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UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

INTERVIEW OF  
**BRUCE CARVER BOYNTON**

as a part of the  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

of the  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
MIDDLE DISTRICT OF ALABAMA

Interviewed by Mr. Jared Morris  
Frank M. Johnson, Jr.  
United States Courthouse Complex  
One Church Street  
Montgomery, Alabama  
May 22, 2018

VOLUME II

1 MR. MORRIS: Today is May 22nd, 2018, and we are here  
2 with Attorney Bruce Carver Boynton for a follow-up session.  
3 This is part two of a two-part oral history. The first part was  
4 last Friday, May the 18th, 2018, and we're going to continue  
5 where we left off at the end of that session.

6 Good morning, Mr. Boynton.

7 MR. BOYNTON: Good morning.

8 MR. MORRIS: One of the parts of your background that  
9 we did not have a lot of time to spend on last week was your  
10 education background. And if it's okay, I did want to go back  
11 and cover a couple of questions related to that, because I know  
12 you were a student of history.

13 MR. BOYNTON: Yes.

14 MR. MORRIS: And as we noted last time, you graduated  
15 high school very early, at the age of 14, and ended up  
16 graduating college from Fisk University at the age of 18.

17 What was it that brought you to make the decision to  
18 attend college at Fisk University?

19 MR. BOYNTON: Well, actually, at the time that I  
20 finished high school, I was uncertain where I wanted to go. But  
21 my parents wanted me to go to Tuskegee Institute, their alma  
22 mater. Actually, it was because they had attended Tuskegee, and  
23 there is an aunt in Montgomery who was the home demonstration  
24 agent for Montgomery County who was a Tuskegee graduate and an  
25 aunt who taught at Hale County Training School in Greensboro who

1 was a Tuskegee graduate. And Tuskegee was the headquarters for  
2 both parents and for my aunt, that they frequently went to  
3 Tuskegee for something in connection with their work. So I got  
4 to know everybody, and it would not be like going away from  
5 home. I wanted to go a distance where I could be considered  
6 away from home, but nevertheless close enough in case I wanted  
7 to come back. So Nashville, Tennessee, and Fisk University  
8 seemed to have fit that pattern.

9           And additionally, there was one friend of my mother who  
10 was a Fisk graduate, a doctor's wife, and she pointed out that  
11 Fisk University had a basic college program, and that they  
12 enrolled students who were brilliant or very smart from the 10th  
13 grade through the 12th grade where they would not have to go  
14 four years of college, they would go five years. But because  
15 they were early entrants, they had that advantage of just being  
16 smart. Actually, it was thought that I would associate with  
17 them, but I considered myself to be a straight freshman and not  
18 one of the young basic college students.

19           MR. MORRIS: Now, you decided to study history there  
20 and majored in history. What led to your choice there?

21           MR. BOYNTON: Well, that was an interesting choice,  
22 because I really wanted to be a doctor at the time, and I  
23 started off in the premed curriculum. Seventeen hours of some  
24 very solid education scientifically. I had five hours of  
25 chemistry and lab and four hours of solid geometry -- or five

1 hours of solid geometry.

2           And the first week of chemistry class with a German  
3 professor, he gave us an examination, I guess to inform him of  
4 where each one of the students were, advanced or not advanced in  
5 chemistry. I had only had one semester of chemistry, and I only  
6 learned how to make sulfuric acid.

7           And actually, I had one semester of physics, which the  
8 professor never taught physics because the English teacher went  
9 to the hospital on her yearly -- birth of her child. He taught  
10 us English. I think he figured that there were many of us in  
11 class who would never rely upon physics, but we did need to be  
12 able to speak a correct sentence grammatically to say that we  
13 were high school graduates.

14           But the test was given in the chemistry class. And I  
15 was sitting down on the front row of the lecture hall that was  
16 elevated, and I was writing with a pen -- a pencil. And I  
17 noticed that I didn't hear anybody else writing. The pencil  
18 would make a sound on the paper.

19           But I turned around and looked up behind me, and I saw  
20 everybody with this thing, looked like a ruler, and they were  
21 manipulating it. I didn't even know what a slide rule was while  
22 they were busy sliding me out.

23           But I quickly learned that I didn't have a background  
24 for Fisk University's premed program, and I then enrolled as a  
25 history major.

1           MR. MORRIS: How did your history studies shape your  
2 perspective on some of the events that you were a part of and  
3 some of the events that were going on at the time?

4           MR. BOYNTON: Well, the fortunate thing is that I had  
5 only one professor for all of my history classes. He was  
6 considered to be a great history professor, and he was. He  
7 could claim as his student from Fisk John Hope Franklin, but he  
8 also claimed Rudy Vallee as one of his students. That was, of  
9 course, before he left the east and came to Nashville to teach.

10           I got a good foundation in what America was all about,  
11 and also from a Native American point of view because I have  
12 that in my ancestry. But I had -- I suppose what I saw and  
13 experienced as a history major, things that shaped my whole  
14 outlook in life.

15           MR. MORRIS: And I know part of that outlook included  
16 some studies on the Doctrine of Discovery and the implications  
17 that that had, if you could talk some on that.

18           MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes. The Doctrine of Discovery,  
19 which I in later years as a practicing attorney got a chance to  
20 involve myself in much more because of my involvement with the  
21 Native Americans in Phoenix, Arizona. But I was --

22           And incidentally, I guess this is a good way of  
23 explaining the doctrine, too. I was requested by the Native  
24 Americans in Phoenix if I could involve myself in the Black  
25 community there in Phoenix to cause the Blacks to become

1 supportive of the problems that the Native Americans were  
2 facing.

3           The reason why is the very beginning of the Black  
4 people's problems in Africa for colonialism and slavery, slave  
5 trade, was also the exact problem that the Native Americans  
6 faced after Christopher Columbus came, resulting in the loss of  
7 the great turtle, which they referred to that being the United  
8 States, the property that they owned and the land that they  
9 owned.

10           Well, the Doctrine of Discovery basically began in  
11 1454 when the Pope gave to the Portuguese the right to go into  
12 Africa and seize it as a colony, the people as slaves, and to  
13 take any and all personal property.

14           Of course, when Columbus discovered America in 1492,  
15 the doctrine was extended at that time to all of the monarchs of  
16 European countries. Which at that time we have to remember the  
17 Catholic reformation had not occurred, and therefore all of --  
18 there were no Protestant rulers. All were Catholic. And the  
19 doctrine went to give them authority, as the king of Portugal  
20 had, to do anything it cared to with not only Africa, but any  
21 discovered country or land that was not already being ruled by a  
22 European monarch.

23           So that opened up the whole world, really, to  
24 colonialism. As a matter of fact, that was the -- that was done  
25 in the late 1800s when the -- at least when the widespread act

1 of colonialism came about. It even extended to the Asian  
2 countries and the Middle East, the Middle East because  
3 specifically, and the doctrine was worded, that the authorities,  
4 the monarchs, were to take the land of Muslims. And that  
5 explains how they got into the Middle East and became the boss  
6 of those areas.

7           So I recognized that as being perhaps the first  
8 example of institutionalized white racism, white supremacy, to  
9 give the European monarchs this type of authority over  
10 nonwhites.

11           MR. MORRIS: Mr. Boynton, in addition to your studies  
12 of history at Fisk University, I know you also studied foreign  
13 language, which led to a story of a theater incident that I  
14 wanted to ask you to recount if you don't mind.

15           MR. BOYNTON: That is right. Well, I had some --  
16 several incidents of seeking to break the law of segregated  
17 public facilities. And one occurred at Fisk when there was a  
18 movie -- I can recall now, it starred Sidney Poitier in  
19 *Blackboard Jungle*. And we wanted to see it being played at a  
20 downtown movie where the whites sat on the first floor, blacks  
21 sat in the balcony, but we didn't want to subject ourselves to  
22 being segregated. So what we did was to organize a group of us  
23 to go to the movie. We had two or three whites, because Fisk  
24 had always maintained having a white enrollment, either on a  
25 permanent basis or as exchange students from other universities

1 across the country.

