times twelve months of fabricating adequate sanitary protection first-century style. Twelve years times twelve months of raging hormones. Twelve years times twelve months of suffering.[69]

Hall defended the urgency of such sermonic honesty: "There are things in the Bible that women can explain in ways that men cannot. And that should be alright. Women in the congregation listen attentively to men preachers give football illustrations and boxing analogies. Surely men can listen and learn about what their wives and daughters go through….Women weren't supposed to talk like that, but I had dared to be brazen enough to tell their story."[70]

As Hall recast texts from the voices of women, she also subtly wove elements of her own life story into her sermons. In Hall's sermon on the hemorrhaging woman, her own experience of losing her daughter heavily influenced her depiction of the frantic father Jairus seeking Jesus. Hall explained: "Can you identify with him? I certainly can and on a very personal level. I buried a daughter, so I deeply feel his pain. It was essential to describe the urgency of time, and thus I describe him as stepping all over Jesus' toes and thinking, 'Come on Jesus, hurry! Can you get to my house now?'"[71]

In Hall's "When the Hurts Do Not Heal" sermon (1985), Hall echoed the same themes of God presently active with believers, saving people and systems: "Even if the pain does not leave you, I've learned that there is healing that transcends pain. Hurting is

[69]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 68.

[70]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 60-61.

[71]Hall, "Encountering the Text," 65.

not the last word." Clearly speaking from her womanist, Christocentric hermeneutic, Hall continued:

> Look at him, coming all the way from heaven down, down, down, down, down to where the hurts do not heal. Look at him. He didn't stop there. He's still coming up, up, up, up as a root out of the dry grass. Look at him this morning. Healing in his voice, healing in his face, healing in his clothes. Look at him. Healing crippled men and crippled lives, turning funerals into celebrations, wretchedness into pleasantness, and grief into grace. Look at him.[72]

Hall also offered examples of her theological struggle in times of suffering. Recalling the trauma of losing her father, living in the face of death in the Civil Rights Movement, her difficult divorce, and losing her daughter, Hall powerfully spoke about her lived experience of reconciling suffering with faith and of unconquerable hope. In "Journey with Jesus" as she described Cleopas and the other disciple traveling to Emmaus in grief, she asked her congregation: "Have you ever walked in their sandals, so preoccupied with your own pain, so preoccupied with your own misery, with your own burden, with your own cares that the Burden Bearer and the Heavy Load Sharer was actually in your presence but you could not see, and you did not know?"[73] Perhaps the sermon in which Hall most powerfully explored her suffering was "When the Hurts Do Not Heal" on the story of Job:

> Hurt hurts. Whether we've done it to ourselves as we sometimes do, whether mean and ungodly structures hurt us and deprive us, whether other human beings hurt us, when we hurt, we hurt. I found out, if you haven't, and if you haven't, I dare you to live, there are some heartaches in this world that the electrocardiogram doesn't know a thing about. There are some earthquakes that

[72]Prathia Hall, "When the Hurts Do Not Heal," Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, Detroit, MI, March 22, 1987, Prathia Hall Papers. This sermon is also available as Prathia Hall, "When the Hurts Do Not Heal." In *Those Preaching Women*, Vol. 2. Edited by Ella Pearson Mitchell, 95-102.

[73]Hall, "Journey with Jesus."

> will rock your life, but no scientist can measure it on the Richter scale. Hurt hurts.[74]

Advocacy for Women in Ministry

The clearest expression of Hall's womanism in her preaching was her radical advocacy for the full inclusion of women in ministry within African American religious circles. Even with awareness of the historical reasons why African American churches have elevated men's leadership – toleration of sexism for the sake of greater racial advances – Hall believed that the exclusion of women from leadership had taught women to be silent, "that child care and the kitchen were essentially our jobs." Explaining the significance of this message, Hall continued: "The psychology of this oppression is that (women) are taught to not have confidence. Many black men and women have bought into this by believing that (women) can be missionaries and evangelists but not pastors."[75] Hall boldly insisted that God's call to ministry was not limited to men, and that in order to be faithful witnesses to the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, the church had to be inclusive.[76]

---

[74]Hall, "When the Hurts Do Not Heal."

[75]Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother."

[76]Hall recognized key differences between white women's sense of gender equality and that of African American women. She explained to Barbara Ransby:

> For Black women, there's a kind of duality which was not based on any sense of woman as inferior or as a lesser being or second sex. There was none of that kind of stuff that white women dealt with. It was because of racism we saw and understood how Black men were demeaned and demonized in the press, were prohibited from having a strong voice in anything but the church, and there was a certain pride that Black women took in having strong, articulate Black men in positions of leadership. Now the rub, I think here, is that the guys never realized how much of their leadership was by the permission of women. For instance, you'll find very few pictures of me. It's just not my personality. And then of course, who was doing the interviewing? Usually the white male press. Who did they think were the important people to interview? Just like you said, when they interviewed Miss Baker, it was to find out about King or someone else….But what I am saying is that there was a kind of complicity among some Black women. Not all Black women felt the same way. (Prathia Hall, Interview by Barbara Ransby, 18.)

Hall's convictions about advocating for women in ministry and against any kind of oppression very much stemmed her own personal journey toward accepting her calling and rising out of racist and sexist circumstances. As a girl, the first woman Hall heard preach was Mary Watson Stewart of Detroit, about which Hall reflected: "There was absolutely no mistaking she was a preacher." Even so, when women preached, "they weren't called preachers." She said, "Even if they were preachers, they weren't called preachers." In her own ministry, many churches asked Hall to preach from the floor rather than behind the pulpit, or on a special Women's Day, because they would not accept a woman preacher on a traditional Sunday. Hall insisted to speak from the pulpit as a male would do, or she declined the invitation.

Hall recounted the ways churches had treated her during pastoral search processes. Even churches which had pursued her as a pastoral candidate ultimately called male preachers whom Hall considered "less competent, less qualified" than herself. More than once, she heard feedback from search committees that "she's excellent, if only she wore pants," or that if she were a man, she would have one of the most prestigious pulpits in the country. Though she pastored her father's church, Mt. Sharon Baptist Church, in Philadelphia from 1978 until her death in 2002, she hoped for the opportunity to advance to a larger church. In her entire career, even after her prestigious recognition by *Ebony*,

---

For more on Hall's interactions with feminism, see her review of Susan Thistlethwaite's *Sex, Race, and God: Christian Feminism in Black and White*, published as, Prathia Hall Wynn, "Toward a New Starting Point," *The Women's Review of Books* (1991): 25-26. Hall praised Thistlethwaite's awareness of the differences between white and non-white culture, particularly related to individualism versus communal identity (meaning psychological models may fall short with non-white women), class, family, and relationship with nature. Whereas white women typically rejected patriarchal notions of women's inferiority, this feminist notion may be inadequate for non-white women, whose experiences of oppression were often multi-layered and complex. Hall criticized the author's reluctance to acknowledge the racism inherent in the early women's movement. Hall's womanist convictions shone brightly in this review, and in many of her sermons.

Hall did not receive a single offer to pastor another church. She felt that larger churches sought her candidacy to dispel rumors of sexism, with no real intention of calling her to their pulpits.[77] While Hall was on the faculty of United, there were some nationally famous clergy who "diametrically opposed" women in ministry. During a Doctorate of Ministry seminar course in 1989, Dean Samuel DeWitt Proctor and Hall co-led a discussion on women in ministry. Jeremiah Wright, a student at the time, recalled the conversation: "It was a brouhaha. It got to be ugly….But Prathia stood her ground."[78]

Hall's womanist hermeneutic was Christocentric, which was extremely evident in her preaching. She commonly used the phrase "watch Jesus" or "look closely at Jesus" to guide her hearers into a deeper understanding of Jesus' teachings, particularly as this related to justice. At times, Hall overtly made the connection between her use of "watch Jesus" and womanist theology, as in this example from "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life":

> Throughout these two thousand years we have been told what women can and cannot do based on what this or that person said. Rarely have those who set the rules consulted Jesus. When they have even bothered to glance in his direction, they argue that there can be no women pastors and priests because there were no women among the twelve disciples. Yet this argument is absurd; there were no Gentiles among the twelve either. By that reasoning, we would disqualify just about every male in the pulpit today. The real problem of these gatekeepers is that they have not watched Jesus closely enough….Sisters, when gatekeepers claim that your gender disqualifies you from this role or that role, tell them to look at Jesus. Until they do, they do not have the whole story….Brothers, you go tell the brothers, when Jesus stops by and reverses longstanding socially and ecclesially

---

[77]Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother"; Goldwyn, "Pastor earns acclaim as lady of the house"; Ron Goldwyn, "Big churches hear but don't hire popular black female preacher," *Fort Worth Star Telegram*, December 13, 1997.

An alternative explanation for Hall never moving beyond Mount Sharon was her mother Ruby's ("Mother Hall") controlling hold on Hall. Presstonia Brown remembered Mother Hall pressuring Hall to stay at Mount Sharon to preserve what Hall's father had built and stay close to her extended family. See Brown, Interview by Lyons.

[78]Wright, Interview by Lyons.

> accepted ways of doing things, don't panic. Just believe. Jesus has blessings abundant for everybody."[79]

Elsewhere, Hall used her Christocentric, womanist phrase "watch Jesus" to decry the lie of surrendered identity which accompanied tolerated sexism. Comparing Satan's dialogue with Jesus during the temptation in the wilderness to the experience of women in ministry, Hall imagined what Satan might say to tempt a woman in ministry to surrender her identity:

> Preacher, if you are really God's anointed woman, just let me name you, let me form you, let me get you to dance my tune, let me get you to jump at my command, let me get you to do my tricks. Preaching woman, let me tell you who you are, where you belong, when and where you can preach. You can make a pretty good reputation just doing Women's Days. You'll be alright. Just stay in a woman's place. Stay in the woman's slot. Stay in the female box. Because if you will surrender your identity to me, I won't have to worry about God getting the glory out of your ministry. I won't have to worry about you fulfilling the dangerous mission to which God has called you. Bow down to me and sabotage the divine project, prove who you are.[80]

Later in the same sermon, Hall continued: "So, preachers, teachers, servants of God…don't you surrender your identity. Sister preacher, whether they believe you or not, you better know who you are."[81]

Mt. Sharon Baptist Church was historically affiliated with the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc., but in the 1980s, Hall transitioned Mt. Sharon to dual affiliation with the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC) and American Baptist Churches, USA (ABCUSA) because of their commitment to social justice issues. Hall chaired the Program Committee for the PNBC and served as PNBC delegate for the

---

[79]Hall, "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," 70. This sermon can also be found as Hall, Prathia. "Children. A Suffering Sister, Frantic Father, Dying Daughter: Encounters with Jesus." (Sermon given at Third Annual Center for Congregations and Family Ministries Conference. Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Louisville, KY: 1999).

[80]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff," in *Preaching with Sacred Fire,* 691-2.

[81]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff," in *Preaching with Sacred Fire,* 694.

