

MS450_022

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Interviewee: Bond, Julian

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(MS450)

RONALD BAYOR: Seven, eight, nine, ten. OK, first I was curious about your reaction to the Appeal for Human Rights statement -- the reaction from the white community to that?

JULIAN BOND: There were two separate reactions. Governor (coughs) -- excuse me -- Governor Vandiver said, "This sounds as if it had been written in Moscow if not in Peking." And Mayor Hartsfield said, "This hasn't been written in Moscow or Peking; this is the legitimate aspirations of our own college students." So, you had these extreme reactions. Vandiver, I think, was playing to the state audience and Hartsfield to the local audience.

BAYOR: Was there any effort to acknowledge or act on the (inaudible)?

BOND: No, no. No, no, no. Not by anyone.

BAYOR: Not by Hartsfield?

BOND: No. Oh, no, no one. If there was, I didn't know it.

BAYOR: [01:00] Even though he owed his -- or, at least, a good part of election to the black community?

BOND: Yeah, no, no, no. None at all.

BAYOR: Atlanta has often been described as a city where negotiation and compromise on racial issues went well. I was curious whether you thought that was true or not?

BOND: I think that is true, not all of the time, but a large percentage of the time. Because the white community has been eager to negotiate, and the black community has seen that, through negotiation, it can avoid -- well, the other way around, actually. The white community has seen that, through negotiation, they can avoid confrontation, which means publicity, which typically means bad publicity. And bad publicity is bad for business. Of course, any publicity is bad for business, I guess. And the black community has seen that it can use negotiation to forward its agenda, probably as quickly as it could have done through some other way.

BAYOR: Yeah, so was it -- in terms of the white community [02:00] (inaudible)?

BOND: Yeah, yeah.

BAYOR: "The city too busy to hate," so...

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: Do you think the relationship between the white and black leadership of the Atlanta Negro Voters League effected racial change in certain ways? In other words, was it easier here than in other cities?

BOND: [Hell?], yeah.

BAYOR: Faster? Slower?

BOND: Easier. Easier and -- but who's to say whether faster or slower? But easier, certainly, because you had this history of interracial contact which went back I don't know how far but it went back a pretty long way. So that it was relatively easy when the 1960s came, and these clashes came over lunch counters, for these old mechanisms that had mediated political disputes to mediate this dispute too. They were already in place.

BAYOR: At the same time, it was a -- it was a process of not so much confrontation but of compromise. Do you think that sort of slowed down the [03:00] process of change in the city?

BOND: Sure. I'm sure it did. Well, I think some -- on some occasions, it probably speeded it up and on others it probably slowed it down. I don't think we'll ever know. Had we done this instead of that, would the timetable have been faster? So, I guess, fast in -- faster in some cases, and slower in others. Excuse me, let me...

(break in audio)

BOND: Oh, this is terrible. What do you do about it?

BAYOR: Nothing. I had laryngitis, it was -- drank a lot of tea.

BOND: I can't handle laryngitis.

BAYOR: Well, I couldn't -- I can't either. I (inaudible).

(laughs) The impact of the student movement on this relationship -- on this black-white leadership relationship?

BOND: Well, a couple of -- it had a couple of impacts. One, it replaced it -- not absolutely, but shifted it. It made room for this new group of people who were students and for most -- most importantly, for a new group of adults who were more closely aligned with the students than were the old group of adults. [04:00] Then, it demonstrated, I think, to the more perceptive members of the white community that this black group didn't speak for everyone. That there were forces in the black community -- in this instance, students, and in other instances, who's to say who? -- who were opposed to this sort of go-slow, across-the-tables approach. So, it altered this relationship. And I'd hazard a guess that this black-white politics in Atlanta -- politics in larger sense -- haven't been the same since.

BAYOR: I'm sure it has hasn't.

BOND: No.

BAYOR: How about the racial changes that -- the impact of the student movement? Have they speeded up the change that was...?

BOND: Oh, yeah, absolutely, absolutely.

BAYOR: Well, that's what I meaning -- that's what I was talking about before, in terms of whether the [King, Sr.?], the (inaudible) approach was getting things done, but very slowly, and sort of needed --

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: -- a little explosion of (inaudible).

BOND: Yeah, and the students gave them that. (laughter)

BAYOR: OK. Was there less violence in Atlanta, at all, (inaudible)?

BOND: Yes, yeah.

BAYOR: [05:00] Why, would you say?