2           But we got two or three of the white students, and  
3 there were about six of us Blacks, and we all converged on the  
4 ticket booth at the same time, and each one of us spoke a  
5 language that we had taken in college there at Fisk. For  
6 example, I spoke German. But by us speaking in tongue with all  
7 of these languages, it confused the ticket seller, who just  
8 assumed that we were all from a foreign country, and she sold us  
9 tickets. And we sat downstairs and enjoyed the movie at the  
10 time.

11           MR. MORRIS: From Fisk University you proceeded to law  
12 school at Howard University. And we touched on your years there  
13 last Friday, but I wanted to ask a more specific question. Did  
14 you have a favorite professor there, and what were some of your  
15 favorite parts of law school?

16           MR. BOYNTON: I suppose that my -- one of my favorite  
17 professors was one who taught me freshman or first year -- first  
18 year federal procedure. He was a person by the name of Charles  
19 Duncan.

20           And besides him being an excellent professor who  
21 relayed the problems that we found in the course very well,  
22 Charlie was a unique person. He had been the subject, along  
23 with his family, of a movie that had -- oh, it had been made  
24 in Hollywood after World War II. Probably released about 1947  
25 or '48. The title of the movie was *Lost Boundaries*. And in



1 it -- and this was based on an actual occurrence of -- based on  
2 fact.

3           But in the movie, Charlie had attended Dartmouth for  
4 his undergrad studies. His father was named Todd Duncan, and he  
5 had performed on Broadway with the play -- Gershwin's play *Porgy*  
6 *and Bess*. As a matter of fact, he played in the title role of  
7 *Porgy*.

8           At the time that Charlie was at Dartmouth, he became  
9 friends of a white classmate. I think he was perhaps his  
10 roommate. But they were close friends, so much so that the  
11 friend decided that he should go home with him for Christmas.  
12 So he wrote his family and told them that he wanted his roommate  
13 to come to visit along with him for the holidays, and they  
14 agreed.

15           Now, the problem was that his parents were Black, but  
16 they had been passing for white. As a matter of fact, the  
17 father was the town doctor, highly respected, and they had lived  
18 a comfortable life passing.

19           When Charlie, who was identifiably black, showed up  
20 with their friends -- their son, rather, then all conniption  
21 fits occurred because they were positive that by his presence,  
22 it would indicate to the community in some type of way that they  
23 were not white but were members of the Black race. And the  
24 movie went on and on on that.

25           It ended up with a happy ending, but I've forgotten

1 right now what it was. But occasionally the movie is shown on  
2 Ted Turner channel. So if one remembers that the title of the  
3 picture was *Lost Boundaries*, you can catch that movie perhaps  
4 even shown now days.

5 But I thought that we had a very good relationship,  
6 and I will remember him forever.

7 MR. MORRIS: I know you had good relationships with  
8 your classmates as well. Your class started with 60 but  
9 graduated with only 30, so a fairly high attrition rate, I  
10 believe.

11 MR. BOYNTON: Right. I think the school was happy to  
12 be able to eliminate some of the students.

13 MR. MORRIS: Law school was different by the time I got  
14 there. It was harsh historically.

15 We covered quite a bit on Friday about --

16 MR. BOYNTON: Incidentally, let me say this on that  
17 subject.

18 MR. MORRIS: Yes, sir.

19 MR. BOYNTON: There was a saying that one of the  
20 teaching professors adopted to us first-year students, very  
21 early days of the classes starting. He said he wanted everybody  
22 to look to their left and then look to their right, because by  
23 the end of the semester, one of you-all will be gone.

24 MR. MORRIS: I know you spent some time in Philadelphia  
25 over the summers during law school, but ultimately after

1 graduating -- after making it through those cuts and graduating  
2 from Howard, you returned home and took the Alabama Bar. Was  
3 there a temptation at any point to stay up north after you  
4 graduated?

5 MR. BOYNTON: No, not really. I think the closest that  
6 I came to considering practicing in Philadelphia is that I -- I  
7 had difficulty getting jobs, even though I was seeking some  
8 employment, not on a permanent basis, but something commensurate  
9 with my education. And I often went to someone who was a  
10 practicing lawyer and asked them if they could make a suggestion  
11 on where I might go to apply for work that would not be working  
12 in a restaurant or something of the sort.

13 I ended up with an attorney, Cecil Moore. Cecil was a  
14 very outstanding criminal lawyer, and we became close friends.

15 Close friends because he had broken the will of a -- I  
16 can't remember his first name now, but his last name was Girard,  
17 who was a seafaring captain who made enough money to establish a  
18 white university for white males. And that's the way that his  
19 will specified. And Cecil said, there ain't a will that can't  
20 be broke, ain't a will -- ain't a will that can't be wrote,  
21 ain't a will that can't be broke. And he broke that will for  
22 the admission of Blacks.

23 As I said, he and I became very good friends. And I  
24 did consider at one time remaining in Philadelphia and  
25 practicing with Cecil. But I recognized that my family, mother

1 and father, were fighting for equal rights for Blacks here in  
2 Alabama, and that they had paid my way through for college and  
3 law school to help them, so I did not seriously consider but for  
4 just a minute.

5 MR. MORRIS: Now, when you did come home to take the  
6 Alabama Bar, we noted on Friday that the same day you sat for  
7 the Bar was the date that the United States Supreme Court  
8 granted cert in your Supreme Court case.

9 MR. BOYNTON: That is true.

10 MR. MORRIS: What we did not note is that in the midst  
11 of all that going on, when you took the Bar, you got the second  
12 highest score in the state. And I think that's an important  
13 thing to note here.

14 Your application, though, wound up being upheld for a  
15 number of years after you took the exam.

16 MR. BOYNTON: For six years. But actually, when I took  
17 the examination on the first day, and the Supreme Court granted  
18 cert, the local news and everybody carried that occurrence. And  
19 also the students at Alabama State University, which is a Black  
20 school here in Montgomery, went down to the county courthouse to  
21 protest an all-white lunch counter there in the courthouse  
22 itself. So that was in the news.

23 And I had not mentioned that I was appealing the case,  
24 because I did not write that I had intentionally gone into the  
25 white restaurant on my application, but they did investigate my

1 arrest. At the time that everyone else got notice of if they  
2 passed or failed the Bar, I got a telegram stating that they  
3 were going to investigate the circumstances surrounding my  
4 arrest. And that investigation took place for six years.

5 And actually, I got my license from the state of  
6 Alabama primarily because Congress had passed the important  
7 racial integration laws -- the Voting Rights Act, the public  
8 accommodation law -- and they thought that there was no longer  
9 any need to keep me out; that they had lost on all fields of  
10 battle. Therefore, I came down and got my license in 1966.  
11 January the 1st, 1966, is the date that my license were issued.

12 MR. MORRIS: Well, I was just going to, before getting  
13 to 1966, if it's okay, go back to what you were doing meanwhile,  
14 which is you went to Tennessee and also passed the Tennessee Bar  
15 exam. And there was a story, I believe, regarding your  
16 admission ultimately in Tennessee.

17 MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes. Which is symbolic of the  
18 problems that my parents would have been facing all the while  
19 and what I also faced at that time.

