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JLFT 006 John C. Randolph
John LeFlore Oral History Tapes (JLFT), Acc. 328
Interviewed by John Beebee and Sheila Flanagan on October 17, 1996
1 hour, 12 minute audio recording • 16 page transcript

Abstract: In this recording, John C. Randolph is interviewed by John Beebee and Sheila Flanagan to discuss John LeFlore and the Civil Rights Movement in Mobile, Alabama. The interview begins with Mr. Randolph discussing his early life and meeting John LeFlore through the NAACP. He talks about the integration of Murphy High School and the *Birdie Mae Davis* case in Mobile. Mr. Randolph remarks on the way Mr. LeFlore treated people in general, and how he carried himself as a person. The interview concludes with Mr. Randolph discussing Mr. LeFlore's work with the Non-Partisan Voters League and his election to the Alabama House of Representatives.

Sheila Flanagan and John Beebee led the interviews for this project, recording the reflections of relatives, friends, and colleagues of Mobile activist John LeFlore for an Alabama Public Television documentary released under the title, "A Quiet Revolution: The Story of John L. LeFlore." The project was funded through an Alabama Humanities Foundation grant.

Preface: This is a transcript of an oral history recording archived at the McCall Library of the University of South Alabama. Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, which has been minimally edited for readability.



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JLFT 006 John C. Randolph
Interviewed October 17, 1996

This is a verbatim transcript of an oral history interview recording, composed and formatted in accordance with the McCall Library transcription style guide.

Verbatim transcription is a style of representing as closely as possible the exact wording and phrasing of the speakers on the recording, though false starts, repetitious phrases, and other minor edits have been made as needed only for the sake of clarity and readability. Readers of this transcript are strongly encouraged to listen to the recording.

Please note that if any text is **bolded** in the transcript, this indicates uncertainty of either spelling or accuracy of transcription regarding what was said. Italics indicate emphasis, or are applied to titles and similar proper nouns.

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JLFT 006

Interviewee: J.C. Randolph

Interviewer: John Beebee and Sheila Flanagan

Date: October 17, 1996

B: Okay. Okay, great. Mr. Randolph, thank you very much for helping us with this project. We wanted to ask you first, just kind of tell us a little bit about yourself, about where you were born, and that kind of thing, and—.

R: Well, my name is John C. Randolph. I was born in a little small town called Pine Hill, Alabama. And the ninth month before in the 14th year, of course, I moved to Mobile—my parents did—when I was about three years old. I attended Mobile County school, high school. And incidentally, while I'm mentioning Mobile County Training School, I had three generations to attend the Mobile County Training School and finish from Mobile County Training School when it was a high school. And as you know, now, it's a junior high now. But anyway, during my early life, you know, I had to go to work to help out, in my early life—public work. And my wife and I, we decided to go into a little business for ourself. And she would get up three and four o'clock in the morning, parch peanuts, and I would carry them down on to the state docks to sell them. And we just had a humble beginning. But we stuck together, and finally, we opened up a small grocery store. And we ran that store for about 39 years. And during that time, I was elected to the Mobile County Democratic Executive Committee, which I was the third African American member of that committee at that time. And during that time, I became a member of the NAACP, where I met Mr. John LeFlore. And there was something peculiar about Mr. John LeFlore. I cannot explain it, but it was something about him that drew me to him. He was a very friendly, easy person to talk to. And as time went on—as you know, during that time, our governor at that time was Governor Patterson. And through his administration the NAACP in Alabama was outlawed. And what drew me closer to Mr. John, when we was outlawed from the NAACP, he formed the Non-Partisan Voters League. And I wondered how he was able to form that league and not come in contact with some court fight or court orders. But anyway, Mr. LeFlore, through the Non-Partisan Voters League, began to work on civil rights. And during that time, Mr. LeFlore began to accomplish a whole lot in the city of Mobile. And the way he did that, he would make contact one-on-one. He didn't just, head-on with a big organization or something, but he was able to do that. He was able to maintain good relationship with a many white friend throughout the city. As you know, during those early part of the civil right days, that Mobile was very fortunate that they did not have too much of a riot or whatever. We were able to get along in that day through the leadership of Mr. John LeFlore. He had many white friends during that era, because it would have been impossible in that era to accomplish the things that he did. But as you can understand, in that era, you had to do certain things—not open, but you had to know how to handle yourself and