World Council of Churches in Zimbabwe in 1998. Hall was also part of the ABCUSA Women and Men in the Community of Faith. Explaining her conscious decision to remain Baptist, Hall told a reporter in 1997: "The Baptist church is going to have to deal with me. Some of us have to remain in the recalcitrant church. Everything we know about God is that the living God is not a bigot."[82]

Hall knew full well that staying Baptist meant she would be fighting a deep-seated racism and sexism, without traditional denominational backing. Hall explained the effects of racism on African American church leadership: "The pulpit has been the place where the black community has had strong male leadership…that could be independent in dealing with racial and economic issues within the community, because the pastor is paid by that congregation and has a certain freedom. It's also an issue because of the larger number of single-parent families and what it means to have a strong male image in the pulpit." Nevertheless, Hall recognized that this traditionally Baptist independence had become a congregational polity excuse to continue the exclusion of women from pulpits.[83] For Hall, the inclusion of women in ministry was part of the larger problem of oppression. She told a reporter, "Ministers have a responsibility to stand against racism, sexism, ageism – all the '-isms' that put people down. It's not a ministry if it doesn't liberate us."[84]

Hall also believed that denominational leaders – Baptists and beyond – might say that congregations were not ready for women in ministry when in reality the

---

[82]Goldwyn, "Pastor earns acclaim as lady of the house."
Hall was most involved with the ABCUSA and the PNBC. She was on committees of both organizations and frequently spoke at their national gatherings.

[83]Wynn, "Accepting the Call to Leadership," 24-25.

[84]Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother."

denominational leaders were the ones who were not ready. Hall insisted that pulpit committee advisors, Baptist association and conference leaders, and denominational leaders needed to be intentional about helping qualified women find pulpits. Hall compared "the scandal of sexism" to "racism and classism as another idolatry." Referring to the Civil Rights Movement in a 1987 interview, Hall said: "In the 1970s the church woke up and confessed its sin of racism. There has to be a similar confession from males – black and white, Asian, Hispanic and Native American – about the sins of sex idolatry."[85] In the same interview, when asked pointedly whether African American Baptist men were bigots, Hall answered: "I have to call it what it is. This gender based exclusion is bigotry, and they blame it on God and say God ordained it. That is outrageous. The church has to be purged of that oppression."[86]

Hall's "Beyond Eden" sermon, which she often preached at revivals throughout her career, offered a scholarly, yet accessible, examination of human creation in which "God created them together in harmony, in physicality, in beauty, in solidarity, and in equality."[87] She continued: "So when we come together to that part of the story that talks about thorns and thistles and blaming all that kind of stuff, God is not prescribing this behavior as some way for human beings to relate to each other….The divine prescription is back there in 1:26 and 27, created together in the image of God."[88]

Oppression and hierarchy are the consequences of human sin, not part of God's plan for humanity, Hall explained. She blamed gender hierarchy on sin: "Sin is what sin

[85]Wynn, "Accepting the Call to Leadership," 24-25.

[86]Wynn, "Accepting the Call to Leadership," 27.

[87]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

[88]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

does. You know what sin is. Sin alienates. Sin separates. Sin destroys. Sin dominates. Sin has us not liking each other. Sin has us using each other. Sin has us abusing each other."[89]

Banished from Eden, Hall compared Adam and Eve's new existence to life in the refugee camp. She lined her sermon with repetition of the phrase "In the refugee camp, life became miserable." She described this bondage / refugee camp doctrine of distorted humanity: "In the refugee camp, woman became a scapegoat for sin….In the refugee camp, the rabbis taught little boys to pray every day, 'I thank God I was not born a woman.' In the refugee camp, woman became nothing but a childbearing piece of property…owned by her father, sold to her husband, and passed on in death to the husband's elder brother." Hall used Mary's Magnificat to transition from refugee camp to redemption: "Thanks be to God, God did not abandon us in the refugee camp mess….Somewhere around the borders of the camp, I hear a little country girl from Nazareth singing a brand new song." Hall continued that though redemption had come, refugee camp doctrine lingered among the people:

> Many of us refuse to be rescued…Our girls have been led to believe that they got to go along to get along, that they're just pieces of meat, just flesh, just a body, and that's really all that counts. And our boys have been led to believe that they are birds and bees and butterflies just roaming from flower to flower to flower to flower. What is the culprit here? The culprit is that in the refugee camp, we have arrived at a distorted understanding of personhood, and therefore a distortion of personality and relationality. And so we have exalted the genital fixations of a sick and sinful culture to the level of a theology and then dare to blame that bigotry on God.[90]

Hall spared no courtesy in rejecting sexism: "Sexism is a liar….Sisters, we know the lies that it tells on us. That we're not too bright, and you know we're kind of a divine

[89]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

[90]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

afterthought and we're either the temptress and the whore or we're the Madonna and neither one is real." Men suffer from sexism, too, Hall explained:

> It says that you are so weak and so insecure that you cannot deal with us as God created us. You cannot deal with our minds and our spirits and our gifts and our talents, so you've got to create little biological boxes that say, 'My biology is this way, and therefore I belong here, and I can do this, and I can do that, and your biology is that way and you belong here and you can do this.' Brothers, that's a lie![91]

When Christians live according to the lie of sexism, they "behave as if Jesus Christ had never come." Living in bondage doctrine, in refugee camp doctrine, "flies in the face of our rescuer." Speaking to the particular tragedy of sexism within the African American community, Hall continued: "It's tearing us apart. It has black men over in one corner, trying to survive against the odds in their own private hell, and black women and black children over here in another corner trying to survive against all kinds of odds in their own hell. We won't survive like that." Jesus the liberator has rescued the captives:

> So thanks be to God for the rescue mission. God's got something better for us. God has a way for us to relate to each other that is not by our fist, not cutting each other up with our tongue, not putting each other down, not finger pointing, not scapegoating….We can't go back to Eden. But thanks be to God, we can go beyond Eden." Comparing old creation to new creation, Hall celebrates that though humanity has sinned against gender harmony, new creation has come, and "thanks be to God, we are rescued from the refugee camp. We are new creation.[92]

Hall's womanism shone as she challenged men to stop competing against women: "God made you beautiful. God made you fine. God made you strong. And God did the same thing for us." Emphasizing inclusive community over oppressive hierarchy, Hall continued: "And God knows if ever there was a time when we needed each other, we need every man, every woman, every boy, every girl, every child, every senior, we need

[91]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

[92]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

it all. We need to be shoulder to shoulder, arm in arm, hand in hand, working together to redeem our communities. Working together to rescue our children."[93]

Hall often spoke candidly about the experiences of women in ministry being dismissed or marginalized. Her "A Journey with Jesus" (1990) sermon made this point in the disciples' treatment of the women who first announced Christ's resurrection. Whereas the disciples thought they knew Jesus, they ignored the most important news about Jesus:

> Perhaps if they would have received the report of the women, perhaps they would have known the Lord is risen. He is risen, indeed. Prejudice and pain left them broken, blinded, and ignorant. The report of the women disturbed them, but it could have delivered them. But, they were blinded by bigotry….And my sisters and my brothers this was not to be the last time that the Gospel would be missed…and many of us…and still missing the Gospel, because God chooses a messenger who is woman.[94]

At the 1992 National Dialogue Conference of the Kelly Miller Smith Institute on African American Church Studies at Vanderbilt Divinity School (KMSI), addressing the question of "What does it mean to be Black and Christian?" Hall drew a standing ovation after her address to more than 200 church leaders. She said that Black churches "defy God and curse Christ" when they practice sexism, which is anything from excluding women from leadership to tolerating humor which demeans women. She clearly established the mutual exclusivity of sexism and Christian discipleship: "You can't be a disciple of Jesus and harbor sexism in your heart."[95] Hall's comments at the meeting clearly made her point:

> Sexism in the Church represents a theological scandal. It exalts the genital fixations and sexual distortions of the culture to the level of a false theology and

[93]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

[94]Hall, "A Journey with Jesus."

[95]Ray Waddle, "Black churches harbor sexism, minister charges," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 24, 1992.

> dares to blame that bigotry on God….The scandal is even more outrageous when we who have been victims of the idolatry of racism, and know its abuse, stoop to practice the kindred idolatry of sexism….Any authentic dialogue between Black women and men will reveal that sexism is a problem; real, pervasive, and destructive to our individual and collective existence.[96]

In an interview during the KMSI, Hall told reporters, "You know well that sexism is a demon that must be exorcised from our churches and first from our homes….Gender-based oppression isn't a trivial inconvenience. It's human devastation, a sin God takes very seriously."[97] Hall made it plain:

> The lie that sexism tells about women and the lie it tells about men, these are not the worse lies. The most bodacious lie that this demon tells is the lie that it tells on God. For you see we lift this reasoning to the level of a theology and claim that God said it, that God ordained it, and I feel tonight God's fist in my back saying, 'Preacher, I'm tired of folk lying on me!' The living God is not a bigot.[98]

Hall said that when African American men would tell her that they did not understand sexism or remained insensitive to sexism, she boldly responded, "If you've experienced racism, then you have a framework for understanding sexism, so don't tell me you don't understand." Hall made the connection explicit: "Brothers, you need to understand what the fallout is. Seventy to 80% of your church members are women, and stuff you carelessly say bruises and batters. Many women are being battered from the pulpit for their faithfulness to the church."[99] In addition to its spiritual abuse, Hall also

---

[96]Prathia Hall, co-author, "A Call to a National Dialogue: The Challenge of a Black Theology to the African American Church," Kelly Miller Smith Institute on African American Church Studies, (Nashville, TN, 1992), 14-16.

[97]Ray Waddle, "Black churches harbor sexism, minister charges," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 24, 1992.

[98]Hall, "Beyond Eden."

[99]Ray Waddle, "Pastor says sexism sin that defies God," *The Tennessean*, October 21, 1992.

said that this prejudice "tacitly signaled to young people that violence against women is okay."[100]

In an article (1996) offering a womanist perspective on the 1995 Million Man March, Hall affirmed the progress of African American men in asserting their own identity. She also acknowledged the double edged sword of sexism within the African American church since women have struggled to keep their sons safe and African American men have not been "allowed sufficient space for them to take personal responsibility for themselves." Even so, Hall concluded:

> I must make it abundantly clear that while as a black woman I could understand and support the March of Men on October 16, the survival and liberation of our community requires the equal partnership of black men and black women in the family, in the church and in the community. There is no place in our forward-movement for misogyny too often demonstrated by some march organizers. The hatred of women, however dressed it may be in chivalrous garb, is absolutely destructive to women, men, and children. It must be totally purged from the hearts, minds, and practice of all who will function effectively in the continuing struggle for liberation.[101]

Addressing the source of the God-ordained-sexism argument in a newspaper interview after preaching a revival at Union Baptist Church in Swissvale, PA (1997), Hall referenced misinterpretation of the creation narrative in Genesis as the source of the "bondage doctrine" that blames women for sin and gives men license to treat women like property. Hall spoke against the idea that African American men must "rule their house by any means necessary," which she said "creates havoc in the black community" and "destroys any basis for relationships to have harmony, passion and common goals."[102]

---

[100]Prathia Hall, quoted in Ray Waddle, "Black churches harbor sexism, minister charges," *St. Petersburg Times*, October 24, 1992.