20 But I got notice that I had passed the Bar in  
21 Nashville. And then several weeks or a couple of months later,  
22 I got a call from the president of the Tennessee Bar that he had  
23 received a letter from the Dallas County Bar Association, which  
24 is in Selma, my hometown. And he thought that there were some  
25 problems that the letter presented and suggested that I come to

1 Nashville and meet with him at his home.

2           My parents and I did do such a thing by meeting with  
3 him on a Saturday at his farm. He was a very congenial person.  
4 And we met him, played chess, but I wanted to know more about  
5 the letter that he had received. And I asked him finally, what  
6 about the letter? He said, well, not to worry about it; that  
7 we -- he used the term "we" -- had considered the letter, and it  
8 was written in such racist terms that we decided to ignore it,  
9 and you will be admitted with everyone else on the date of  
10 admission.

11           I asked to see the letter, and he said that he didn't  
12 have it there at his home. But I did ask him, what did it say?  
13 And he said, well, one of the things that it said was that they  
14 considered you and your father to be arrogant niggers. And with  
15 that, they ignored the rest of it because it was, obviously, a  
16 racist letter. So I got my license from the state of Tennessee.

17           MR. MORRIS: And you proceeded to practice in  
18 Chattanooga. And I thought that it was worth noting that I  
19 believe one of the types of cases you handled there was  
20 representing teenagers who would go to the local theater, as you  
21 had during your time at Fisk University.

22           MR. BOYNTON: Well, that is true. I was representing  
23 some young people who were demonstrating against an all-white  
24 theater in downtown Chattanooga. Actually, it was done at a  
25 time when there were sit-in demonstrations occurring all over

1 the south, and they were being arrested, beaten, and otherwise  
2 made to feel uncomfortable.

3           The students -- the high school students who comprised  
4 the protesters for the movie theaters had a fashion of protest  
5 that did not cause them to be arrested. They formed a circular  
6 line, and the one closest to the booth would go up and offer his  
7 money and be denied a ticket. He then would go to the rear of  
8 the line, and the next one would do the same thing, and they  
9 were repeating that all through the protest. Well, the city  
10 said that as long as they don't break the law, they're not going  
11 to be arrested.

12           There was one recent high school graduate by the name  
13 of Willie Ricks. And Willie, who later became the minister of  
14 defense for Stokely Carmichael -- and I have a large picture of  
15 Stokely, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Willie Ricks marching  
16 together. But he was minister of defense for Stokely Carmichael  
17 and frequently comes to Selma. So I still see Willie now.

18           But he really was my first client or these kids were my  
19 first client. I was called in to defend them when they decided  
20 that they would do something that would cause them to be  
21 arrested. So Willie had them to line up across the sidewalk,  
22 thereby causing all-white sidewalk walkers to then have to walk  
23 in the gutter. And they were then arrested in the presence of  
24 two newspaper reporters, the morning and the afternoon  
25 reporters, and a local television news camera. So there was no

1 question, no doubt about what they did and the resulting arrest.

2 Well, when we went to city court on the charge of  
3 obstructing the sidewalk, the courtroom was packed with Black  
4 spectators. Actually, I had come to Chattanooga to replace a  
5 Black attorney, the only one in town, who had died after many  
6 years of practice and everything. But I was a replacement for  
7 him, so to speak. And I determined that the people who were  
8 sitting in the audience had come to observe me and the way I  
9 would defend these kids as much as to observe how they were  
10 defended.

11 Well, the sergeant who ordered the arrests of the kids  
12 testified what the kids did; what he saw them do. And he then  
13 picked up his notebook and said that he ordered, and started to  
14 read off the names of the defendants, and that they were  
15 arrested.

16 Well, I stopped him with an objection. And my  
17 objection came because I didn't know how I would defend the case  
18 until a quiet voice spoke to me, and the voice said, Bruce,  
19 don't you know that to white people, all Black people look  
20 alike? So my objection was for him to identify the person with  
21 the name of the arrestee, which he couldn't do. So for each one  
22 that he called out and then was unable to identify who that was,  
23 I had a motion to dismiss.

24 And it was everybody who was dismissed except Willie  
25 Ricks, because Willie had been arrested so many times as a



1 sit-inner or other areas of protest that -- actually he was  
2 being supported by the NAACP of Chattanooga, but they were  
3 afraid that with his frequent arrests he would soon break the  
4 bail bond account of the organization.

5           But that is -- that led -- that case -- because I had  
6 on appeal the arrest of Willie Ricks, and that case led to  
7 something I'm very proud of that occurred. That was that I had  
8 a close friend who was a lawyer, and he had been a state senator  
9 at the time that *Brown versus Board of Education* was decided.  
10 And he made public statements, typically of all the white  
11 officeholders who reacted in their southern way to the decision  
12 of the United States Supreme Court: That your little white girl  
13 will come home with black babies and all of that.

14           At the time that he became my friend, he no longer felt  
15 that way. He genuinely had rejected all of those type of  
16 statements.

17           But he wanted to run for mayor of the city against an  
18 officeholder who had been in office for 18 years. He asked me  
19 what would I charge to be a co-campaign manager for his  
20 campaign. I told him that my charge would be that he, if  
21 elected, would put me out of business of representing kids on  
22 matters such as what they were arrested on. He said that he  
23 would. Actually, we had a campaign and election that I was very  
24 active in, and we won.

25           Very shortly after that, he not only integrated the

1 city, but he and his wife -- I had taken in a partner, and his  
2 wife and my first wife, all six of us attended a formerly  
3 all-white movie to see the motion picture *How The West Was Won*.  
4 That was symbolic of the fact that Chattanooga was now a  
5 desegregated city. Actually, everything, all public facilities,  
6 were desegregated, except the public schools were still being  
7 appealed and some things by the board of education. We had  
8 elementary schools desegregated, but it was sort of like having  
9 to climb a mountain with the rest of the schools.

10           And also one place that wasn't immediately  
11 desegregated was the wrestling matches, because they -- he  
12 thought that it would take some time for the viewers who went to  
13 wrestling match to become adjusted. And I had no objection  
14 about that -- those two grounds.

15           But I am very happy that that was done two years  
16 before Congress passed the public accommodation act. So we  
17 desegregated a city, won *Look Magazine's* All-American City  
18 Award, and that was done while the rest of the state of  
19 Tennessee practiced racial segregation.

20           MR. MORRIS: I believe Mayor Ralph Kelley was the mayor  
21 you helped to get elected.

22           MR. BOYNTON: Yes, it was. That was the person.

23           MR. MORRIS: During those years in Chattanooga, I  
24 believe you also continued to have some ongoing contact with the  
25 attorney who had represented you in your United States Supreme

1 Court appeal, Future Justice Thurgood Marshall. And I thought  
2 I'd ask you to speak to that.

3 MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes. Well, I had mentioned that  
4 school desegregation case against the Chattanooga Board of  
5 Education was ongoing. And the Black lawyer who died had been  
6 the local lawyer who filed the lawsuit. I came in and replaced  
7 him, which allowed for the out-of-state attorneys for the  
8 plaintiffs to continue in the case, which was Thurgood Marshall  
9 and Constance Baker Motley.

10 Connie Motley became a federal district court judge for  
11 the District of New York City. And they would -- in New York  
12 City, they would draft the pleadings that would be relevant to  
13 the case. Mail them to me. I then would file the pleadings  
14 with the court, and with an extra copy -- one for myself and a  
15 copy for the newspaper reporter. I would give him his copy.

16 Well, that's the way it went for about three months.  
17 And I really felt like I was a spear carrier in an opera,  
18 because I really didn't do any of the work on the pleadings.  
19 But I thought that since I was in court every time that we had  
20 court, and I'm filing the pleadings, I am one of the lawyers;  
21 therefore, I should be paid. So I sent a bill to Thurgood. And  
22 I didn't hear from anyone. Weeks came and went, and I didn't  
23 hear anything.

