Excerpts

Reverend Vivian: Yeah, and then the bus boycott. Well, they won it. Jim Lawson is in Nashville and begins to train ministers, begins to train students, and that training of students went on for several months. It was through that that I met Jim, because I had already been in movement in Peoria, so I knew Jim and then it ended up that Jim got an apartment right across the street from our apartment, and his wife was working at one of the colleges near where my son was going to school, to a special school across the street from the Vanderbilt campus. And so she would take him to school. Well, we met each other through that means and really— but I had done it nine, ten years before, but Jim really knew far more about nonviolence than I did, and so I welcomed him because this was what we needed, as much knowledge as we could get of the method. I had done it, but he had the background to be able to teach it in quite a different way. I had gotten techniques and so forth and it was naturally for me a natural way of life, right? But that's what fit the ministry. But then to teach the students and so they can get it is another thing. Jim was excellent at it.

Interviewer: I never will forget Diane Nash saying that she was a very, very good student and she said that her government professors defined government and politics as a monopoly of violence so how can nonviolence work? And they were doing all these experiments and slapping each other around and everything—she was horrified by it. Did you actually participate in any of those and watch that or having already done it, did you not need to—?

Reverend Vivian: Yeah, I watched some of it and participated in some of it. I never will forget one of the ministers there, they burned—put out a cigarette on him and it burned a hole, some of the fire fell and burned a hole in his trousers, and he made it very clear that we were going to buy him a new suit. [laughter] Quite a guy— he went to Morehouse, too, by the way, and was a Methodist, and his church was near Fisk campus which we used to meet in all the time.