get certain things done. And he was a man that could do that. And as time went on, Mr. LeFlore, along with some of his other friends, saw where they need to pursue certain discrepancy, and segregation, discrimination, and all of those things that was existing in Mobile at that time. And Mr. LeFlore, along with some of his white friends, were able to move forward with the civil right activities in Mobile. And Mr. LeFlore, he would—let me put it like this to y'all: I don't say right now in this age and time that these things that we are enjoying now would not have transpired, would not have come to fruition. But during Mr. LeFlore time, as you can understand, that it was very hard to be able to—well, I would say, to break in certain areas where discrimination and segregation and all of that was going on. And through his leadership, we were able.

B: Okay. Real quick, I just want to hit on a point here. When was—the League was started when? After NAACP—is that right—was outlawed?

R: That's right. The early part of the 1950s.

B: Around [19]56, something like that?

R: Something in that neighborhood. Right after the Supreme Court ruled that the segregation of school was unconstitutional. And right after that, he was able to set it up.

B: So, people have, there've been some people that said it might have started back in the [19]30s or [19]20s, but that's not right.

R: No, that's not right. That's not right.

B: Okay. You kind of hit on this a little bit: what was it like? Give us a picture. Like, we're talking to young people, say: what was it like to be a Black American back when you were growing up, the [19]40s and [19]50s. Give us some typical things that you ran across, some typical things like just, eating, drinking, walking, riding to—. Give us a typical things that you ran into that you were discriminated against.

R: As you know, being a 80-year-old man that, during my young days, that naturally I came up, you might say, when segregation and discrimination was at its worst. But you know, I learned that in spite of certain things that you might be confronted with, that if your perseverance is strong enough, and you persist strong enough, you can overcome some of the things—in spite of, I hope you understand. And in my young days, naturally, I was confronted. But I didn't let that deter me from my goal.

I've always believed that if I work hard enough, that I could better myself as a person and a citizen.

B: What was Mr. LeFlore like to work with? What kind of personality did he have? Was he difficult to work with? Was he like demanding in any way? What kind of person was he like to work with?

R: Well Mr. LeFlore, he was a man that, once he set his mind on something, whatever it would take for him to accomplish that goal, he was that. I've known him to stay up eleven, twelve, one, two o'clock, working on different civil rights projects. And we often would tell him that he was overworking himself. And he was a man that, he just wouldn't take no for an answer. He would keep at it until he get the job done. That's the type of man he was. He didn't let anything get in his way, or he didn't believe that nothing is insurmountable, I'll say that. That he would work at it if it's twelve, one o'clock, all night; whatever it is. And then, it's another thing: the harmony that we were able to maintain in the city of Mobile was due largely to Mr. John LeFlore being able to maneuver himself in a way where he didn't, you might say, step on too many toes, or make a, you might say, a certain crowd angry with him. He was able to do that, and it was a mystery to me. And maintain their friendship. And as you know, the things that he was able to do—for instance, we were the first city in Alabama to have a Afro-American bus drivers. We were first to have Afro-American policemen. And we were the envy, you might say, of the other part or section of Alabama; whenever we would travel, the question was always asked, "How did you do it? How *are* you doing it?" We'd say, "Well, we have a wonderful leader in Mobile named Mr. John LeFlore. And he has the expertise. He knows how to get the job done." And you know, during the time right after all of this happened, and Mr. LeFlore saw where the need of the city of Mobile and Mobile County, that there should be some Blacks in some capacity of government. And he set out to accomplish that. Unfortunately, he passed before the fruition of that accomplishment came to pass. But we had another, you might say, ram in the bush, by the name of Mr. Wiley Bolden, who took up where Mr. LeFlore left off. And he pursued to change the form of government in Mobile County. And I would like for you to know, it took 10 long years to accomplish that. Just think about that: 10 long year. Now, there had to be somebody that was able, and could pursue, and had the patience to hold out that long. But eventually, it was accomplished. And I would like to tell the, especially those young people, that naturally coming along, that the task was not easy. It was a hard-fought battle. And as a result, you all is enjoying the fruit of Mr. John LeFlore' labor. And he is worthy of all honor and praise as a person that, in my opinion, can be given to him. He did not quit. And as a result of that, we have Afro-Americans in city government, county