BOND: (coughs) First, you had a good police force -- good in the sense that it would keep violence down. Secondly, you had a -- at the time, when violence was likely, you had a black community that at least gave lip service -- a little more than lip service to nonviolence. And you had a white business community which were doing all it could to ensure that violence didn't ensue. So, yeah, you did have a -- you know, (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BAYOR: What was the basis for the white community

(overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BOND: And, again, it was fear of negative publicity.

BAYOR: Birmingham, Little Rock, type of thing? Yeah.

BOND: Yeah. Which, in their case, meant any publicity.

BAYOR: Yeah, true, true. In regards to negotiation with -- negotiated settlements on the sit-ins, lunch counters, and the school desegregation, was there a lot of opposition to this?

BOND: Oh, yes. I can remember a tremendous mass meeting held at the church on the corner of Ashby and Fair streets -- I can't remember the name of the church now; it was either Mount Moriah Baptist Church or the one across the street -- [06:00] in which this agreement was announced by the adults and the two students who had participated in negotiating. You know this was -- the students force the lunch counters to integrate. And then, two students and about 50 adults negotiated the agreement. And the crowd was just angry. And I remember women saying, "You mean to say I haven't shopped in Rich's for six months, and this is what I get?" and da, da, da, da, da. And they even called Daddy King an Uncle Tom. This was, you know, a scandal. And M.L. King Jr., gave a speech on leadership, and it was a mas-- a mighty speech. He lifted the audience up, and he

let them down. He lifted them up, he let them down. He lifted them up, he let them down. When he let them down the last time, he was through and it was over. And all the anger and the heat had gone out of the people. And they (coughs) --

BAYOR: Were willing to accept that agreement after that?

BOND: Reluctantly willing to accept the agreement.

BAYOR: The students, too?

BOND: [07:00] Yeah, reluctantly, yeah.

BAYOR: Were there suggestions from the students to do it differently?

BOND: Oh, sure.

BAYOR: In what way?

BOND: Well, as I remember this agreement, it was -- we would stop all demonstrations for a period. And then, at the end of this period -- then, selected lunch counters would integrate. And if that worked, then the rest would integrate. And our attitude was, no, we're going to keep demonstrating until they integrate. And the only way they're going to integrate is the day after we stop demonstrating. And then, everybody will come, not only select group.

BAYOR: And (inaudible) the school desegregation (inaudible)?

BOND: No, no, not at all. And it was never really clear, to be honest, whether or not it was tied into school desegregation. I think the whites and some of the black adults wanted that to happen. But, anyway, we didn't like the agreement.

BAYOR: And the agreement, basically, was the -- I guess with Borders, Calhoun, King Sr., pretty much?

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: People like Carl Holman, I guess, weren't involved? Or (inaudible)?

BOND: No, no. [08:00] Well, Lonnie King and Herschelle Sullivan were involved. That's when they almost lost their leadership, because they had, however reluctantly, ratified this. They were the two students on the adult/student negotiating committee or whatever it was -- liaison committee.

BAYOR: Did they have much voice?

BOND: No, no, I'm sure not (inaudible). But they were there.

BAYOR: Yeah, OK.

BOND: Suspect, in our eyes anyway.

BAYOR: The effect of the settlement on racial change in the city -- you think it speeded it up (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)?

BOND: Oh, sure, I think it speeded it up.

BAYOR: It did. So, in a sense, retrospectively --

BOND: Retrospectively, it was fine.

BAYOR: Yeah.

BOND: But I think, you know, we viewed it from the heat of our position as being on the front lines, as we were taught, of racial change in America. We were there.

(laughs) But I don't think -- in retrospect, I don't think it made much difference. It probably slowed us down a little bit, from our next target, whatever that was.

BAYOR: Well, the sense is, I guess it speeded up the lunch segregation, but it certainly didn't speed up school desegregation.

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: Because that proceeded at a --

BOND: Snail's pace, right.

BAYOR: -- snail's pace really, yeah.

BOND: [09:00] And the two really had nothing to do with each other anyway.

BAYOR: Were the students involved at all in...?

BOND: No.

BAYOR: No, you were (inaudible).

BOND: It was a whole other different set of people. Some of the adults were involved in both, like Calhoun.

BAYOR: Yeah, I talked to Don Hollowell.

BOND: Yeah, Hollowell would have... But, typically, it was more likely a different -- whole different set of people.
(phone rings)

BAYOR: OK. You were involved in SNCC, of course. Did SNCC operate in Atlanta differently than elsewhere?

BOND: Yes, we treated Atlanta, typically, as an R and R place. This was the place where we came to relax and take it easy, where we didn't work, where we had our office, where we relaxed.