24 So I got on the telephone, and I called to New York.  
25 And Constance Motley answered the telephone, and I said I was

1 calling because I had submitted a bill and I hadn't received any  
2 money. She said, "Well, Mr. Marshall is right here. I'll give  
3 him the phone." And Thurgood came on, and he said, "Yes,  
4 Boynton." I said, "Mr. Marshall, I submitted you-all a bill,  
5 and I haven't received any pay." He says, "How much was the  
6 bill for?" I said, "\$5,000." He said, "Well, I tell you what  
7 we're going to do. You submit us bills that you want, and we'll  
8 submit you a check for the amount of money that you're going to  
9 get."

10           And he submitted a check for \$3,000, with which I  
11 bought my first car. So I really appreciate being a cocounsel  
12 of Thurgood Marshall.

13           MR. MORRIS: Now, while you were living and working in  
14 Chattanooga, Tennessee, I know that you did not disconnect from  
15 Selma, obviously, because of your parents, but also in your own  
16 activities you remained very involved. And there was one  
17 incident around 1963, while you were living in Chattanooga,  
18 where a judge in Alabama signed an order to enjoin a long list  
19 of people from being allowed to gather, I believe. And I wanted  
20 to ask you to tell that story, if you don't mind, and your role  
21 in responding to that.

22           MR. BOYNTON: Right. Well, I would come home to do  
23 whatever I could with my mother or father. And one time I was  
24 there in Selma, and I was in the company of a lawyer who became  
25 a very prominent attorney, J. L. Chestnut, who had been in law

1 school one class ahead of mine.

2 But the time that we were together on this day, a  
3 deputy sheriff came along and served us with injunctions. This  
4 is in '63 when there had been, of course, Freedom Riders, lunch  
5 counter sit-ins, but things had then changed to voting  
6 registration demonstrations.

7 It had not developed in Selma that there was any mass  
8 demand for blacks to become registered voters. My father had  
9 been active. In '63 he had suffered a heart attack -- or,  
10 rather, a stroke, and he then was in a nursing home, completely  
11 paralyzed on his left side.

12 But my father, to give you an idea of just how intense  
13 he was on the issue of voting, everyone who was an adult who  
14 passed my father's room at the nursing home, he would call out a  
15 question: Are you a registered voter? And because there had  
16 not been any widespread -- outside of what my mother and some of  
17 her group would do, there had not been any widespread mass  
18 meetings or anything of the sort.

19 The purpose of the injunctions -- now, we had never  
20 received any notice of a lawsuit. Never received any notice of  
21 a lawsuit. These were just flat-out injunctions, that we were  
22 enjoined from being in the company of more than three persons.  
23 And that was rather amazing, to say the least. But it was  
24 designed to enjoin everybody Black in the town of Selma who  
25 might possibly become involved in a voting rights meeting. The

1 names of some of the people were people who would never  
2 participate in a voting rights meeting, but nevertheless, they  
3 listed everybody. And it was names of over a hundred.

4           I thought of an idea that could satisfy the ministers  
5 who were enjoined from the three people or more but who would be  
6 too afraid to openly violate the injunction, and at the same  
7 time to give a message to the congregation of how intense the  
8 white community was in objecting to the registration of Blacks  
9 and what they must do by organizing to defeat them in their  
10 efforts to stop Blacks from becoming registered voters, and this  
11 being done without the ministers publicly espousing that idea.  
12 So what I did was to prepare a letter, written to every minister  
13 in Selma, requesting that he, on a date certain, like the  
14 following Sunday, that he does not show up in church, but he  
15 allows his associate pastor to be the one who conducts the  
16 service, and he stays at home. That way he was not in violation  
17 of the injunction, but by the same token there is a stern  
18 message given to the congregation about what this is all about.  
19 Well, I and some of the SNCC participants went to each one of  
20 the churches.

21           And I had -- that -- that Saturday, in preparing the  
22 letters, I had run them off at my father-in-law's, who was a  
23 minister, home. And there must have been 30 or 40 of such  
24 letters. I ran them off on his mimeograph machine.

25           And because of the length of time it took, I also had

1 a couple of drinks to warm me as I was just participating in  
2 writing the letters. Well, I suppose I had that on my breath a  
3 little bit. I wasn't drunk or anything like that. But as we  
4 had finished delivering the letters, I was arrested, and I was  
5 arrested for DUI. As a matter of fact, they took me to the city  
6 jail in Selma. And present at the time was Attorney J. L.  
7 Chestnut. And I was just obedient and compliant with whatever  
8 they wanted.

9           They put me in a cell for about two hours, and then I  
10 was released, but they were supposed to have kept me for eight  
11 hours. I was told by Attorney Chestnut that they thought that  
12 my arrest would be so embarrassing to me that I would go home  
13 and stay the rest of the time.

14           But to give you an idea of the spirit and the attitude  
15 of my parents in their fight for Blacks to have a right to vote,  
16 my father was conducting a Fourth Congressional voting rights  
17 meeting, which was our congressional district, at a First  
18 Baptist Church in Selma on this day. And I, from being released  
19 from jail, immediately went to the church and spoke. Well, it  
20 wasn't long before the federal court had dissolved that  
21 injunction.

22           MR. MORRIS: I know there was another incident that  
23 happened, Mr. Boynton, during your time while you were living in  
24 Chattanooga but still heavily involved in activities in Alabama.

25           MR. BOYNTON: Right.

1           MR. MORRIS: And this was when you were -- this related  
2 to the Freedom Rides and a trip up Highway 31. You know which  
3 one I'm referencing.

4           MR. BOYNTON: Right.

5           I had come home, and I had traveled to Montgomery for  
6 some business reason and to visit with my aunt, and I decided  
7 that I would leave from Montgomery to drive back to Chattanooga.  
8 And the way that one would do that is to take Highway 31 here in  
9 Montgomery to Birmingham, and then to change to a highway  
10 further north.

11           Well, this was about two o'clock in the morning as I  
12 was driving, and I had cut on my favorite jazz radio station  
13 called Moonglow With Martin. And though I was the only person  
14 riding in the car, I felt that I had complete company with the  
15 music that was playing.

16           Well, I was approaching the city of Alabaster,  
17 Alabama, when I wanted to pass a car -- it was a double-lane  
18 highway, but this car was driving in the right hand parking  
19 lane, and about a foot of the automobile was over in the second  
20 lane. I wanted to pass the car, so I blinked several times to  
21 let the driver know that I was there to pass. He slowly moved  
22 over. And as I passed the automobile, I noticed it was a deputy  
23 sheriff. So I went on with the passing.

24           And at the first traffic light in the city, the light  
25 was red against me. So I stopped in obedience of the light, and



1 the deputy drove up to me and beckoned for me to follow him. I  
2 followed him to the city hall, which also was the city jail.  
3 And he told me he was going to write me a ticket for passing in  
4 a no-passing lane.

5 He asked to see my driver's license. Well, Tennessee  
6 carried driver's license that also on it was your profession, so  
7 my driver's license said I was attorney at law. When he saw  
8 that, he asked to search my car.

9 Well, at that hour of the morning, and with nothing to  
10 hide, I gave him the keys to the car and agreed that he should  
11 search it. I accompanied him back to the car, at which time it  
12 dawned upon me that I had stopped on my way down to Selma here  
13 in Birmingham and met with a person by the name of J. Richmond  
14 Pearson, who later has become a circuit court judge there in  
15 Birmingham. But Tennessee had forbade us to have quickie  
16 divorces, but Alabama still allowed such, so I wanted to send  
17 down to him clients of mine who were in need of a quick divorce.  
18 And he agreed and gave me a form called a waiver form where a  
19 defendant would sign that and waive his right to take testimony  
20 and all of those type of things. And the form carried an  
21 identification of a court. It said, in the Circuit Court of  
22 Jefferson County, Alabama.