commissioners, school board. And most of the municipalities in the county, we have Afro-Americans participating in that now. In my conclusion, I would give it credit to Mr. John LeFlore and the Non-Partisan Voters League, which stood by him through thick and thin. We did not give up. I don't know whether some people *thought* we were going give up, but we weren't going give up. I've made two trips to Washington DC, to the United States Supreme Court myself. And sat in on the session during that time when we was trying to change the form of government. And I want it understood that we had to have white friends to help us. I don't want to—to not forget that. But it was done in a way where it wasn't an open thing. And they gave us—they *believed* in what they were doing, and they supported us—morally and financially so. And I am glad to have been a part of it along with Mr. John LeFlore.

B: Tell us about—what was driving Mr. LeFlore? Was there some kind of incident that set him on this drive? Because he—this man was, you said he worked till eleven, twelve, one, two in the morning and y'all, you know, were concerned; you know, you're working so hard. Along the way, by the way, when I'm telling you, when I'm asking you a question, if you could just give me any kind of story that can illustrate what we're talking about? But what do you think was driving him? What was underneath that was just driving him forward?

R: Well—

B: Something that set him off?

R: I believe what set him off is that, you know, for many years, Mr. LeFlore was a mail carrier. And I'm sure that he saw many things that was troubling to him. And that reminded me of a story that I heard about Abraham Lincoln. He was in New Orleans, I think. And he saw where a little Afro-American girl was being sold as a slave. And saying is going that, that stuck with him. And it was in him, that when time come, if he ever got the opportunity, he was going to get that. And as you know the story of Abraham Lincoln. And I would style Mr. John LeFlore, that something about him—for an instance, there were unequal pay for the same credential or qualification or what have you, between Black and white teachers. And John LeFlore, along with some of his white friends, were able to change that, and brought about equal pay for equal qualification. And from there, there were some Afro-American in law enforcement. But they didn't have any power to enforce the law. And that was troubling to him. And he felt like if you were an officer, that you should have the same privilege to do your duty as anybody else. And that was troubling to him. And he saw that how we as a people was taxed. In other words,

he saw where taxation without representation was wrong. And he pursued to correct that. And as you know, today, that we are represented in various part of the government of Mobile County.

B: You mentioned white friends. Which ones are you talking about, and how did they help?

R: Well, Mr. Langan was one that I can truly mention. When he came back from the Korean War, he was a good general or commander, or whatever. And he came back, and he was disturbed about some things that he saw in the city. For an instance: he saw some Afro-Americans standing in the rain to catch the bus. And when the bus did arrive, they had to go in the bus in the back door. And there were some seats between the back part of the bus and the front part of the bus. And being African American, we were not able, at that time, to cross that line, to go and sit down—although there was empty seats there. And that was troubling to Mr. Langan. And as time went on, he was able to be elected to the Alabama Legislature. And from there, to one of our Senators. And from there, he was able to step in and help us. And I think that was mighty brave of him to come forward in that day and stick his chest out for the injustice that he saw going on in the city of Mobile.

B: How did he work with Mr. LeFlore? How were they working together? What was their relationship?

R: Well, the thing was, it was real close. You know one paper in that day ran a front-page ad showing Mr. Langan and Mr. John on the front page, and the question was asked, “Are you going let these two run the city of Mobile?” So, you can see just what position Mr. Langan was in as being a white man, and in close relation with Mr. John LeFlore. But as I forestated, that I would give Mr. Langan all the credit. And he stood in and he stood up for what was right.