BAYOR: That sort of acknowledges that things were going well here, and they really weren't (inaudible).

BOND: Well, it was not because they were going that well -- although, comparatively, they were doing well. Compared to Birmingham I'd say it was going well. But also, it suggests that we knew you couldn't work all the time.
[10:00] And (coughs) the staff here, at least at this time, was all together in support for the people in the field. So, it would be a real luxury for me to have spent my day helping these people and then worried about something here. And it just seemed, tactically, the thing to do. Later, we did get involved in things in Atlanta, but I -- we really intended just to -- for this to be an office and nothing more.

BAYOR: Using the same reason that the SCLC and everybody else located here, pretty much?

BOND: Yes, yeah.

BAYOR: Because this was the best of the Southern cities?

BOND: This was the best of the Southern cities, had the best transportation, had the best -- it was a communications hub. It was all those things.

BAYOR: Black colleges.

BOND: Yeah. It had the -- it had everything you needed to... It had the best of everything you needed to locate an office.

BAYOR: Did you come into kind of situations where King, Sr., or Borders, or any of the other old leaders just tried to put a lid on SNCC activities here?

BOND: [11:00] Probably. I don't remember. Don't recall any. There are a couple of things we did get involved in. Have you read about the so-called "Berlin Wall"?

BAYOR: Oh, yeah.

BOND: OK, well, we got involved in that. And I'm sure they tried to put a kibosh on that. I don't know that they did, but I'm sure they did. And then, later on we had this little project down in Vine City, but I don't...

BAYOR: I'd like (inaudible) that the older black leadership was as concerned as the white leadership about image (inaudible) city.

BOND: Yes, oh, surely. Oh, sure they were, sure they were. But I don't think they saw us as any kind of serious threat, at least in this initial period. (coughs) We were crazy and wild, but we weren't King. If they were comparing us to Martin Luther King -- that is, as black leadership -- we were decidedly the lesser factor.

BAYOR: Of course, he, too, did very little in Atlanta.

BOND: Yeah, right.

BAYOR: Was that part of an (inaudible)?

BOND: Oh, I'm sure, I'm sure. Probably pressure from his father, pressure from other adults, [12:00] and, I think, the realities of the situation, you know? Let's just have our office here and not do anything else. We can't afford to spend office time, or to have -- you know, we just can't afford this dual function here in Atlanta.

BAYOR: (inaudible) a more serious problem -- Herbert Jenkins wasn't Bull Connor.

BOND: Right.

BAYOR: In 1968, in a newspaper statement, you said something about your impact as a legislator at that time, in '68, has mainly been with getting your constituents' local

complaints a hearing -- to put constituents' complaints in the hands of those who would deal with them, rather than acting so much on state government issues.

BOND: Mm-hmm.

BAYOR: Do you think this was the main impact of the earliest black state representatives and senators?

BOND: Except for one or two of us, maybe (coughs) with the exception, say, of Bobby Hill, who was just a brilliant lawyer, and who probably had an impact on a large body of this state's law. But, yeah, for most of us, yeah, (inaudible).

BAYOR: And what was the reasoning there, basically?

BOND: Well, there -- you know, you could [13:00] feel, when you walked a room -- at least, I could, and maybe I'm different -- but you could feel this hostility. You know, "There he is. Here he comes." It was just awful. And you had the feeling that the harder you pushed against it, the more rigid it would become, and that you would be defeating whatever purpose you had if you did. So, you had to work and weasel your way on in. It was awful stuff. (coughs)

BAYOR: Yeah, I spoke to Leroy Johnson (inaudible). In the sense of trying to get your constituents to (inaudible) at that time -- we're dealing now with the late '60s -- was

there still -- was there still difficulty to get black demands a hearing in the (inaudible)?

BOND: Well, typically, what I'd do is, somebody would come to me with a problem, and it dealt -- it was a state problem, and some agency handled it, I'd write a letter -- a fairly detailed letter to the state agency. And, typically, they'd say, "OK, we'll take care of whatever it is." But every now and then, you felt as if you were just dropping your letter into a wastepaper basket. [14:00] And it wasn't because of this bureaucracy. I felt that it was because it came from me. Of course, you never knew, but then, you know, a month would pass by and you would write another letter, and another one, and another one. Sometimes they'd be solved, and sometimes they wouldn't.

BAYOR: And this involved city problems, also? Did you have any impact on (inaudible)?

BOND: No, I didn't deal much with city problems. Whoever was the chairman of the delegation -- the county delegation -- would deal with that, yeah.