23 I had just simply put the forms in the glove  
24 compartment, and I thought about that when the deputy sat on the  
25 front seat and opened the glove compartment. He did come up

1 with the forms, and his -- I could see his thought process went  
2 from two plus two to equaling eight. And next thing I knew, he  
3 had gotten out of the car, forced my hand behind my back, and  
4 pushed me back into the jail and gave -- and put me in a cell.

5 I remained there, not knowing why I had been arrested,  
6 until about -- oh, about seven o'clock that morning, when I  
7 overheard him talking to one of his fellow officers that he had  
8 nabbed himself a Freedom Rider. I looked around, and I was the  
9 only one that was in the cell.

10 But I found out that he had charged me with not just  
11 passing in a no-passing zone, but assault and battery on him. I  
12 also found out that they were holding court on me that day; that  
13 they found the judge at a laundromat, and he had come, and I was  
14 present before him.

15 And before we got started, when I found out what the  
16 charges were, I asked him what type of punishment would I  
17 received if found guilty. And the judge began to tell me about  
18 the several months in jail.

19 I then asked him to allow me to talk with a lawyer,  
20 and I called Attorney Orzell Billingslea in Birmingham and  
21 explained to him what was going on. He then asked to speak with  
22 the judge, and the two of them spoke for a while. And then the  
23 judge told me that I could plead guilty to assault, and he would  
24 fine me \$50, which I did at that time and got the heck out of  
25 Alabaster.

1 I have since gone back and asked the clerk of  
2 municipal court if she could find a copy of the proceedings, and  
3 it was -- she claimed that it was so far back that it would be  
4 very difficult to locate one. But I wanted it for my book  
5 because it did occur.

6 MR. MORRIS: This would have been around May of 1961, I  
7 believe; is that --

8 MR. BOYNTON: Right. Actually, yes. What it was is  
9 that the Freedom Riders were attacked at the Birmingham bus  
10 station. That would have been May the 18th, I believe, May the  
11 18th or May the 17th, 1961.

12 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Boynton, there was a case -- a number  
13 of cases you handled after returning to Selma around 1966 that  
14 we'll touch on that. Originally one of the activities you were  
15 involved in when you returned was assisting in a corporation  
16 that I believe had been formed between your mother, Ms. Amelia  
17 Boynton Robinson, along with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. And I  
18 wanted to ask if you could briefly describe that corporation.

19 MR. BOYNTON: Yes. My mother was interested in forming  
20 some type of organization, which became this corporation, but  
21 something that could result in the employment of local Blacks  
22 and particularly local Blacks who had lost their jobs in  
23 demonstrating to become registered voters. Even though the  
24 voting rights bill had been passed, they still would be out of  
25 work.

1           And what she did was convince Dr. Martin Luther King,  
2 Jr., to give \$10,000 of his honorarium for being awarded the  
3 Nobel Peace Prize, and she contributed \$10,000 -- hold on just a  
4 minute --

5           MR. MORRIS: It may have been five and five.

6           MR. BOYNTON: 5,000. Yes. 5,000. Each one  
7 contributed 5,000, which made 10,000.

8           MR. MORRIS: Yes, sir.

9           MR. BOYNTON: For the corpus of a new corporation that  
10 was set up just for that purpose and that purpose alone.

11           One of the things that we did was they -- I became the  
12 attorney for the group, and one of the first things I did was  
13 ask them where was the \$10,000 that they had raised, and they  
14 said that it was in the bank. I explained that the bank was the  
15 very place that had been financing the resistance to their  
16 movement, and they shouldn't be allowing it to use their money.  
17 So they agreed the best thing to do would be to purchase some  
18 land with the 10,000, and they bought 50 acres of land.

19           Which later on -- because of the difficulty that we had  
20 in actually raising more money that would have been necessary  
21 for a garment factory, and people just didn't buy shares, that  
22 later on -- and this is just a few years ago -- that property  
23 was sold for \$50,000. So it was a good investment.

24           MR. MORRIS: Good return on the investment there.

25           MR. BOYNTON: Right. Right.

1           MR. MORRIS: In 1967, around that year, you had a case  
2 that you were assigned to handle in Monroeville, Alabama. And I  
3 believe this was the first instance in which an African American  
4 attorney in Alabama had become a special prosecutor for the  
5 state. I wanted to ask you to tell about that case.

6           MR. BOYNTON: Yes. It was my first appearance as  
7 special prosecutor for the state. It involved a Black young man  
8 about 21, 22 years of age, who had been driving his automobile  
9 down a dirt road in Monroe County, Alabama. Actually, it was  
10 close to Monroeville.

11           The mayor of Monroeville was standing outside his  
12 automobile -- and this is all on a dirt road -- when the young  
13 man came by. He passed the mayor, and his automobile threw up  
14 some gravel on the mayor. The young man didn't notice that and  
15 went on about his business.

16           Later on that day, he drove by a store that was called  
17 The Commissary, which was a general products store for groceries  
18 to everything else. And he saw the mayor, who was with two  
19 other white men, and the mayor beckoned for him to come over to  
20 where he was. They were not inside The Commissary. They were  
21 under a large oak tree on the side of The Commissary. He went  
22 to see what the mayor wanted and was attacked by all three and  
23 very badly beaten.

24           He arranged, with the help of local Black militants  
25 there in Monroeville -- he arranged for an arrest warrant to be

1 issued against the mayor. And the mayor was arrested, so that I  
2 became the special prosecutor on the case against the mayor.

3 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Boynton, if I can interject one  
4 detail, I believe the young man had to be hospitalized after the  
5 beating as well; is that right?

6 MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes, he did have to be. He was that  
7 badly beaten.

8 And I had a problem -- well, not in this case. Because  
9 at this time, the juries were not only all white, they were all  
10 male. There were no white women on the jury.

11 But my problem was trying a case where you knew that  
12 the jury was going to come back not guilty. And that did  
13 happen, but I was the first time that a Black attorney had been  
14 a special prosecutor.

15 Now, one of the fringe benefits of that case is that it  
16 resulted in the desegregation of the Monroe County Circuit  
17 Court. The courtroom was not the original one where *To Kill A*  
18 *Mockingbird* had been filmed. The county had built a new  
19 courthouse, and it had a balcony just like the old one where  
20 blacks sat.

21 Now, when I arrived at the courthouse, all of the  
22 Blacks who were enthused about the case were waiting for me,  
23 standing outside the courthouse. When I got out of my car and  
24 started to enter the courthouse, I told them I did not want to  
25 see anybody Black sitting in the balcony. They all sat on the

1 first floor for that case, and that desegregated that county's  
2 courtroom.

3 Now, the judge was Robert E. Lee Keith, who was quite a  
4 conservative person. I don't think he forgave me for  
5 desegregating his courtroom after many years.

6 What was I going to say?

7 But that was the result of that case.

8 MR. MORRIS: So positive outcome, despite the not  
9 guilty verdict by the --

10 MR. BOYNTON: Right. Right.

11 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Boynton, I believe around 1967, there  
12 was another case that I wanted to ask you about, and that's one  
13 where I believe you represented Mr. Stokely Carmichael and  
14 Mr. Willie Ricks.

15 MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes. That one arose one spring day.  
16 One Sunday, I had gone fishing. And when I came back home, I  
17 had a telephone call from Stokely who said that they were in the  
18 middle of a gun battle. The call came from Prattville, Alabama.  
19 And what he explained was that they -- he was involved in a gun  
20 battle with a local police, and they were running out of -- he  
21 was running out of bullets, and the Army had a tank that they  
22 were bringing in. And he asked what should he do, and I said,  
23 surrender. Which is what he did do, fortunately, before anyone  
24 lost a life.