U1: And I had a picture I didn't want to interrupt. But I wanted to know if they wanted to see it.

R: Honey, just a minute sugar.

B: Okay. Tell us about the danger that surrounded you all during time, during the movement toward civil rights. Tell us about some of the real dangers you faced. Tell us some *stories* about some of the dangers you faced.

R: Well during that time—which, I didn't participate every day in the activities with Mr. John LeFlore, and Mr. Purifoy, Mr. Bolden, Mr. Raymond Scott, Mr. Sherman Smith, and all of those members. During that time, remember that Ms. Vivian Malone—that was her name at that time, I think she's married now—but anyway, she attempted to integrate the Murphy High. And—

B: Was that—no, she was with Alabama though, is that right? Is it Birdie Mae Davis was—

F: Birdie Mae Davis was with the school, Murphy High School system. So there is a difference. And, but it was the best we could do. And it's still not settled, that's what's so interesting about it; took on a life of its own. But we—

[Break in recording]

B: Could you tell us about that, then, the Birdie Mae Davis? How'd this all start? What was Mr. LeFlore thinking? What was, tell us about the planning and all that, for that case?

R: Well, the first—the starting of the integration of the Murphy High School was done by a white lady, which was the daughter of Mr. Paul Danner. And there were so much turmoil in that with her during that time, that she withdrew and pulled her daughter out, one that she reared. And during the time that Birdie Mae Davis was integrating, Mr. LeFlore and members of the Non-Partisan Voters League—I wasn't able to be with them all the time—but, we had to escort her through **accounts**, sticks, all kind of profanity, cursing, and all of those things. In other words, we really had our life on the line. But we didn't stop. Mr. LeFlore didn't. And finally, during that period of time, his house was even shot in. And it was a—it was a terrible time. But we, with under the leadership of Mr. John LeFlore, we were determined not to let *nothing* stop us from our goal of seeing that Afro-American children will get the same education, equal education, as anybody else. Because we felt that we were a citizen of this country, and we were entitled to all the benefits that were due any citizen of this country. Mr. LeFlore determined to see to that. And it was dangerous. It was. I know myself, not being a leader as Mr. John LeFlore was, that I spent a lot of sleepless night. And going to and fro from these meetings, who knows what was lurking out there that I might not get home. I give my wife credit. She stood by me when I was going, and when I was doing airplane riding, and what have you; bus riding. And if it had not been for her, a lot of time I would not have had the opportunity to participate in a lot of Civil Rights Movement. Because naturally, I had a living to make. But anyway, Mr. John LeFlore was a

fierce, fearless man, you know what I mean? He was not afraid. And he—a lot of time, he knew he was putting his life on the line. Just like a lot of great people, male and female before him, have put their lives on the line, and some of them have lost it for a cause. It remind me of Dr. Martin Luther King. He said, “It's not how long you live. Longevity is not the answer. It's what you do *while* you live.” And I believe Mr. LeFlore had that in him. And he just accomplished wonderful things. And I would like, like I forestated, that the younger people that is coming on behind him is enjoying the fruit of his labor. And he paid a tremendous price for the things that he accomplished.

B: Tell us about the day of the bombing? Do you remember the day that John LeFlore's house got bombed? What was his reaction to it, and your reaction? Tell us a story about that.

R: Well when we heard it, everything, got home, and we had a little late-night meeting, and we determined that we weren't going let anything stop us. Even when I was on the stand in the federal courts, that I was asked, “Have you ever been threatened by the Ku Klux Klan?” I told Honorable Judge Pittman that “No, I haven't.” But I never did learn why the question was asked. But he asked it and that let me know that something was lurking out in the dark. But then I wasn't going let nothing like that deter me from my goal. And if I had to, if it was necessary, I was going go down with the great man I know by the name of Mr. John LeFlore.

B: How did his tactics, your all's tactics, how did they compare his leadership with other civil rights leaders?