BAYOR: I was just thinking that we're in the period of Ivan Allen now, (inaudible), so I would think that black demands were getting a real hearing in city hall by this time?

BOND: No.

BAYOR: You don't think so?

BOND: Yes, I think they were, but they -- not through me.

They wouldn't have come through me.

BAYOR: OK. But state government was still resistant to --

BOND: Resistant -- well, reluctant would be better than resistant -- reluctant.

BAYOR: Reluctant to give acknowledgement to the black community (inaudible)?

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: OK, the last -- really, the last question -- the affect of -- on racial tension, having a black mayor elected in '73? (inaudible)?

BOND: I -- well, it's -- you know, you can't [15:00] quantify these things -- but, I think, remarkable. Particularly -- although I've been told that Maynard Jackson is one of the most hated black men in this city. And it may be true. I don't know. But he seemed to me to perform so well. Built this airport under budget, ahead of schedule. You know, just -- even if you didn't like what he did, you had to think he knew what he was doing, it seemed to me. He just seemed to me such a competent, capable kind of guy, that he had (coughs) -- it has to be at least a modest plus for race relations. Maybe not a major plus, because his personality is abrasive, and he's, you know... But I think it had to be some kind of plus.

BAYOR: Why do you think the white business community went after him with a hatchet (inaudible)?

BOND: Well, first, because he threatened their privileges, their method of dealing with city hall, their contract system. He upset them. [16:00] He up-- he touched their pocketbooks, and anybody becomes upset when you do that.

BAYOR: In what sense? Do you think that joint ventures...?

BOND: Joint ventures, bringing in new people to do new things -- even new white people to do these... You know, if you had been -- this old group of whites had been used to doing this for years and years and years, and all of a sudden here comes Mr. New White Man, you know, you've got to be upset. Maynard just upset the applecart. And don't think some of them have recovered from it (inaudible).

BAYOR: (inaudible) Do you think he -- I guess it -- in terms of (inaudible), Jackson really provided much more for the black community than I imagined he would. So --

BOND: Yeah, oh, sure.

BAYOR: -- (inaudible) there had to be a black mayor at some point.

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: How about the first black congressman, when Andy Young (inaudible)?

BOND: Andy? Well, I think Andy was a big step -- a big plus, but maybe not a radical big plus. Because, even though a lot of business people here deal with a [17:00] congressman, typically, the average person doesn't, or, at least, beyond Social Security checks and that type of thing. So, aside from the happiness of his election, I don't think it made a great, great difference in the lives of most people.

BAYOR: But symbolically...?

BOND: Yeah, symbolic more than anything else.

BAYOR: Is that the same, really, with Leroy Johnson's, or Q.V. Williamson on the city council --

BOND: Yes, yes.

BAYOR: Basically symbolic (inaudible)?

BOND: Yes, well, the first couple of people, yeah.

BAYOR: How about Horace Tate, way back on the board of education there? The same?

BOND: A little less so, I think. Because the board of education -- the school system was heav-- was more -- always more black than the city, in terms of students and, probably, in terms of teachers, too. So, he probably was a little more real than symbolic, because he's an educator, too. This is the perfect job for him.

BAYOR: He should have stayed here. (laughs)

BOND: No, no, (inaudible). But I didn't say it. (laughter)

Anyway -- but, because he's an educator, [18:00] and because that's his focus in life, I think he probably was less symbolic than Q.V. and Leroy. He automatically fit in, in ways that they didn't.

BAYOR: In ways that changed anything, though? (inaudible)?

BOND: No.

BAYOR: Probably not?

BOND: Well, I don't know.

BAYOR: I guess I'm trying to get -- one of the things I'm trying to get is, really, a sense of racial change here at this time. And I've really gotten the feeling that, while Q.V. Williamson and Horace Tate and all (inaudible) a fine, slow job. Because Atlanta, really, was not moving very fast. And we're -- it's not -- if you hadn't put the fire in the -- with the student movement --

BOND: Yeah.

BAYOR: -- it really wouldn't have moved very fast at all. We'd still be dragging along here.

BOND: Probably so, probably so, probably so. If the business community could have kept the umbrella on, and kept things quiet, probably so.

BAYOR: Yeah. I mean, it wasn't -- it wasn't so much they
were really trying to address the grievances of the black
community. They were trying to --

BOND: Keep them quiet.

BAYOR: -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible).

BOND: Yeah. [19:00]

BAYOR: Well, great. That's --

BOND: OK.

BAYOR: Got through that fast, yeah.

END OF AUDIO FILE