25 But what had occurred to reach the point of the

1   shootout was that earlier that day, there had been a mass  
2   meeting that had been held there in Prattville. It was about  
3   voting rights -- no, let's see. Couldn't have been voting  
4   rights. I'm not sure what it was about. Because this would  
5   have been '68. I'm not -- I'm not sure --

6           MR. MORRIS: A civil rights matter.

7           MR. BOYNTON: Right. It was a civil rights matter.

8           But they -- one of the white police officers walked to  
9   the front of the church and just announced to everybody, "Y'all  
10  go home." And a Black woman stood up and said, "You go home and  
11  see if I'm there." And I guess they had some more words, but  
12  that was the end of the involvement of the police at the church.

13           But then later on that day -- I don't know if it was  
14  the same officer who had been at the church or another police  
15  officer, but he was on regular patrol, when somebody with a  
16  shotgun shot a blast into the windshield of the automobile.  
17  None of the shots injured the officer, but the blast itself  
18  caused him to lose control of the automobile. It went into a  
19  tree and knocked him unconscious.

20           From there the law enforcement moved to the house where  
21  they knew was the headquarters for Stokely, and the shootout  
22  occurred. And that was what was going on.

23           Actually, the next day, for me to present a bond for  
24  all of the participants -- because besides it being Willie  
25  Ricks, there were about 12 -- 10 -- about 10 young Black men.



1           But as I made the bond for Stokely and others, at that  
2 time there was a flatbed truck that had about 10 white men who  
3 were sitting on the truck, and the National Guard had been  
4 called in in reference to the appearance of that tank. And that  
5 day when the bonds were being made, there was a colonel from the  
6 National Guard who was there, and he and I both expressed  
7 concern about the white men on the flatbed truck.

8           What he concluded to do, because there was an alleyway  
9 on the opposite side of the courthouse, leading from the jail to  
10 the street. And if one took that way, the people on the truck  
11 would not even see the departure of Stokely and the people. So  
12 Stokely and the group all departed by going down the alleyway in  
13 their automobile, followed by the National Guard and their --  
14 with their armament, followed by the news people with their  
15 television cameras. And when I looked around, I saw that I was  
16 the only one left, and the whites on the flatbed truck were  
17 still there. Well, I was the only one there with the bondsman.  
18 But we also departed the same way and got away without any  
19 problems.

20           Now, some months passed before that case came up to be  
21 resolved. In the meantime, Stokely had left and gone to Africa  
22 to marry a person who had been an outstanding movie star, and  
23 she was an outstanding vocalist, recording star. Miriam Makeba  
24 was her name. And they were scheduled to get married at the  
25 same time that the case was scheduled to come up with Stokely.

1           I went to the judge and explained that -- I was really  
2 asking for a continuance -- that Stokely would be in Africa  
3 getting married at the time that his case was scheduled and  
4 would he give me a continuance of a sort. And he says, well,  
5 Bruce, if you promise me that Stokely Carmichael will never come  
6 back to Autauga County, I'll dismiss the case. I said, well,  
7 you got that, Judge. You got a promise. Actually, that was  
8 done, so to speak.

9           Years later, I was over in Prattville and decided to  
10 look at the court record to see how the case was finally  
11 resolved. And even though there was a shootout and all of that,  
12 the case was resolved against Stokely for disorderly conduct and  
13 a fine of \$25. So that's how that one was resolved.

14           MR. MORRIS: You had another case, I believe, that  
15 followed that one by not too long, also in the late 1960s,  
16 representing Mr. James Austin in Camden, Alabama. I wanted to  
17 ask you about that one as well.

18           MR. BOYNTON: Oh, yes. Yes.

19           Well, I had been representing a young Black man  
20 about 20 years of age in Sheffield, Alabama, which is the  
21 northern section of the state. He was charged with two cases of  
22 murder where he had shot and killed two brothers. They were  
23 coworkers of his. All three were employed for the city  
24 cemetery, and they were cleaning up things of a sort.

25           But what happened, the other two whites were people who

1 were constantly after him, agitating him, because he was Black.  
2 He finally had gotten so tired of the way that they treated him,  
3 including calling him Florida sunshine and destroying his  
4 lunches and everything, that he told them that the next time  
5 that they bothered him, he was going to shoot and kill them.

6           They did act into that. And he left the cemetery,  
7 caught a White K cab, went home, looked for his gun and for his  
8 bullets around the house, found them, loaded his weapon, placed  
9 it in his waistband, and came back to work. He kept the cab  
10 waiting to bring him back to work.

11           And sure enough, they started in after him again. He  
12 pulled his pistol, and he shot both of them to death. He then  
13 went down to the county jail and surrendered himself. And that  
14 was a case that I was involved in the defense.

15           I was defending the defendant on the grounds of  
16 insanity caused by white racism. And I had a Black psychiatrist  
17 from Atlanta, Georgia, who created the slogan Black is  
18 beautiful, it's so beautiful to be Black, as his defense  
19 witness. And we went through the life and exposure of that  
20 young man, and one could easily see that he was a victim in his  
21 life of white racism.

22           But I was so involved with that case that James Austin,  
23 who lived in Selma but who had friends and relatives in Wilcox  
24 County, the next county over, and one of the worst counties in  
25 the state of Alabama racially, had been there seeking to

1 register -- again, I don't remember why, but something involving  
2 civil rights, because he had copied some of Martin Luther King's  
3 speech from the *I Have A Dream* speech. And I do remember seeing  
4 him on television, on the news, reciting a portion of that  
5 speech.

6 But they had arrested him. And I'm not sure what it  
7 was for now, and I do know that I kept putting off seeing about  
8 going down and getting a bond for him because I was so tied up  
9 in the north Alabama case.

10 So finally there was a break that presented itself in  
11 that case, and I explained to the SNCC workers who served as my  
12 bodyguards and as a driver that the -- James Austin -- they had  
13 come, and we would go down there and get him out of jail, even  
14 though I knew that we would have a hard time with law  
15 enforcement there.

16 Wilcox County is just such a county. It was akin to  
17 Dallas County with the sheriff, Jim Clark, that we had, and a  
18 lot of men had been killed in the county jail. And I knew that,  
19 and I certainly didn't want that to happen to James.

20 Well, I went down to the courthouse to get a bond form  
21 to take out in the community to get someone that James knew to  
22 sign the bond. Actually, that's the way that it was done at  
23 that time. You could get a form from the sheriff's department  
24 and go out, have it signed, and the sheriff then would check to  
25 see if they had enough property to be released on the signature

1 of the signee.

2           Well, there was nobody in the sheriff's office, so I  
3 couldn't get a bond form. But I waited for about an hour, and a  
4 chief deputy -- or the chief deputy showed up. I told him that  
5 I wanted a bond form. He then explained to me where he had  
6 been. And he said that he had been someplace in the county  
7 because the Black students were protesting and objecting to the  
8 fact that they had to go a long ways on mileage to school on the  
9 bus.

10           And I know that he said that and said it that way to  
11 get me to reply. If I objected to him, I was asking for an  
12 argument with him, with me and his jail. If I agreed with him,  
13 then he would consider me just an acceptable Negro.

14           So I thought that I would go in an oblique way and try  
15 to turn it off into humor. So I said, "Well, shit, Sheriff, the  
16 way Black kids are nowadays, it's a wonder they didn't grab you."  
17 He turned red, expressed a little bit of anger on his face, but  
18 he gave me the form and I left. That was at the courthouse  
19 where the sheriff's office was.

20           When I came back after having the bond signed, I went  
21 to the courthouse. And I was so intent on getting a bond  
22 executed for James that I didn't pay attention to obvious signs  
23 that something was amiss. I ignored the fact that at the front  
24 of the jail near the parking space, the sidewalk, there was the  
25 clerk of the court. And we had been gone for over an hour, so

1 she had to be there for a long time waiting for me. But she was  
2 waiting for me to tell me that the sheriff wanted to see me at  
3 the jail. I ignored that and went to the jail.