[101]Prathia Hall-Wynn, "Transcendent Power: A Black Woman's Perspective on the Million Man March," *Sojourners*, January-February, 1996, 23.

[102]Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother."

Hall said that "God created humankind, not m-a-n kind. Our maleness and our femaleness both reflect something of the nature of God."[103] Consistent with her womanist hermeneutic, Hall insisted that "If we continue to ignore the maternal and feminine in Scripture then we have a distorted view of humanity."[104]

At the 1999 National Baptist Convention, Hall was "vexed by the absence of even a single [female] candidate for president." She explained that until local churches start calling women as pastors, women will continue to be excluded from denominational leadership. Hall also explained that Mt. Sharon Baptist Church remained a non-member of the National Baptist Convention explicitly because of its failure to have women in top leadership positions.[105]

Preaching Justice and Liberation

Hall's womanism expressed itself in her preaching even when she was not advertently discussing gender issues. Her preaching emphasized themes of justice and liberation and insisted that the message of Jesus rejected oppression and hierarchy. As Hall exegeted the biblical text, she reflected on whether the text was authored in a context of racism, sexism, or classism and whether the text has been used to propagate oppression. She questioned whether the text reflected God's will or rather things humans do in the name of God. She described her interaction with the text as:

> an interrogatory conversation with the congregation and the text. I walk around in the text. I cannot take a verse out of context. We come to the text with our

[103]Goldwyn, "Pastor earns acclaim as lady of the house."

[104]Dyer, "Heeding the call of a divine mother."

[105]William R. Macklin, "Black church lags in women leadership – Fiscal problems take precedence for Baptists," *Star-Ledger*, September 12, 1999.

The National Baptist Convention's top leadership feared that developing female leadership might divide the convention and pose a financial risk for the organization.

> baggage. We cannot become neutral – we bring our social location, concerns, and presuppositions to the text. We need to knowingly be up front about that. So we interrogate the text. Sometimes the text is absurd. I believe that the Word of God is in the text and is not imprisoned in the paper. It is in the text. And in the process, the prayerful preacher is assisted by the Holy Spirit in dialogue with the text. And if you question the text long enough, it will begin to interrogate you. Then this is the stuff that preaching is made of.[106]

One of the ways Hall's sermons proclaimed justice was by bringing marginalized characters to the foreground, challenging traditional assumptions that her hearers might bring to the text. For example, in "When the Hurts Do Not Heal," Hall rescued Job's wife from condemnation as the selfish wife who challenged Job's obedience to God as Hall's sermon explored Job's wife suffering, loss, and relationship with God:

> We have been beating up Mrs. Job for as long as this story has been told. Perhaps we condemn her so vicariously because she reminds us so much of ourselves. But you won't mind, will you, if this preacher has a word to say for Sister Job? Let us walk a mile in Mrs. Job's shoes. Everything that Job lost, she lost. A woman had no property of her own. She had no identity of her own. She was the servant of her family – the servant of her husband. The sons and daughters, which Job lost, she lost. She bore those children. They were her children, too. She brought them into the world. She nursed them and nurtured them and guided them and now, grieved for them! Sister Job hurt. And is there any hurt more grievous – God knows, I know of what I speak – standing by the bedside of a loved one in unrelieved pain? Watching and knowing the helplessness of your watching. Willing even to exchange places with them and knowing that even that is impossible. And how many of us on that same bed of affliction have said to God, "I have had enough God! Take my life and get it over with!"? I am simply suggesting that Sister Job did not regard God lightly. She knew that the living God would always vindicate the Holy Name. She took God very seriously. Sister Job was desperate because her hurt would not heal.[107]

Similarly, in "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," Hall gave voice to the unnamed hemorrhaging woman healed by touching Jesus, examining how others had defrauded her, like the doctors who had been taking her money for years while making

---

[106]Hall, Interview by Allen, Allen, 58-59.

[107]Prathia Hall, "When the Hurts Do Not Heal," a sermon preached at Trinity UCC, Chicago, Illinois, 21 May 1989.

her condition worse or her community who rejected her as unclean. But Jesus "was neither queasy nor offended by the fountain of her blood," and his "healing fountain" reversed "her fountain of seemingly endless, painful, foul-smelling flow."[108] Instead of rebuking her for contaminating him or requiring her to be purified, Jesus "pauses to commend her faith and to grant her salvation and Shalom."[109]

Hall's "Broken by the Blessed" (1997) sermon emphasized Paul's message to the Corinthian church about classism, drawing out liberation themes: "You are consumed with silly factionalism as if Christ could be divided. You are observing and exalting class lines and barriers which have no place in the house of God. Some of you are feasting high on the cow or the lamb while others of you are starving. You are not gathering to remember the broken body, the spilled blood of the Lord. You have turned the meal of sacred memory into a private party."[110] Hall rephrased Paul's message in her womanist blend of gospel and social justice:

> When we eat the bread without discerning, without seeing, without considering, without meditating upon, without judging our own conduct according to the profound meaning of the body, we once again break the body of our blessed Lord. And who does the breaking? We, who are the blessed, again, and again, and again break the body and bleed the Christ whenever we allow the bigotry and factionalism and sectarianism and denominationalism and classism and racism and sexism and ageism and any of all of the myriad ways we have found to separate, segment, stratify, distort, and destroy the body of Christ, we who are called by his name, preserved through his body, saved by his blood, and blessed by his life, death, and resurrection once again take the spikes and the hammer of the crucifiers, take the scourger's lash and in our own hands, break and break and break and break again and again and again the sinless body of our Lord.… This is a critical challenge to the contemporary church. Our clubs, our cliques, our

[108]Hall, "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," 70.

[109]Hall, "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," 71.

[110]Prathia Hall, "Broken by the Blessed," 1997, Prathia Hall Papers.
Typical of her merging of eloquence with colloquialism, Hall said: "They loved a high time in the Lord, but when the substance of their faith was tested by the evidence of their Christian living, it was found to be tissue paper thin."

> bondage doctrine, which rationalizes sexism and dares to blame that bigotry on God, does not just harm people. They again break and bruise and bleed the blessed body of our Lord. [111]

Hall's "Captivity's Capture" sermon (1998) argued that since Christ captured captivity, the church was tasked with removing the chains. After elaborating on the disproportionate incarceration rate of black men, the high rate of unwed pregnancy of black women, and the failure of older generations to faithfully convey the strength and accomplishments of Black heritage, Hall challenged the church to take responsibility in spreading the liberating message of the gospel:

> You know we get lazy as Christians, and we want to have a good time in the church and then send the Lord in the streets. Send the Lord to the crack house. Send the Lord to the prison. No, that's why God saved you. No long-handled spoon. You've gotta get down and dirty. You've gotta get up close and personal. You've got to be heart to heart, hand to hand, life to life. People will know you love them because you are there with them. You are present with them in their struggle. You are present with them as they are going through….We have work to do, and our work is the work of chain removal.[112]

Hall continued that when the church kept itself in chains with stratification, this task became impossible: "Now some of us cannot be about the work of chain removal for we are stepping over too many captives in the church. The church seems always to be plagued by some little cliques and some little crowds that want to hold folk down, want to keep people in their place and got little organized boxes in which you put folk." Any place where prejudice lingered, the church rejected Christ and Christ's work in the world:

> And in some places it's racism. In some places, it's sexism. In some places, it's ageism. In some places, it's heterosexism. Yes, I said that. Anything, any –ism that we can divide to separate us from each other and try to keep people from being the very human beings that God intended them to be, we can't set captives

[111]Hall, "Broken by the Blessed."

[112]Prathia Hall, "Captivity's Capture," Omega Baptist Church, Dayton, OH, March 9, Undated, Prathia Hall Papers.

> free if we're clinging to captivity. Sometimes we don't' want our own chains moved: "Leave me alone! I like my mess. Leave me alone!"[113]

To faithfully live the gospel, according to Hall's womanist hermeneutic in "Broken by the Blessed," the church must work together to accomplish this new chainless, equilateral social order. The church best imitated the ministry of Christ by functioning as *one* body, proclaiming the gospel:

> When I hear folk talk about what women can't do and what men must do and where those folk out there belong, it grieves my heart. It saddens my spirit. It grieves my soul. They are breaking the Christ. When I hear them, my soul is bowed down. But oh thanks be to God, the Spirit of the Lord brings good news. The spirit of the Lord brings great news….The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. God's mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. Our God is faithful. Our God is true. Our God is our strength. Our God is our capacity to change. Our God is love. Our God makes it possible for us to love. Our God does not send us to battle alone. Our God is our strong tower. Our God marches before us. Our God marches behind us. Our God marches with us. Our God works through us. Our God is a compassionate savior. We can pass the Christ test. We will pass the Christ test. Bigotry in the church shall fall. We shall be the people that God calls us to be. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujhah. Hallelujah.[114]

Hall's womanism compelled her to speak against the multi-layered prejudice within the African American church, including sexism, racism, classism, ageism, and heterosexism. In "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," Hall exhorted that those who claim Christianity must be actively doing justice:

> Let us keep our eyes on Jesus, for he specializes in radical reversals. He not only repudiates physical and spiritual death, he turns around the social structures of death. Let us watch Jesus and turn our world right side up. Let us turn around police abuse, child abuse, brutality against women, and brutality against men. Turn around homophobia and xenophobia. Turn around sexism, classism, ageism, and colorism in the African American church and the African American community. Let us turn our world right side up.[115]

---

[113]Hall, "Captivity's Capture."

[114]Hall, "Broken by the Blessed."

[115]Hall, "Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life," 72-73.

Hall addressed why the church sometimes ignored the liberating message of the gospel in her "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff" sermon. As Jesus read from the Isaiah scroll, announcing his ministry, the congregation turned on him. Hall explained: "But how did they hear him? They should have heard him gladly. Wouldn't you think? They were poor. They were blind. They were captive. He brought good news. It sounded mighty good. Mmm, Joseph's boy sure can tell it." But Jesus' good news was not heard as such because, according to Hall, the gospel always involved a radical reversal of the kingdom of this world: "Remember that good news to some is always bad news to somebody else. Good news to the poor is bad news to the rich who keep the poor, poor. Deliverance to the captive is judgment to those who hold them captive. Sight to the blind is disaster to those who exploit their blindness."[116]

The church in chains surrendered its identity as children of God, according to Hall: "And surrendered identity is worse than stolen identity, when we lay it down. Ask Clarence Thomas and the pseudo-conservatives about it. They have checked their African American identity at the door to drink at the trough of oppressive power and have made a deal with Satan to destroy freedom's struggle and sabotage the divine project."[117] As she did often, Hall addressed the temptation of surrendered identity for African American youth: "Parents, if we could only convince our children of who they are. Then they would know that they are too rare, too lovely, too precious in the sight of God and in our own sight…that they are our only hope of a future…that they are too valuable, too important, too irreplaceable to take their lives so lightly." When Christians surrendered their

[116]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff."