R: Like I forestated, Mr. John, he operated, not with a group confronting an issue. He would always go ahead, you might say, and set the table with his friend both Black and white. Usually when he made a move, he had it already, you might say, under control. That's how he was able to accomplish a lot of things. And that's the way he maneuvered. And he didn't make a lot of noise in most of his civil right. You never did hear him. But at the same time, he was giving it all that he had. Like I forestated, he would stay up 12, one, two o'clock making contacts, and getting donations. You know, after all, there was a financial end to it, too.

B: And you were treasurer is that correct? What was your title?

R: I took over the treasurership from Mr. Wiley Bolden. When Mr. LeFlore deceased, Mr. Wiley Bolden stepped in his shoes. Well, that left the treasurer vacant. And they selected me to be treasurer.

B: And that was your first office position, was the treasurer, is that right?

R: Yeah, that's right.

B: Do you recall when and why Martin Luther King Jr. visited Mobile? Do you call about his visits to Mobile with Mr. LeFlore, or—?

R: No, well, I was fortunate enough not to see him when he came to Mobile. At that particular time, I had a meeting with the Mobile Democrats Executive Committee, which I was a member of at that time. And I missed that occasion.

B: There's been some talk that Dr. King was excluded from Mobile, or he was kind of shut out in a way. Is that true, or what—and there's a different kind of thought that—tell us what your perspective was on that. Was he officially shut out of Mobile, or was he invited and turned down? Or tell us what your perspective is.

R: I cannot recall the name that took Dr. Martin Luther King in when he came here. But I understand that he stayed with some of the members. I really don't know. I better not go into that, because I don't have enough information to really give you a definitive answer on that, now. But I knew he made a short trip here, and a hurried trip. I heard, too, it was said that some of them felt that his presence would kind of rock the tranquility that was existing in the city at that time. But we were getting along pretty good—as it *compared*, now, to other section of Alabama, such as Montgomery, Birmingham, and those areas.

B: What was—let me ask you about the pink sheets. Tell us about the pink sheets, how that was a prominent part of what you did with the League.

R: Well—

B: How did you go about choosing the candidates, and take them through interview? How'd you go through all of that?

R: Well then, through the leadership of Mr. John LeFlore, he had the ability to interview a candidate, and he could pretty well read that candidate and size him up, and recommend that particular candidate to the League. And I would say 90 percent of the time, he was right on the mark with most of them. He had that ability to do that. So as you know, we had what you call the pink slip. And that pink slip was a thorn in a lot of people' side in that day. And a lot of controversy went on

about that pink slip. Especially when there were some other Afro organization came into play long about that time, but the pink slip prevailed over all the rest of them, because the Black voters' confidence that they had in Mr. John LeFlore, that they felt that they were not being misled. That Mr. LeFlore was being true to his trust that they had put in him, and he held true to his trust that was put in him. You could trust Mr. LeFlore and what he said, and he did not keep any secret from his organization. That's one thing: he made known all of his finding to the organization. And therefore, he was able to keep a strong organization up until just a few years ago, where most of us, like myself, have gotten old and we cannot get around and do the things that we once had done.

B: What was his opinion? Do you remember him telling you, talking about Noble Beasley, the NOW organization? Do you remember what he—what was he saying about the organization, their tactics? What was he saying about them?

R: Well, he didn't say anything negative about—he didn't believe in negativism. He didn't say anything negative about them. To him, whatever other organization that came up, he never did feel like he was in competition with them. He always extended a welcome hand to help wherever he could. And he gave a lot of them, as well as NOW and some—well, a big percentage of the NOW members became members of the Non-Partisan Voters League. Because John, I mean, he did not—that wasn't his style. Each organization got their own style of pursuing a certain goal. And that was not Mr. John LeFlore' style. And therefore, naturally, he maintained his distance from certain operation that others was pursuing.

B: First I'm going to ask you about Vivian Malone though.

R: Okay.

B: Okay. Okay. Let me ask you about Vivian Malone. She was the one chosen for the famous stand in the schoolhouse door where Mr. Wallace stood up against her. Do you remember how and why she was chosen? Do you remember Mr. LeFlore talking about her, or choosing her? Do you remember going up there?