4           When we drove up and parked, there was the sheriff,  
5 the chief deputy, and one Black trusty with a shotgun. Across  
6 the street were about 13 whites, and they had guns. And I  
7 recognized that we were in a trap at that time, even though I  
8 will admit that I had weapons, too, but at that point there was  
9 no way that any type of shootout could have satisfactorily  
10 occurred.

11           So I got out of the car, went up to the sheriff, and  
12 said that I understood he wanted to see me. Sheriff says, "I  
13 understand that you've been cursing in my office." I said,  
14 "Well, I remember what I said, but I thought that among men it  
15 was just a joke that was -- there were no children or anybody  
16 there to be offended." I said, "But I do apologize in case that  
17 should not have been said." He said, "What, Boynton? You been  
18 cursing in my office? Why, kill that SOB. Kill that MF." And  
19 he went into a screaming fit to kill me.

20           The chief deputy pulled his Chief's Special .38 Smith  
21 & Wesson, just like the one I had, and started waving it around,  
22 claiming he would kill me right then and there.

23           I had on a white linen suit, a straw hat, and shades.  
24 And I used to smoke back at that time, and I was smoking a  
25 cigarette. So I decided to be calm and prepare to be shot in

1 the stomach. And I continued to smoke the cigarette and try to  
2 exhibit calmness as much as possible.

3           After about two or three minutes of the screaming, the  
4 chief deputy put his gun back in his holster, and then he said,  
5 goddamn it, I'll kill you now, and he slapped me. And he  
6 slapped me very fiercely, so much so that the sound of the slap  
7 caused the sheriff to quit screaming to kill me. He was silent.  
8 There was nothing but silence from both of them.

9           I then told the sheriff that I was going to go back in  
10 the jail and see my client. I asked him if I could, but I went  
11 without a reply. And I didn't go back in to see the client. I  
12 just went to a corner and finished smoking my cigarette. I then  
13 lit another cigarette.

14           And I told the client no details of what had occurred  
15 outside. I just said, it will take tomorrow to get you out of  
16 jail. And I went back outside, we got back in our automobile,  
17 and we left. We safely departed Camden.

18           I called several Black people, but nobody seemed to  
19 want to go back to Camden with me at one o'clock the next day.  
20 There was one minister who asked what could he do, but when I  
21 told him I was going back because my client was in jail, he  
22 didn't offer any more help.

23           But there were -- there were SNCC people who had been  
24 Vietnam Veterans who were coming from as far away as 50, 60  
25 miles or more, and they were going to accompany me. A couple of

1 them were cooking explosives, plastic explosives, on my kitchen  
2 stove.

3           And I called first the governor of the state. Lurleen  
4 Wallace had died, and she had been replaced by Governor Brewer.  
5 And I spoke with Governor Brewer. Explained to him what had  
6 happened. And I said, it's clear that they want to kill me, but  
7 I'm going back, and I wonder whether or not you can provide me  
8 some protection. He said, no, can't do it -- give you any  
9 protection. I said, well, I'm going back anyway at one o'clock,  
10 and I'll have some Black men with me as bodyguards. And that --  
11 while I can't -- I will promise you we're not going to start  
12 anything, I can't promise you that there won't be anything going  
13 on.

14           I then called the FBI or the Justice Department, and I  
15 was asking for FBI protection. And I got a reply that they  
16 could come with me as observers, but they couldn't offer any  
17 protection. And I told them that I didn't need anybody to just  
18 observe how I died.

19           Well, we were getting ready to come to Camden --

20           Oh, incidentally, my sheriff, Wilson Baker, who had  
21 replaced Sheriff Jim Clark by an election of Black votes. Baker  
22 was now the sheriff, and I had gotten the gun permit from him.  
23 He called me and canceled my gun permit. But I explained to him  
24 that in Alabama, you can openly carry a weapon. The permit was  
25 for a concealed weapon. And that it was summertime -- I think



1 it was in June -- and I said that I would not have it concealed.  
2 Somebody can see it.

3           We were getting ready to go back to Camden, when who  
4 came walking down the street but James Austin. He didn't know  
5 why he was released. He was just told to go to my house before  
6 one o'clock. And that's what occurred. We did not have to go  
7 to Camden.

8           MR. MORRIS: Shortly after that case, I believe you  
9 actually moved to Washington, D.C., where you had gone to law  
10 school at Howard University --

11           MR. BOYNTON: Right.

12           MR. MORRIS: -- and spent some time up there. I wanted  
13 to ask you a little bit about that move and that transition.

14           MR. BOYNTON: Right. Well, that's true. Because  
15 nobody seemed to have been concerned about what occurred to me  
16 in Camden, I decided that perhaps I needed to take another look  
17 at just how devoted I am to Black people and their rights and  
18 what can happen to me with nobody caring. And I decided that I  
19 would try going to Washington, D.C., and just looking at the  
20 situation through different eyes. And that's what I did do.

21           I went to Washington. And I ended up with a job  
22 that -- it was basically from my mother's classmate who then had  
23 been the secretary of -- assistant secretary of education during  
24 the Johnson Administration. And his partner in the corporation  
25 was a person, Dr. Francis Gregory, who had been the director of

1 Operation Manpower for the Department of Labor.

2           Now, being Democrats and in the Johnson Administration,  
3 when Richard Nixon was elected, they automatically had submitted  
4 their resignation for both positions. But what they wanted to  
5 do was to set up this corporation to take advantage, like other  
6 people who are high officials with the federal government, to  
7 use the contact and everything that they had made and to be able  
8 to make a living, make a profit, out of having such high  
9 positions.

10           Now, there were two other people who were involved in  
11 the corporation, and I'll explain to you their relevancy. There  
12 was -- Melvin Laird was Secretary of Defense, and we had his  
13 niece on the board of directors. And also we had a white former  
14 FBI agent who was a friend of the majordomo of Howard Hughes.  
15 This person was a friend of a former FBI agent, but he became  
16 the majordomo of Howard Hughes. The reason for his involvement  
17 was that with Dr. Gregory being familiar with labor --  
18 Department of Manpower, that Howard Hughes was then considering  
19 selling one of his casinos. And we would purchase the casino  
20 and then have Blacks to not only run it, but to teach other  
21 Blacks how to run a casino through the Department of Manpower.

22           Well, we also had -- with Dr. Bryce and his connection  
23 with the Department of Labor, we had Tuskegee Alumni Housing  
24 Association. That was a housing program that would be built  
25 under HUD with the various alumni associations of Tuskegee

1 around the country being the sponsor for apartments to be built  
2 under the HUD programs. And we were successful while I was  
3 there, the building of one that had been completed. But all of  
4 that was housed in a spanking brand new tall apartment building on  
5 17th Street that went to Connecticut Avenue downtown.

6 The third floor housed Tuskegee Alumni Housing  
7 Foundation. The curtains, the carpet, and other things in the  
8 office were done in Tuskegee's color of crimson and gold.

9 Upstairs on the fifth floor was Warner & Warner  
10 International Associates, and that was done in a powder blue  
11 decor for the draperies and the carpet.

12 Now, we ended up -- we ended up involved with  
13 Mr. Wilson, who owned Holiday Inns, and six West African  
14 countries with an idea of developing their beaches for resorts  
15 in each one of the countries, with the country itself owning at  
16 least 51 percent of the operation. That was done through an aid  
17 program with Richard Nixon --

18 And incidentally, when the group went over to Africa for  
19 the first time, we couldn't go -- I didn't go at all, but the  
20 group couldn't go, according to Richard Nixon, unless  
21 Mr. Johnson of Johnson Publication -- *Ebony Magazine*, *Jet*  
22 *Magazine* -- were put on the trip to go with us, because he owed  
23 Mr. Johnson this trip for a political payoff. And he did go.