[117]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff."

identity, they traded the gospel for oppressive lies: "Lord help us, because if we will allow Satan to form our identity, the battle has been lost."[118]

Throughout Hall's preaching, she proclaimed the liberating power of the gospel against oppression and suffering. Her "Captivity's Capture" sermon clearly stated this freedom faith that as those in the church worked in cooperation with each other, God worked through the church:

> Wherever you go, if you go North or you go South, if you go East or you go West, Jesus Christ has already been there. He's already been there, already fought the battle. The victory's already won. And that he ascended and also descended means that there is no unconquered space. Wherever we go, wherever captivity rears its ugly head, it is a liar. It is a fraud. It posters a power it does not possess because Jesus Christ has already been there, taken captivity and shaken it, taken out its power and made it a captive….And so, whatever your chains are, shake 'em off. The power has been broken. Hallelujah, hallelujah. We can save our children. We can save our streets. We can have a future. Why? Because when he ascended, he also descended and took captivity capture and caused death to die. So we got work to do. Let's roll up our sleeves, sisters. Brothers, we can't do this one by ourselves. These are mean streets. We need you with us, hand in hand, heart to heart, arm in arm. We're gon' do it together. God will honor our togetherness. We got to remove these chains, get 'em out of the church first, sweep the church, leave 'em at the altar, clear the balcony, get rid of the chains, and then let's do our job. Let's hit the streets marching for Zion, claiming lives, building people. We've got work to do, but it can be done. Our victory is assured.[119]

---

[118]Hall, "Between the Wilderness and a Cliff."

Betty Garman Robinson remembered seeing Hall preach in Baltimore sometime in the late 1990s or early 2000s. When Robinson heard that Hall would be in town, she made a point to be there. The neighborhood was steeped in drug trade and a strong cultural tendency toward "external symbol[s] of importance" such as gold teeth, gold chains, and gold rings. Robinson remembered Hall's sermon speaking against materialism, inviting the congregation to a deeper spirituality and embrace of values and character. (Betty Garman Robinson, Interview by Courtney Lyons, Prathia Hall Special Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, May 4, 2010.)

In "A Nightmare in Broad Daylight" (1998), Hall likened surrendered identity to living in chains. If the church is tasked with chain removal, the church must remember its identity as children of God: "So my sisters and my brothers, as you view this midnight, this nightmare in broad daylight, don't despair. Just remember who you are. Just remember whose you are. Just remember the battle has already been fought. The victory has already been won. Your job is chain removal. So take on every enemy. Take on death, sickness, and disease. Do battle. Make it hand to hand, heart to heart, shack to shack, tenement to tenement, and life to life." See Prathia Hall, "A Nightmare in Broad Daylight," March 29, 1998, Allen Temple Baptist Church, Oakland CA, Prathia Hall papers.

[119]Hall, "Captivity's Capture."

Hall's womanist preaching expressed her freedom faith that even as believers faced oppression and suffering, God was faithfully present in the lives of believers. Her "The Church under Construction" (1988) sermon offered a powerful encouragement to the church as it went about the work of chain removal:

> Christ is working in you. The project is his. The process is his. We are his. And Christ does not abandon churches under construction. Christ starts the work and keeps on working. In fact it is God working in us to will and do of God's good pleasure….Now, look who we've got. We've got Jesus Christ, the visible expression of the invisible God. We've got Jesus Christ the anointed one, the risen one, the ascended one. Jesus Christ, the hope of earth and the joy of heaven, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever, Jesus Christ, Lord of the universe, Lord of the church, king of heaven, bishop of our souls, Jesus Christ, fairest of 10,000, rose of Sharon, lily of the valley, dayspring from on high, bright and morning star, working in us, working in you, great pastor, great people, great project, in progress, church under construction….God does not do half-done work. The God who has begun a work in you will keep on working, will not stop working, until, not until the day of Jesus Christ.[120]

Even as Hall acknowledged the difficulty of maintaining freedom faith in suffering, she remained convinced that God would be faithful to those who worked for justice and liberation, that nothing could defeat those who worked for justice and liberation. In "An Outrageous Assertion," Hall connects the realities of human suffering with the outrageous assertion of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:1 ("For we know that if this earthly house we live in is destroyed, we have another building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."):

> When our grief is breaking our hearts and tears flow down our faces in defiance of our own will and it seems that we can neither speak nor bear the pain we are feeling, when the stress and strain of life has pushed us to the walls and our nerves are frayed, we are feeling hassled. Our heads hurt. And tension has made our bodies taunt, and tied us up in tight little knots and we're even too spaced out to read Scripture and bad news has distorted our ability to receive any news at all. And then from somewhere…this outrageous assertion….What is it about this bold assertion that stops us in our grief, unties the knots of our anxious, stress-ridden

[120]Prathia Hall, "Church Under Construction," Grace Church, September 22, 1988, Prathia Hall Papers.

> nervous system, calms our most ferocious fears and wherein only moments ago we were sobbing in an uncontrollable manner, hurting with hurts so horrendous that they would not heal, and now, mysteriously, unexplainedly, we are not only calm, but we feel a shout coming on. Grief is transcended by grace, terror by triumph, and we have been changed instantaneously from victim to victor. [121]

Hall's womanist preaching style focused on this transformation from victim to victor, emphasizing the power of the gospel to save people and systems. Those with freedom faith could not be defeated:

> Pain and problem and trouble and sorrow and despair and defeat, tears, separation, grief, sickness, cancer, stroke, coronary failure, mental illness, dope addiction, street violence, domestic violence, wars and lost children are not the last word. Aging and arthritis, dying and burying are not the last word….This knowledge, precious knowledge, calms our tears and fears, strengthens our resolve, even heals our affliction. This knowledge assures us that whatever it is that is depressing us: racism, sexism, economic oppression, dope addiction, nicotine, demeaning, dehumanizing relationships, our own weakness, our own hang ups, our own mess ups, our own faults, our own failures have no ultimate power over us….The Spirit speaks to us saying, 'Get up, dust off your clothes, you are not defeated unless you give up.[122]

Hall's freedom faith convinced her that though there are sorrows and difficulties in this life, fear does not have the final word. In "An Outrageous Assertion," Hall spoke from her experiences of losing family members, her difficult divorce, and enduring physical injury and illness as she allowed for uncertainty in this life even as she kept her faith in God:

> And now I say to you that I do not know what God has in store for me, but I do know that every time despairing, destroying, demeaning, defeating experiences in this tent threaten to overwhelm me, then the Spirit speaks to me and tells me that it is not me that is suffering. It is not me despairing. It's just this earthly tent, this earthly tent that houses me….Sickness cannot destroy you. Sorrow cannot conquer you. Enemies cannot defeat you…I do not know about tomorrow. I don't know, it may bring be poverty, oh, but the one who feeds the sparrows, that's the

[121]Prathia Hall, "An Outrageous Assertion," Undated, Prathia Hall Papers. This sermon was transcribed by LaGretta Bjorn in the late 1990s and was included in a collection of three transcribed sermons in Prathia Hall's papers.

[122]Hall, "An Outrageous Assertion."

> one who stands by me. I don't know about tomorrow, my path may be through storm or flood, but I'm anchored, yes, I'm anchored in my Jesus, and I'm washed in his blood. Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand, oh, but I know who holds tomorrow, and I know he holds my hand. 'For we know that if this earthly house we live in be destroyed, we have another building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Thanks be to God. Hallelujah and amen.[123]

Prathia Hall's Legacy

Hall was a role model and mentor for hundreds of young clergywomen. When Teresa Fry-Brown surveyed black clergywomen in 2008 concerning their primary female ministry mentors, Prathia Hall and two of Hall's students were among the top five.[124] Of the fifteen women named in *Ebony's* 1997 list of top African American women preachers, eight were graduates of United Theological Seminary or affiliated with the seminary in some way, the seminary where Hall was Dean of African American Studies and the Director of the Harriet Miller Center for Women in Ministry. Because of Hall's powerful preaching, social justice activism, and prophetic voice against domestic abuse, sexism, and other forms of injustice, she inspired a generation of young clergywomen. She modeled pulpit power without forsaking her femininity, and she appealed to listeners' minds and hearts.

Hall was the first woman that Rev. LaGretta Bjorn saw preach. Bjorn, now pastor of a United Methodist Church in Trenton, New Jersey, called the sermon, "Preach to the Stump," and "could not believe the power and the presence that she has….I was just mesmerized." When Bjorn began studying at United, Hall was the only African American female faculty at the seminary, so Bjorn and many others flocked to Hall: "She was

[123]Hall, "An Outrageous Assertion."

[124]Teresa Fry-Brown, *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help? Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry* (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 2008).

somebody I wanted to teach me everything she knew." Hall was Bjorn's most influential preaching mentor, someone who embodied both social justice and the gospel in her preaching and her life.[125]

Fry-Brown recognized that Hall's calling to social justice and her calling to preach were fully intertwined, that her activism came from a deep spirituality: "Her womanist sensibilities were most evident in the doing, her presence, her head up, eyes fixed carriage even when her back ached, rather than talking. More praxis than mere discourse." Fry-Brown felt an instant connection with Hall as a spiritual mother and ministry mentor:

> I was immediately struck by the measured warmth of her voice, the womanly gentleness of her pulpit presence even in the 'hoop' at the end, her big sister hand on top of my hand as she spoke connecting our souls, the way her eyes took in the entire person as if only the two of us were in conversation in the midst of many and her honesty in self disclosure, not as bragging but as Mother Wit. Her pastor's heart was ever present even when she was in pain or overburdened.[126]

Vanessa Ward, co-pastor of Omega Baptist Church in Dayton, Ohio with her husband Daryl, similarly reflected on Hall's influence and inspiration as a ministry mentor:

> I have to say that the late Rev. Prathia Hall-Wynn, a pastor and theologian who became a personal friend, meant so much to me. She spoke in Philadelphia when my husband, Daryl, was in seminary. I was in my 20s and I had never seen a woman stand in such strength and power. She spoke at a conference with mostly males present and her strong voice fighting for social justice commanded the room. She said that God called her to do this for the people and the community. I

---

[125]Bjorn, Interview by Lyons.

Because Bjorn had been a practicing lawyer before returning to seminary, she was more mature than many of her student peers. Bjorn spoke of Hall the way Hall spoke of Ella Baker as a young woman in SNCC. I could not find any surviving recordings or transcripts of "Preach to the Stump" in Prathia Hall's papers.

[126]Teresa Fry-Brown, Interview by Jessica Davenport, March 31, 2010, http://prathiasdaughters.wordpress.com/2010/07/22/remembering-rev-prathia-an-interview-with-rev-dr-teresa-fry-brown/ (accessed 10/10/2013).

> often quote her words, and try to follow in her steps. She was a phenomenal woman, graceful and gracious.[127]

In 2010, Jessica Davenport created a network for African American women in ministry called "Prathia's Daughters."[128] Women in ministry who are concerned with social justice connect through this online community to share testimonies, inspiration, and celebrations of their work. Prathia's Daughters' network:

> seeks to continue the historical legacy of Rev. Prathia and many other women in ministry whose social activism and concern for socio-political issues went hand-in-hand with their role in the church. They were women in ministry who saw the injustices and oppression in their communities and believed that God had something to say about it; women in ministry who knew that if a change was going to come in the church and in their communities, they would have to be the ones to bring it forth.[129]

For Prathia Hall, the call to ministry was both "her glory and her burden."[130] She struggled for a great deal of her adolescence and early adulthood between her call to ministry and the harsh reality of being a woman in ministry. She served on the front lines of the civil rights movement, witnessed suffering and unexplainable courage, and lived in ever-present danger. Surrendered to her call, she faced immense personal obstacles as she pursued her education and career. She lost many loved ones including the tragic deaths of her father, brother, and daughter. Her divorce was long, difficult, and expensive. Torn by both the call to preach and the need for additional income, Hall often accepted preaching

---

[127]Vanessa Ward, quoted in Dale Huffman, "Powerful speech a pivotal one," *Dayton Daily News*, February 25, 2006.

[128]Jessica Davenport, "Dispatches from the Wilderness: Welcome to Prathia's Daughters," July 21, 2010 (http://prathiasdaughters.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/dispatches-from-the-wilderness-welcome-to-prathias-daughters/) Accessed January 16, 2014.

[129]Natasha Thimas, "Prathia Hall," http://prezi.com/dfbaxhee4a6h/prathia-hall/ (accessed 10/10/2013).

[130]Peggy Dammond Preacely, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

engagements which severely taxed her time and energy. She worked full-time, while in graduate school, and was a single-mother and pastor in spite of debilitating back pain from two major car accidents and diabetes. She preached all over the world and boldly spoke against sexism, racism, ageism, classism, materialism, and homophobia. She finished her education, raised two children and a grandchild, and mentored hundreds of young African American clergywomen through her ministry and teaching. Hall's sister Teresa Hall-Darden said, "She didn't give up easily. She was a valiant fighter. She ran into lots of barriers in her life, but it was justice that drove her."[131]

Colleagues of Hall showered her with praise and noted the need to emphasize her contributions to the quest for justice and equality in America's recent history. John Lewis expressed hope that Hall will be memorialized "as one of the founding mothers of the modern – of the new America."[132] Wyatt Tee Walker said he wished he could "recommend her as a member, founding member of the National Hall of Fame for Human Rights."[133] Michael Eric Dyson described Hall as "one of our most gifted spiritual forces. God forbid that sexism blind us to her genius. May she rest in peace."[134]

Jeremiah Wright admired her as "one in a million," "a model that needs to be lifted up in every seminary of all races, for all seminarians of all races, so people can get a glimpse of what someone who has really said yes to ministry and who went to her grave

[131]John F. Morrison, "Prathia Hall, preacher, theology teacher," *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 19, 2002.

[132]John Lewis, Interview by Courtney Lyons, August 11, 2009, in Atlanta, GA, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[133]Wyatt Tee Walker, Interview by Courtney Lyons, April 3, 2012, compact disc, Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

[134]Dyson, "Freedom was foremost for Philly Activist."

living that ministry daily." He continued: "Instead of saying she's a female version, I would say Mahatma Gandhi is a male version of Prathia Hall Wynn."[135]

Hall's freedom faith inspired her to pursue justice from a young age, and throughout her education, civil rights activism, community organizing, and ministry, Hall lived out her freedom faith. Her preaching insisted that anyone who claimed to bear the gospel must also be about the work of liberating justice. Hall's womanism valued all people regardless of race, gender, or class, and sought the equality and liberation of all people. She inspired hundreds of students and challenged them to continue the legacy of their Christian and African American heritage in their ministries. Hall's freedom faith – the belief that God wants everyone to be free and equips and sustains those who work for freedom – was the central idea of her womanist theology and preaching.

[135]Wright, Interview by Lyons.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

Prathia Hall is a significant figure in American religious history. The historiography of the Civil Rights Movement and the history of women's roles in American religious activism insufficiently acknowledge Hall and her role as a religious leader in American Christianity. Even when the literature does mention Hall, it is brief, without detail, and without emphasis.

As a Civil Rights Movement activist and womanist preacher, Hall insisted on the connection between Christian orthopraxis and liberating justice. Hall's freedom faith – the belief that God wants people to be free and equips and empowers those who work for freedom – was the central guiding principle of her life, activism, and ministry. Understanding Hall's freedom faith is critical to understanding Hall and her significance in American religious history.

Chapter One discussed Hall's early life and her intellectual and spiritual formation. Hall's commitment to social justice began in her girlhood. Hall was influenced by her father's social justice ministry in North Philadelphia. Her father exposed her to leading African American thinkers and shaped her initial understanding of freedom faith. Though she attended predominantly white schools, Hall first encountered Jim Crow segregation as a child as she visited family in Virginia. The influence of her father and her own early experiences with racism fortified her commitment to social justice. As a teenager, Hall became involved with Fellowship House, a Philadelphia social justice

organization for youth and college students. Through Fellowship House, she studied the philosophy of non-violence and participated in non-violent direct action civil rights demonstrations in Maryland. Hall wanted to go to college at Tuskegee University in Alabama, but her father forbade her to go South because he feared she might be hurt. Honoring her father's wishes, Hall studied at Temple University in Philadelphia. Throughout college, Hall remained active in Fellowship House, through which she met Martin Luther King, Jr. and was mentored by Fellowship House's director Marjorie Penney. The tragic death of Hall's father in 1960, one week before the Greensboro sit-ins, created a longing to join the Civil Rights Movement in the South that Hall could no longer ignore.

Chapter Two assessed Hall's first year in SNCC, in Southwest Georgia, particularly examining how her freedom faith guided her and how her experiences there contextualized her understanding of freedom faith. In 1962, Hall joined SNCC and was assigned to the Southwest Georgia voter registration project out of Albany, Georgia and surrounding rural areas. Hall's maturity beyond her years and her experience in organizational leadership set her apart from her peers. Charles Sherrod immediately recognized Hall's leadership abilities and theological background, and she became a co-leader of the project. Hall often spoke in mass meetings and represented the Southwest Georgia project in SNCC events.

Hall's background gave her a unique perspective for training SNCC volunteers to navigate Southern, African American, religious culture. As an African American, raised in the North in predominantly white schools and in the Black Church, and having Southern relatives, Hall understood the cultural differences between Northerners and

Southerners. She skillfully advised SNCC volunteers in Southern etiquette such as appropriate attire, the importance of protecting African American men from any accusation of sexual misconduct, and the central role of the church in the community. Hall viewed SNCC's work as a mutual educational exchange between SNCC workers and the local people, and she guided other SNCC workers in how to earn trust with the communities in which they worked.

During Hall's time in the Southwest Georgia project, she stayed in the SNCC office in Albany and in Carolyn Daniels' home in Dawson, Georgia. In July, 1962, in Sasser, Georgia, Hall experienced her first police raid on a mass meeting. In August, 1962, when Hall bravely confronted a police deputy about police brutality against civil rights workers, the deputy fired bullets within inches of her feet and locked Hall and those with her in a vermin-infested jail in Sasser. In September, 1962, Hall suffered minor injuries during a nightrider attack on Daniels' home.

Hall returned to Philadelphia during Fall, 1962. She spoke across the North, raising financial support for and awareness of SNCC's work in the South. Hall's family struggled with her activism, both out of fear for her safety and for their own after receiving threatening phone calls. Strengthened by her freedom faith, Hall returned to Southwest Georgia, undeterred. She continued canvassing for voter registration, teaching freedom schools, speaking in mass meetings, and networking with young people in the community. In June, 1963, Albany police hoped to deter civil rights progress by arresting SNCC workers there. Hall evaded arrest and hid out SNCC-friendly homes and churches for several days before police found them.

Chapter Three described Hall's work with SNCC's Selma project. SNCC chairman James Forman recognized Hall's leadership potential and asked her to lead SNCC's voter registration project in Selma, Alabama in Fall, 1963. During the October, 1963 Freedom Day in Selma, in which hundreds of African Americans attempted to register to vote, Selma Sheriff Jim Clark fixated on Hall as his prize arrest.

In Summer, 1963, Hall transitioned to Atlanta where she led SNCC's Atlanta desegregation campaign. During Christmas, 1963, Hall was arrested for demonstrating at the Heart of Atlanta Motel and Toddle House restaurants. She worked with other civil rights leaders who cooperated in the multi-organization Atlanta Leadership Summit, refusing to cease demonstrations until Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen desegregated the city and released jailed demonstrators.

In February, 1964, Hall's trial for her arrest in the December, 1963 Heart of Atlanta Motel demonstrations made national headlines as Fulton County (Atlanta) judge Durwood T. Pye battled with federal judges over jurisdiction in the case. Federal authorities had to remove Hall from the Fulton County jail by force in March, 1964, and her case went through various stages of appeal until ultimately dismissed in April, 1968.

Throughout 1964, Hall played several key roles in SNCC's leadership. In late Spring and Summer, 1964, Hall worked in SNCC's Atlanta office and trained volunteers for Mississippi Freedom Summer. She was also elected to SNCC's Executive Committee and engaged in an extensive speaking tour at universities across the nation, promoting SNCC's work and raising financial support. In September, 1964, Hall traveled with a select group of SNCC leaders to Africa. The trip provided exposure to African independence movements and Black people with self-determination.

Hall returned to Selma in early 1965. She happened to be in Atlanta for an executive SNCC meeting on March 7, 1965. When word reached Atlanta that thousands of marchers had been brutally attacked by police on the Edmund Pettus Bridge, Hall was among five key SNCC leaders who traveled to Selma by charter flight to help with the wounded. Certain SCLC leaders in Selma challenged the salvation of those who expressed any type of anger about the police attacks, which Hall viewed as spiritual extortion. She was so traumatized by the experience, and by SNCC's move toward Black Nationalism, that she left SNCC in 1965.

Though Hall was back in Philadelphia and no longer a field worker for SNCC, she remained extremely active in civil rights and social justice activism. Hall worked with American Friends Service Committee school desegregation campaigns in Georgia and Mississippi. She also led a new branch of Fellowship House in the neighborhood of Philadelphia that erupted in riots in 1964. Hall purposefully accepted only a select few speaking engagements during this season of recovery.

Shortly after turning to Philadelphia, Hall married her long-term boyfriend Ralph Wynn, whom she had met before joining the Movement and had dated on and off throughout her time in SNCC. The newlywed couple moved to Roosevelt, New York for Ralph's job. From 1966 to 1976, Hall became involved with several organizations including Project Womanpower and the National Council of Negro Women, as well as a number of local community and educational boards.