24 But at some point Richard Nixon pulled out and decided  
25 that we should not be able to carry out the program that the

1 program was designed for.

2 But we did get involved in several other things. One  
3 thing that we were involved with was a liquor business.

4 One of the coworkers and very dear friend of ours was  
5 Rashid Halloway. And Rashid had been like a minister of trade  
6 for his country of Sierra Leone.

7 Rashid was one of the most unusual Africans you ever  
8 did see. He was olive brown complexion. Black wavy hair. He  
9 had -- was an all-American soccer player at Ohio State. He got  
10 his Ph.D. from Oxford University. He taught at Cambridge. His  
11 father was a diamond merchant. And he was a very dear friend of  
12 mine.

13 And his cousin lost out to Harry Bellafonte for a  
14 movie that starred Dorothy Dandridge and Joan Fontaine, and I've  
15 forgotten who the male lead was besides them, but it was dealing  
16 with the first interracial love affair of the four of them. And  
17 Sir John Akar, who had been knighted -- his cousin -- by the  
18 Queen of England, had become the ambassador to the United  
19 States. And we had that type of contact. That was Rashid's  
20 cousin.

21 And he actually got him to resign from being the  
22 ambassador, because the president of Sierra Leone had been a  
23 person who was no good; who was about to declare himself to be  
24 the president for life. And Rashid, after talking Sir John into  
25 resigning, also left the company about the same time as I left.

1 I left to come back to Alabama, and Rashid left to teach at  
2 Morehouse University.

3           But while we were there, we had an idea brought by a  
4 Black guy from New York City to go into the liquor business. He  
5 had actually bottled and packaged a brand of Scotch that he  
6 called Soul Brother Scotch. And he -- his money had become  
7 limited for the marketing of the product. He had given Sammy  
8 Davis, Jr., and a lot of other Black celebrities large amounts  
9 of shares of stock, like 50,000 shares of stock, to promote the  
10 Soul Brother Scotch.

11           And he came to us. He heard about this dynamite Black  
12 corporation in downtown Washington. And I made the suggestion  
13 that we not try to breathe life into his corporation, which  
14 would then automatically make the celebrities very wealthy, but  
15 we'll start off again with our corporation, bringing him in.  
16 Because we're not trying to steal his idea, but bringing him in  
17 for a suitable amount of compensation and go from there.

18           As a matter of fact, Rashid came up with the name for  
19 the product, the Amistad Brand, which is based on the ship that  
20 the slaves took over and sailed it to America.

21           But we were busy trying to raise money for going into  
22 the liquor business. I had found that there's a company in  
23 Baltimore, Maryland, that for \$500 they would bottle your  
24 liquor. And instead of the labels stating that it was bottled  
25 for your company, it would state that it was bottled by your

1 company, so that you couldn't tell by looking at it that it  
2 wasn't thereby your distillery.

3           Rashid knew about Scotch, and even that you could buy  
4 Scotch by the barrels, and they would keep it and hold it in  
5 their warehouses for the aging of the product, and you could  
6 then sell it back to them and all of that.

7           But anyway, we had an idea, and the question was, how  
8 much money would it take for us to begin selling a product on  
9 the east coast?

10           And while we were dealing with that, along came two  
11 men to one of the meetings that -- Rashid and I never found out  
12 how they happened to know about the meetings. One was an  
13 accountant. The other was a taxi driver. But they attended the  
14 meetings. They seemed to have been acceptable with Dr. Bryce  
15 and Dr. Gregory, but they seemed to be participating as  
16 shareholders or something in the corporation.

17           But anyway, the next thing I knew, one of the  
18 Washington Post dailies stated that a retail -- a wholesale -- a  
19 wholesale liquor store agent arrested for bootlegging. And what  
20 had happened is that they had taken my idea with the company in  
21 Baltimore, Maryland, and I had explained that the company would  
22 charge only -- charge only a commission if we could guarantee  
23 \$10,000 a month sales and all of that. And apparently, they  
24 liked the idea so much that they went to the company, stole our  
25 ideas, and actually did bottle a liquor called Amistad Brand. I

1 think it was a vodka. Including the idea that we had for the  
2 label and all.

3 Well, they had the liquor, but then they didn't have  
4 any place to warehouse it except in the accountant's basement.  
5 And then they didn't have any sales for the liquor, so they  
6 decided to sell it retail to anybody who came in. And that got  
7 them to the label of being bootleggers and being arrested.

8 Well, after a while, I decided that I would prefer  
9 practicing law and came back to Alabama.

10 But incidentally, though, I would like to say that  
11 Dr. Gregory, Dr. Francis Gregory -- two things about him.

12 One, he became the foster father of Colonel Penn's  
13 daughter. Colonel Penn was the officer who was coming from his  
14 military obligations in the Army and then, going through the  
15 state of Georgia, he was shot and killed by whites.

16 And Dr. Gregory's son, Gregory -- I can't think of his  
17 first name right now, but Dr. Gregory's son was the first Black  
18 astronaut, not the current -- not the astronaut who was killed  
19 on the return trip from outer space. He was supposedly  
20 scheduled to depart from a space -- a rocket ship as the next  
21 flight after the ones who were killed on the launching pad. And  
22 because of that, the -- because of the death of those  
23 astronauts, they skipped over Dr. Gregory's son, and he became  
24 then a pilot for the shuttle craft. He was the first Black  
25 astronaut, not the one that news people give to the one that was

1 killed on the return trip.

2 MR. MORRIS: Mr. Boynton, when you did return back to  
3 Selma around 1972, 1973, I know you continued to handle civil  
4 rights cases through the state for the years that followed. And  
5 I wanted to note specifically that ultimately, you became the  
6 first African American county attorney for Dallas County. I  
7 wanted to ask you about that experience.

8 MR. BOYNTON: Right. For about 12 years. The position  
9 became available to me after Dallas County had a majority Black  
10 county commission so that they could appoint whoever they wanted  
11 to.

12 Now, actually, I think I have still been the only Black  
13 attorney, county attorney, here in the state of Alabama.

14 But one of the cases that stands out with me is a case  
15 involving the painting of a courthouse. The courthouse began to  
16 leak in various places, and a company was hired from there in  
17 Selma to repaint it, but paint it in a waterproof type of paint.

18 The paint did not take at all, and I had to sue the  
19 contractor. And I used a professional expert witness who was  
20 from the state of Georgia and who had testified in a case  
21 involving a paint job gone awry on a Mercedes, if I'm not  
22 sure -- if not mistaken, who -- resulted in a very large sum.  
23 And I got him to be our expert.

24 And I remember that we won the -- we won the case.  
25 The contractor did do a proper job after he was told what he



1 should have been doing and all, and the courthouse looks very  
2 good now.

3 MR. MORRIS: One of many aspects of your legacy.

4 Mr. Boynton, I know our time is up here, but thank you  
5 so much for doing this. And if I could just conclude my part by  
6 conveying to you that this has been truly both humbling and  
7 inspiring for me to get to be a part of. And thank you again  
8 for all you've done and for doing this.

9 MR. BOYNTON: Well, I'm very happy to have participated  
10 and certainly very happy to have been here. So that's it.

11 MR. MORRIS: Thank you very much.

12 MR. BOYNTON: Okay.

13 MR. MORRIS: Thank you.

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COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Patricia G. Starkie, Registered Diplomate Reporter and Official Court Reporter for the United States District Court for the Middle District of Alabama, do hereby certify that the foregoing 49 pages contain a true and correct transcript of the interview of Mr. Bruce Carver Boynton in the City of Montgomery, Alabama, on May 22, 2018.

This 4th day of December, 2020.

/s/ Patricia G. Starkie  
Registered Diplomate Reporter  
Certified Realtime Reporter  
Official Court Reporter