Chapter Four revisited Southwest Georgia, 1962, to argue in support of Hall's origin of the phrase "I have a dream." Over the course of the summer of 1962, five churches with connections to support of the Civil Rights Movement were burned to the

ground. At a prayer vigil at the ruins of Mt. Olive Baptist Church in Sasser, Georgia in September, 1962, Hall offered a prayer which used repetition of the phrase "I have a dream." Martin Luther King, Jr. was present for the vigil and liked Hall's phrase so much that he began using it in a new set piece, which became immortal at the August, 1963 March on Washington. SNCC colleagues and King recognized Hall's preaching abilities, clearly evident through her spiritual leadership in the midst of the church burnings and other harassment of civil rights workers. Yet even the Movement perpetrated its own prejudice in its sexism through the exclusion of women from head leadership, particularly King's SCLC.

Chapter Five continued the story of Hall's life after the Movement, through her graduate education, during which time she came to understand womanist liberation theology as the culmination of her freedom faith. Hall had struggled with her sense of calling since college, debating between law school and ministry. By 1976, Hall could no longer repress her call to ministry. She was ordained in November, 1977 and began preaching at Mt. Sharon Baptist Church, the church her father planted in Philadelphia. She took seminary courses at Mercer School of Theology in New York starting in 1977, but in 1979, she entered the Master of Divinity program at Princeton Theological Seminary. Hall commuted from Roosevelt, New York to Princeton during the week for coursework and to Philadelphia on the weekends to preach. After finishing her M.Div. in 1982, the same year Hall became the first female member of the Baptist Minister Conference of Philadelphia and Vicinity, she completed a Master of Theology degree in preparation for doctoral study.

Hall began her Ph.D. at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1984. During the first year of her Ph.D. program, she suffered significant medical illness, her mother became critically ill, a close family member died suddenly, and her marriage ended. She was severely injured in two car accidents during her program as well. She progressed through her program, but the difficulties in her personal life, particularly medical and financial and the death of her daughter in 1992, made this more difficult. She took multiple leaves of absence from her coursework and dissertation, finally finishing her Ph.D. in 1997.

Hall's commitment to social justice began at an early age and matured through her Movement activism. Through her experiences as a woman in ministry and her exposure to liberation theologies in her studies at Princeton Seminary, Hall had a womanist awakening and moved fully into womanist liberation theology in her scholarship and preaching. Hall's dissertation demonstrated her womanist consciousness in her examination of the Women's Convention Auxiliary to the NBC, USA, Inc. having independent space, yet being subordinate to the male leadership of the NBC, USA, Inc., particularly the battle for control of the Nannie Helen Burrough's National Training School for Women and Girls. As Hall studied the WC within the African American church's advocacy for racial freedom, she illuminated the moral contradiction of that same church's perpetuation of oppression within itself. Her dissertation research merged her theological education with her own experiences as a woman in ministry, contextualizing her womanist identity, which decried racism, sexism, and classism and advocated for all human beings as made in the image of God.

Hall joined the faculty of United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio in 1989, while she was completing her degree. She served as the Associate Dean of Spiritual and

Community Life, Associate Dean of the Doctor of Ministry Program, Dean of African American Studies, and Director of the Harriet L. Miller Women's Center. Hall taught at United until 1998.

Hall had an extensive preaching career, clearly expressing womanist themes. In addition to her itinerant preaching engagements, she continued to pastor Mt. Sharon Baptist Church in Philadelphia for nearly a quarter century. In 1997, *Ebony* magazine named Hall first in its list of "15 Greatest Black Women Preachers," and she was the only woman considered for its list of "10 Greatest Black Preachers," ultimately placing eleventh. In 1999, the International Theological Center in Atlanta awarded her its annual Womanist Scholar Award. She mentored over two hundred African American clergy women, and there is a prominent blog for African-American clergywomen named "Prathia's Daughters." Even after establishing an academic career, Hall remained active in the Progressive National Baptist Convention, the American Baptist Churches USA, the New York Board of Education, the Association of Black Seminarians, and domestic and international advocacy for liberation and equality of men and women of all ethnicities.

In 2000, Hall was named the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chair in Social Ethics at Boston University School of Theology. One year into her position, she was diagnosed with aplastic anemia. Unable to find a bone marrow donor match, Hall died from her illness in 2002.

Hall's story offers a lens for exploring the Civil Rights Movement, the history of African American women, and the relationship between religion and culture in postwar America.

Hall's involvement in racial justice work sheds light on the long Movement as well as the ways the Movement differed in the North and South. Because of Hall's experience across racial, economic, and religious barriers, she was extremely helpful in coaching student activists in how to navigate Southern, rural culture. Her training in non-violence through Fellowship House as well as her extensive reading history of leading racial thinkers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries gave her a unique perspective on how the Movement had transitioned from a primarily judicial approach (e.g. the NAACP) to non-violent direct action (e.g. SCLC and SNCC) and eventually to Black Power (e.g. the Black Panthers). Hall's work spanned Northern demonstrations, social justice education, urban race riots, and economic justice campaigns, as well as Southern voter registration, demonstrations, and freedom schools. Hall's transition to ministry and education following the Movement also demonstrated the ways those in the Movement continued their activism into their later lives, mostly as politicians, educators, and social activists.

Hall's life also incorporated a variety of experiences of African American women, and Hall poignantly reflected on the wealth of wisdom she gained from her community of African American women. Though Hall was her father's daughter, her mother raised her to be self-sufficient and strong. Hall gravitated toward mentors like Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer, but she also valued the mutual educational exchange of speaking with the local people where SNCC worked. As she pursued seminary education, she resonated with womanist liberation theology, the ideas of which flourished in her preaching. Hall faced pressure within African American culture to prioritize racial advancement over gender politics, but she spoke against oppression, even within the African American

community. Her ministry reached African American women from all walks of life, and Hall boldly proclaimed her message of freedom faith, regardless of the setting.

Scholarship of the Civil Rights Movement has fallen into the trap of the Great Man Theory, emphasizing figures like Martin Luther King, Jr., John Lewis, and Malcolm X. In spite of the fact that the Movement was 80% made up of women, even as the literature has expanded to include local figures, focus remained on men like Fred Shuttlesworth and Medgar Evers. Only in the last decade has scholarship intentionally included narratives of women, primarily on more familiar names such as Ella Baker, Coretta Scott King, and Fannie Lou Hamer. Many Movement veterans have recognized the importance of telling their own stories, such as Joanne Gibson Robinson and Mary King. Recent memoir anthologies by the women of SNCC have added more nuance to the importance of local women's activism. Notice, however, that the increase in scholarship of women has come largely from the initiative of the women of the Movement themselves, reflective of the latent sexism within the Movement that has transferred into scholarship of the Movement. Even as the literature of women in the Movement continues to grow, this dissertation added a necessary study of Hall, which has been historically overlooked by scholars.

Hall's civil rights journey also showcased several aspects of the relationship between religion and culture in postwar America. Many religious groups polarized between their conservative and liberal constituencies, and the social issues of the 1960s – the Civil Rights Movement, feminism, and foreign policy – were at the center of these controversies. Hall's exit from SNCC coincided with the rise of Movement leaders not committed to non-violence and a growing distrust of government leaders, made worse by

the Vietnam War. As racism became socially unacceptable following the Movement, sexism took its place. Hall's narrative follows this transition, particularly the heightened sexism she faced in ministry after the Movement. The fact that Hall's preaching against any form of oppression – including sexism and heterosexism – was considered radical even forty years after the Movement also demonstrated the lingering presence of prejudice, even within African American culture. As a woman in the Movement and as a woman in the ministry, Hall experienced her own form of double consciousness and boldly confronted injustice with her liberating, Christocentric womanism.

Freedom faith was the central idea of Hall's theology and is the most appropriate lens for understanding her life's work. She first encountered the idea of freedom faith through her father, but she contextualized and matured her understanding of freedom faith in the Movement. She believed that God wanted everyone to be free and would protect her and others who worked for freedom. Her freedom faith found its ultimate expression in her Christocentric, womanist liberation theology, through which she proclaimed liberation from all forms of oppression. She spoke strongly against layered forms of oppression, even those which African American religious circles might not want to address – sexism, racism, classism, ageism, heterosexism, denominationalism, etc. – and called her hearers to work in cooperation with others and in affirmation of the full equality of all others.

Hall was an important religious figure of the twentieth century. Though her name has only been known by a few until now, she was incredibly influential in shaping the work of SNCC in Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi. She equipped hundreds of SNCC volunteers to work across cultures for social justice. A sage beyond her years, she

reminded SNCC of the importance of its non-violent beginnings and profoundly articulated the realities of faith, fear, and of the dream that would emerge from the nightmare. As a community organizer and pastor, she worked for justice, not self-promotion. As a preacher and professor, she mentored a generation of African American clergywomen, many of whom have come to national prominence. She was among the best preachers of the twentieth century. If she were a male, she would have been a nationally-recognized leader of the Movement, held a prestigious pulpit, and become a major denominational leader. By freedom faith, her life's work proclaimed truth to power, mobilizing thousands to do the same.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

American Friends Service Committee. Papers of the American Friends Service Committee. Philadelphia, PA.

Blackside, Inc. and The Faith Project, Inc. *This Far By Faith*. Episode Four: "Freedom Faith." Directed by Alice Markowitz Blackside, Inc. 2002.

Braden, Anne. "The Images are Broken: Students Challenge Rural Georgia." *The Southern Patriot* 20:10 (December, 1962).

Carson, Clayborne. *The Student Voice 1960-1965: Periodical of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*. Westport: Meckler, 1990.

Curry, Constance, Joan C. Browning, Dorothy Dawson Burlage, Penny Patch, Theresa Del Pozzo, Sue Thrasher, Elaine DeLott Baker, Emmie Schrader Adams, and Casey Hayden, eds. *Deep in Our Hearts: Nine White Women in the Freedom Movement*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000.

DeLissovoy, Peter, ed. *The Great Pool Jump and Other Stories from the Civil Rights Movement in Southwest Georgia*. Lancaster, NH: You Are Perfect Press, 2010.

Douglass, Frederick. *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, ed. Philip S. Foner. 5 vols. New York: International Publishers, 1950.

DuBois, W.E.B. *The Autobiography of W.E.B. DuBois: A Soliloquy on Viewing My Life from the Last Decade of Its First Century*. New York: International Publishers, 1986.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. National Archives File #44-HQ-20425, National Archives and Records Administration. Washington, DC.

Fellowship House. Papers. Urban Archives. Temple University Library, Philadelphia, PA.

Forman, James. *The Making of Black Revolutionaries.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997.

Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn, ed. *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

Hall, Prathia. “The African American Church at the Crossroad: Facing the Moral Challenge of Gender.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “The African American Church in Historical Perspective.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “The African American Hermeneutic In Conversation with the Philosophical Hermeneutics Perspective.” Th.M thesis, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1984. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Between the Wilderness and a Cliff.” In *Preaching with Sacred Fire: An Anthology of African American Sermons, 1750 to the Present*.” Edited by Martha Simmons and Frank A. Thomas. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010: 687-695.

———. “Between the Wilderness and a Cliff.” Undated transcript. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Beyond Eden.” 1989. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “The Bible in the African American Context.” In *Called to One Hope – The Gospel in Diverse Cultures.* Edited by Christopher Durasingh. Geneva: World Council of Churches Press, 1996: 158-165.

———. “Bloody Sunday.” In *Hands on the Freedom Faith: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* edited by Holsaert, Faith, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner., eds. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010: 470-473.

———. “Broken by the Blessed.” 1997. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Captivity’s Capture.” Sermon preached at Omega Baptist Church, Dayton, OH. Undated. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Children: A Suffering Sister, Frantic Father, Dying Daughter: Encounters with Jesus.” Sermon preached at Third Annual Center for Congregations and Family Ministries Conference. Louisville Presbyterian Seminary. Louisville, KY. 1999.

———. “The Church at the Crossroad.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Convergence & Crisis: The Impact of Racism & Sexism on The African American Community.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Encountering the Text.” In *Power in the Pulpit: How America’s Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare their Sermons*. Edited by Cleophus J. Larue. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002: 59-66.

———. “Encounters with Jesus from Dying to Life.” In *Power in the Pulpit: How America’s Most Effective Black Preachers Prepare their Sermons*. Edited by Cleophus J. Larue. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002: 67-74.

———. “Exodus Interpretation in the African American Context.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Freedom-Faith.” In *Hands on the Freedom Faith: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC* edited by Holsaert, Faith, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner., eds. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010: 172-181.

———. “A Journey with Jesus.” Sermon preached at Trinity United Church of Christ. May 15, 1990. Chicago, Illinois.

———. “A Nightmare in Broad Daylight.” Sermon preached at Allen Temple Baptist Church. Oakland, CA. March 29, 1998. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “An Outrateous Assertion.” Undated transcript. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. Prathia Hall Papers. Private Collection of LaGretta Bjorn. Ewing, NJ.

———. “The Religious and Social Consciousness of African American Baptist Women.” Ph.D. diss., Princeton Theological Seminary, 1997. Ann Arbor, MI: UMI.

———. “Theological/Educational Foundations for the Black Church’s Ministry to Families.” December 7, 1984. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “What Does It Mean To Be Black And Christian?” In “A Call to National Dialogue: The Challenge of a Black Theology to the African American Church.” Kelly Miller Smith Institute on African American Church Studies. Nashville, TN. 1992: 14-16.

———. “When the Hurts Do Not Heal.” In *Those Preaching Women: More Sermons by Black Women*, Vol. 2. Edited by Ella Pearson Mitchell. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1985: 95-102.

———. “When the Hurts Do Not Heal.” Sermon preached at Hartford Memorial Baptist Church. March 22, 1987. Detroit, MI. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “When the Hurts Do Not Heal.” Sermon preached at Trinity United Church of Christ. May 21, 1989. Chicago, IL.

———. “Womanist Moral Leadership and Ecclesial Integrity, or, The Silencing of Women and The Crisis of Morality in the Church.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Women in the African American Church and Community.” Prathia Hall Papers.

———. “Women’s Space Women’s Place: Structural Ambiguity and Moral Dilemma in the Woman’s Convention of the NBC USA, Inc.” 1998. Prathia Hall Papers.

Holsaert, Faith, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner, eds. *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*. Chicago: University of Illinois, 2010.

Kennedy, John F. “Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights.” June 11, 1963. *Public Papers of the President of the United States, 1963*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964.

King, Martin Luther, Jr. “The Negro and the Constitution.” *The Cornelian* (1944). http://mlk-kpp01.stanford.edu/index.php/kingpapers/article/volume_i_april_1944/ (accessed January 21, 2013).

———. *Stride Towards Freedom: The Montgomery Story*. New York: Harper and Row, 1958.

King, Martin Luther, Clayborne Carson, Peter Holloran, Ralph Luker, and Penny A. Russell. *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

King, Mary. *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Quill, 1987.

Lewis, John. *Walking With the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement*. New York: Mariner, 1990.

National Archives and Records Administration. Criminal Docket, Case #23886. *The State of Georgia vs. Prathia Laura Ann Hall*. National Archives and Records Administration. Washington, DC.

Philadelphia High School for Girls. *Milestone*. 1958.

Princeton Theological Seminary. Prathia Hall – Student Record File. Princeton Theological Seminary. Trenton, NJ.

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. *Papers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, 1959-1972. Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1994. Microfilm.

Wynn, Prathia. “Accepting the Call to Leadership.” *American Baptist*, (July/August 1987): 22.

Wynn, Prathia Hall. “Called but Not Chosen Review of Righteous Discontent: The Women’s Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920.” *The Women’s Review of Books* 11:12 (September 1994): 31-32.

———. “Toward a New Starting Point,” *The Women’s Review of Books* (1991): 25-26

———. “Transcendent Power: A Black Woman’s Perspective on the Million Man March.” *Sojourners* (January-February, 1996): 23.

Oral History Sources

Barrett, Joyce. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 12, 2012. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Bjorn, LaGretta. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 19, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Bond, Julian. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 3, 2010. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Brown, Presstonia Davis. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 20, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Chatfield, Jack. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Churchville, John. Interview by Courtney Lyons. February 14, 2011. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Darden, JaiOliver. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June, 2012, in Philadelphia, PA.

Daniels, Carolyn. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 24, 2010, in Atlanta, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

DeLissovoy, Peter. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Fry-Brown, Teresa. Interview by Jessica Davenport. March 31, 2010. http://prathiasdaughters.wordpress.com/2010/07/22/remembering-rev-prathia-an-interview-with-rev-dr-teresa-fry-brown/. Accessed 10/10/2013.

Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April, 2012.

Goodman, Janice. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC.

Hall, Prathia. Interview by Drew Hansen. November 15, 2001. Private documents of Drew Hansen.

———. Interview by Vincent Harding. June 25, 1997. “Interview with Prathia Hall.” Ghandi-Hamer-King Center. Washington, DC.

———. Interview by Joy Bennett Kinnon. “Live Well – Wear Your Own Shoes.” *Ebony* (November 2002).

———. Interview by Richard Lischer. Undated.

———. Interview by Sheila Michaels. February 25, 1999. Film and Media Archive. Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

———. Interview by Barbara Ransby. June 25, 1997. Prathia Hall Papers.

———. Interview by Meredith Woods, October 4, 1999. Film and Media Archive, Washington University, St. Louis, MO.

Harris, Don. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. Interview by Courtney Lyons. March 21, 2012. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Holsaert, Faith. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 19, 2010. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Johnson, Bernice Johnson. Interview by Courtney Lyons. September 27, 2012, in Pittsburg, PA.

King, Mary. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 15, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Kunstler, Karen. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC.

Lewis, John. Interview by Courtney Lyons. August 11, 2009, in Atlanta, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Lyon, Danny. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC.

McDew, Chuck. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Nix, Echol. Interview by Courtney Lyons. March 21, 2012..

Noonan, Martha Prescod Norman. June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Paris, Peter. Interview by Courtney Lyons. 2009.

Patch, Penny. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Perdew, John. June 3, 2011, in Albany, GA. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Preacely, Peggy Dammond. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Richardson, Judy. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 25, 1997. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Robinson, Betty Garman. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 4, 2010. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Rubin, Larry. Interview by Courtney Lyons. November 18, 2010. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Sherrod, Charles. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 16, 2010, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Six-Means, Horace, Sr. Interview by Courtney Lyons. January 28, 2010.

Smith, Frank. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 18, 2010.

Tuttle, Elbert P. Interview by Cliff Kuhn. April 10, 1992. Georgia Government Documentation Project. Georgia State University.

Walker, Wyatt Tee. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 1, 2012. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Ward, Daryl. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 19, 2012.

Ward, Vanessa. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 19, 2012.

Weems, Renita. Interview by Courtney Lyons. May 10, 2012.

Wright, Jeremiah. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 3, 2012. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Wynn, DuBois. Interview by Courtney Lyons. June 21, 2012.

Zellner, Bob. Interview by Courtney Lyons. April 15, 2011, in Raleigh, NC. Compact disc. Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco, TX.

Secondary Sources

Allen, Donna. "Toward a Womanist Homiletic: Katie Cannon, Alice Walker, and Emancipatory Proclamation." Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 2005.

Arsenault, Ray. *Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Justice*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Ashmore, Susan Youngblood. *Carry It On: The War on Poverty and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008.

Bass, Patrik Henry. *Like a Mighty Stream: The March on Washington, August 28, 1963*. Philadelphia: Running Press Book Publishers, 2002.

Bass, S. Jonathan. *Blessed are the Peacemakers: Martin Luther King, Jr., Eight White Religious Leaders, and the 'Letter from Birmingham Jail.'"* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002.

Billingsley, Andrew. *Might Like a River: The Black Church and Social Reform*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Branch, Taylor. *America in the King Years, 1954-1968*. 3 vols. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988-2006.

Brown-Nagin, Tomiko. *Courage to Dissent: Atlanta and the Long History of the Civil Rights Movement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.

Calloway-Thomas, Carolyn and John Louis Lucaites, eds. *Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Sermonic Power of Public Discourse*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1993.

Cannon, Katie G. *Black Womanist Ethics*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988.

———. *Katie's Canon: Womanism and the Soul of the Black Community*. New York: Continuum, 1997.

Carawan, Guy and Candie. *Sing for Freedom: The Story of the Civil Rights Movement through its Songs*. Montgomery, New South Books, 2007.

Carson, Clayborne. *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: Warner Books, 1998.

———. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Chafe, William Henry. *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, N.C. and the Struggle for Freedom*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

Chappell, David. *Inside Agitators: White Southerners in the Civil Rights Movement*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994.

Chestnut, J.L., Jr. and Julia Cass. *Black in Selma: The Uncommon Life of J.L. Chestnut, Jr.* New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1990.

Coleman, Monica A. *Making a Way Out of No Way: A Womanist Theology.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Collier-Thomas, Bettye and V.P. Franklin. *My Soul Is A Witness: A Chronology of the Civil Rights Era: 1954-1965.* New York: Henry Holt: 1999.

Collier-Thomas, Bettye and V.P. Franklin, eds. *Sisters in the Struggle: African American Women in the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.

Countryman, Matthew. *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

Counts, Will, Will Campbell, Ernest Dumas, and Robert McCord. *Life is More than a Moment: The Desegregation of Little Rock's Central High*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999.

Crawford, Vicki L., Jacqueline Anne Rouse, and Barbara Woods. *Women in the Civil Rights Movement: Trailblazers & Torchbearers, 1941-1965*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Crosby, Emilye. *A Little Taste of Freedom: The Black Freedom Struggle in Claiborne County, Mississippi*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005.

Curry, Connie. *Silver Rights*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 1995.

Davenport, Jessica. "Dispatches from the Wilderness: Welcome to Prathia's Daughters." July 21, 2010. http://prathiasdaughters.wordpress.com/2010/07/21/dispatches-from-the-wilderness-welcome-to-prathias-daughters/. Accessed January 16, 2014.

Dittmer, John Dittmer. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995.

Dupont, Carolyn Renee. *Mississippi Praying: Southern White Evangelicals and the Civil Rights Movement, 1945-1975.* New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Dyson, Michael Eric. *I May Not Get There with You: The True Martin Luther King, Jr.* New York: The Free Press, 2000.

Eagles, Charles. *Outside Agitator: Jon Daniels and the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000.

Ebony Magazine. "The 15 Greatest Black Preachers." *Ebony* (1997): 156.

Eskew, Glenn T. *But for Birmingham: The Local and National Movements in the Civil Rights Struggle.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996.

Euchner, Charles. *Nobody Turn Me Around: A People's History of the 1963 March on Washington*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2010.

Fager, Charles E. *Selma, 1965: The March that Changed the South*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1974, 1985.

Fleming, Cynthia Griggs. *In the Shadow of Selma: The Continuing Struggle for Civil Rights in the Rural South*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004.

———. *Soon We Will Not Cry: The Liberation of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998.

Floyd-Thomas, Stacey M. *Deeper Shades of Purple: Womanism in Religion and Society*. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

Floyd-Thomas, Stacey, Juan Floyd-Thomas, Carol B, Duncan, Stephen G. Ray, Jr. and Nancy Lynne Westfield. *Black Church Studies: An Introduction*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007.

Frederick, Marla F. *Between Sundays: Black Women and Everyday Struggles of Faith.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Fritts, Roger. "The Most Famous American Sermon of the 20th Century." Sermon given at Cedar Lane Unitarian Universalist Church. Bethesda, MD. January 13, 2002. http://www.cedarlane.org/02serms/s020113.html. Accessed September 29, 2008.

Fry-Brown, Teresa. *Can a Sistah Get a Little Help? Encouragement for Black Women in Ministry*. Boston: Pilgrim Press, 2008.

Gaillard, Frye. *Cradle of Freedom: Alabama and the Movement that Changed America*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2004.

Garrow, David. *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.* New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1986.

———. "King: The Man, The March, The Dream." *American History* (2003): 26-35.

———. *Protest at Selma: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.

Gilkes, Cheryl Townsend. *If It Wasn't for the Women: Black Women's Experience and Womanist Culture in Church and Community*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001.

Greenhaw, Wayne. *Fighting the Devil in Dixie: How Civil Rights Activists Took on the Ku Klux Klan in Alabama*. Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2011.

Hampton, Henry, Judith Vecchione, Steve Fayer, Orlando Bagwell, Callie Crossley, James A. DeVinney, Madison Davis Lucy. 2006. *Eyes on the Prize.* Alexandria, VA: PBS Video.

Hansen, Drew D. *The Dream: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Speech that Inspired a Nation*. New York: Harper Collins, 2003.

Harding, Vincent. *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement.* Maryknoll: Orbis,1999.

Haskins, Jim and Kathleen Benson. *Black Stars: African American Religious Leaders.* San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2008.

Hayes, Diana L. *Hagar's Daughters: Womanist Ways of Being in the World.* New York: Paulist Press, 1995.

Higginbotham, Evelyn Brooks. *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1880-1920*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

Hogan, Wesley. *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for a New America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Houck, Davis W. and David E. Dixon, eds. *Women in the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1965*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009.

Huckaby, Elizabeth. *Crisis at Central High, Little Rock, 1957-58*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1980.

Hughes, Langston. "Let America Be America Again." In *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes,* ed. Arnold Rampersand and David Roessel. New York: Knopf, 1996.

Jeffries, Hasan. *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt.* New York: New York University Press, 2009.

Johnson, Lacey. "A Student's Surprising Discovery about Martin Luther King Jr.'s Dream for America." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 58:8 (2011): A25.

Jones, Patrick D. *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Kinnon, Joy Bennett. "15 Greatest Black Women Preachers." *Ebony Magazine* (1997): 102.

Kusmer, Kenneth L. and Joe W. Trotter, eds. *African American Urban History since World War II.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

Lee, Chana Kai. *For Freedom's Sake: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer (Women in American History)*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000.

Lentz-Smith, Adriane. *Freedom Struggles: African Americans and World War I.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Lewis, David. *King: A Critical Biography*. Westport, CT: Praeger Books, 1970.

Lincoln, C. Eric and Lawrence H. Mamiya. *The Black Church in the African American Experience.* Durham: Duke University Press, 1990.

Ling, Peter and Sharon Monteith, eds. *Gender and the Civil Rights Movement.* New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004.

Lischer, Richard. *The Preacher King: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Word that Moved America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lyons, Courtney Pace. "Burning Columbia Avenue: Religious Undertones of the 1964 Philadelphia Race Riots." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 77:3 (2010): 324-348.

Manis, Andrew. *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999.

Marshall, James P. *Student Activism and Civil Rights in Mississippi: Protest Politics and the Struggle for Racial Justice, 1960-1965*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013.

Mason, Herman, Jr. *Politics: Civil Rights, and Law in Black Atlanta, 1870-1970*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.

McGuire, Danielle L. *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance – A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

McWhorter, Diane. *Carry Me Home: Birmingham Alabama, Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Revolution*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001.

Miller, Keith D. "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Folk Pulpit." *The Journal of American History* 78 (1991): 120-123.

———. "Redefining Plagiarism: Martin Luther King's Use of an Oral Tradition." *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 20, 1993): A60.

———. "Second Isaiah Lands in Washington, DC: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' as Biblical Narrative and Biblical Hermeneutic." *Rhetoric Review* 26:4 (2007): 409.

———. "Voice Merging and Self-making: The Epistemology of 'I Have a Dream.'" *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 19 (1989): 23-31.

Mills, Kay. *This Little Light of Mine: The Life of Fannie Lou Hamer*. New York: Plume, 1993.

Mitchem, Stephanie Y. *Introducing Womanist Theology*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 2002.

Morris, Aldon. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change*. New York: The Free Press, 1984.

Moye, J. Todd. *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945-1986*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004.

Norrell, Robert J. and Arieh J. Kochavi. *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Civil Rights Movement in Tuskegee*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998.

Oates, Stephen. *Let the Trumpet Sound: The Life of Martin Luther King, Jr*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994.

Olson, Lynne. *Freedom's Daughters: The Unsung Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement, 1830-1970*. New York: Scribner, 2001.

Paris, Peter. *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998.

Payne, Charles. *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

PBS. “Prathia Hall.” http://www.pbs.org/thisfarbyfaith/people/prathia_hall.html (accessed May 21, 2008).

Persons, Albert C. *Sex and Selma: The True Selma Story*. Birmingham: Esco Publishers, 1965.

Powledge, Fred. *Free At Last?: The Civil Rights Movement and the People Who Made It*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991.

“Prathia’s Daugthers.” http://www.prathiasdaughtersvoices.ning.com (accessed January 23, 2014).

Pronley, Matthew. “Waveland: Mississippi, November 1964: Death of SNCC, Birth of Radicalism.” Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 2008.

Ransby, Barbara. *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2003.

Riggs, Marcia. *Awake, Arise, and Act: A Womanist Call for Black Liberation.* Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1994.

Roberts, Gene. and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007.

Robinson, JoAnn Gibson. *The Montgomery Bus Boycott and the Women Who Started It*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1990.

Robnett, Belinda. *How Long? How Long? African-American Women in the Struggle for Civil Rights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Ross, Rosetta. *Witnessing and Testifying: Black Women, Religion, and Civil Rights.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.

Seeger, Pete and Bob Reiser. *Everybody Says Freedom*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989.

Sitkoff, Harvard. *King: Pilgrimage to the Mountaintop*. New York: Macmillan, 2009.

Smith, Lillian. *Killers of the Dream*. Rev. ed. 1961. Reprint New York: Norton, 1978.

Smith, Kenneth L. and Ira G. Zepp, *Search for the Beloved Community: The Thinking of Martin Luther King, Jr.* Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1986.

St. Clair, Raquel A. *Call and Consequences: A Womanist Reading of Mark.* Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008.

Sundquist, Eric. *King's Dream*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009.

Stanton, Mary. *From Selma to Sorrow: Life and Death of Viola Luizzo*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2000.

Sugrue, Thomas. *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North*. New York: Random House, 2008.

Terrell, JoAnne Marie. *Power in the Blood? The Cross in the African American Experience.* Maryknoll: Orbis, 1998.

Thimas, Natasha. "Prathia Hall." http://prezi.com/dfbaxhee4a6h/prathia-hall/ (accessed October 10, 2013).

Thornton, J. Mills. *Dividing Lines: Municipal Politics and the Struggle for Civil Rights in Montgomery, Birmingham, and Selma*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2002.

Thurman, Howard. *Jesus and the Disinherited*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1959.

Tuck, Stephen. *Beyond Atlanta: The Struggle for Racial Equality in Georgia, 1940-1980.* Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001.

Vail, Mark. "The 'Integrative' Rhetoric of Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech." *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 9:1 (2006): 51-78.

Vander Lei, Elizabeth and Keith D. Miller. "Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech in Context: Ceremonial Protest and African American Jeremiad." *College English* 62 (1999): 83-99.

Walker, Alice. *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983.

Watson, Bruce. *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy*. New York: Viking, 2010.

Webb, Sheyann and Rachel West Nelson, *Selma, Lord, Selma.* Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1980.

Weitzel, Al. "King's 'I Have a Dream' Speech: A Case Study of Incorporating Orality in Rhetorical Criticism." *Communication Reports* 7 (1994): 50-56.

Williams, Delores. *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk*. Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993.

Wilmore, Gayraud. *Black Religion and Black Radicalism: An Interpretation of the Religious History of African Americans.* New York: Doubleday, 1998.

Wofford, Harris. *Of Kennedys and Kings: Making Sense of the Sixties*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1992.

Wynn, Neil A. *The African American Experience During World War II*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010.

X, Malcolm and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1964.

Zinn, Howard. *On Race*. New York: Seven Stones, 2011.

———. *SNCC: The New Abolitionists*. Cambridge: South End Press, 2002.

Periodicals

Aiken Standard and Review.

Albuquerque Journal.

Ames Daily Tribune.

Atchison Globe.

Atlanta Constitution.

Atlanta Daily World.

Atlanta Journal and Constitution.

Baltimore News-Post.

Baltimore Sun.

Bennington Banner.

The Billings Gazette.

Brown Daily Herald.

Burlington Daily Times-News.

The Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Chicago Sun-Times.

The Daily Courier.

The Daily Mail.

Daily News.

The Daily Plainsman.

Dayton Daily News.

The Delta Democrat-Times.

The Denver Post.

Ebony.

The Evening Bulletin.

The Evening Capital Annapolis.

Fort Worth Star Telegram.

The Gettysburg Times.

Globe Gazette.

Greensboro News & Record.

The Independent.

Kingsport Times.

The Lake Park News.

New Pittsburgh Courier.

New York Times.

The News.

The News of Delaware.

Oakland Tribune.

The Ottawa Campus.

Philadelphia Daily News.

Philadelphia Inquirer.

Pittsburgh Courier.

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette.

The Post.

Sojourners.

The Southern Patriot.

St. Petersburg Times.

Star-Ledger.

The Tennesean.

Time.

Tri-State Defender.

Washington Post.

Waterloo Sunday Courier.

Winnipeg Free Press.