R: The only thing I can say about her is, I was on the Democratic Executive Committee with her uncle and he would talk about her. But Mr. John was involved in it. But, you know, like I said, I had other activities. Sometimes I would be absent from a lot of event that went on. But he had something to do with it.

- B: Were you one of the ones that asked—back to Birdie Mae Davis—were you one of the ones that escorted her into the school, is that right? Or, were you there? Mr. LeFlore was there? I'm talking about Birdie Davis now?
- R: Yeah, several time. But I wasn't there as regular as Mr. LeFlore and some other members of the organization.
- B: There's some kind of—let me ask you, I was going to ask you about the story. Can you tell us a story, maybe a favorite story you have, about John LeFlore? Tell us a little bit about him as a person. You have a favorite story that you'd like to tell about him, or what he talked to people, or maybe a humorous situation, something funny that happened with him, or something, some kind of a story about John LeFlore kind of tells us a little bit about him.
- R: Well, I would say that Mr. John LeFlore, as a daddy, that his son—perhaps which I consider myself as one of his son—came in a home, like average parents, son would come in. And he and I would have a bad report card, you might say. And he said, "Let me see your report card." And look at the report card. And well, and he has a C on it. I'm just trying to—. Mr. John LeFlore would not criticize anybody. Regardless, he accepted everyone for who they were, and not by the station that they hold in life. He did not see anyone above the other. It did not matter with him whether you, you might say, a intellectual or what have you. But if you was willing to put your shoulder to the wheel and help him push, that was all right with him. And he would be like a good father. Pat you on the shoulder and tell you how much I love you.
- B: That's good. Tell us about—there's some disagreement about—tell us this: what were the meetings like? When you got together the League, what was it like? What did it sound like? What were some of the things that went on in the meeting? What were those meetings like?
- R: Well, it was like any typical meeting where people meet. Of course, there was some difference there. Naturally, difference of approach to certain situation. Some would recommend this, and some would recommend the other. And most of the time, if it get, you might say, real heated, Mr. LeFlore was wise enough to see that there would be no consensus there at that particular time. And he would gracefully dismiss the meeting, and tell us, say, "Now, I'll tell you what to do." Said, "Let's back over this particular thing for a few days, and let's come back. And I believe we can handle it better." He was just that type of leader that could avoid and see danger. And kept—he knew how to keep harmony among the members. Because

he never showed any kind of superiority over anybody. You know, it didn't matter with him how you would put forth your thought, or how you would communicate, or what have you. It was your willingness that he would judge. And he was able to use that.

B: You might've hit on it—this is one of the questions I wanted to ask—you might've just hit on it right there. But let me make sure. What do you think—what was the secret of his leadership? Like, he was an amazing man; he could draw people to him. And he could lead, and he could institute change. He could talk to the white community and have a rapport. What was his secret? What was it that he could do that?

R: Well, then I said, I would sit in a lot of meetings and observe his method of operation. I would say he was a man with a—he was a gifted person in knowing how to read people and get them to help him to accomplish what he wanted. That's about it.

B: He knew how to read people, is what you're—

R: Yeah.

B: That's good. What—

U2: Hang on John.

B: Okay. We're running out of tape?

U2: Batteries.

B: Okay, was it before that question, or—?

U2: It's still running.

B: Okay. Okay.

U2: That was **Houston**?

F: Yes. [Laughter]

B: Okay. Tell us about the test-ins. Were you part of that at all, as far as the test-ins? Where I understand, like, he would meet the trains at midnight, make sure they had the proper facilities for Black people, or the—? Do you remember any of those kind of things? Or can you tell us anything about those? About that?

R: No, I know very little about that. But I do know that they did test the train, and pullman, and etcetera on the train.

B: What about the stores and restaurants, do you remember about those?

R: And yeah, stores, and restaurants. And all of those things. And it was amazing how he was able to do those things without much, you might say, uproar in the city. That was amazing. While the other part of the state was in uproar in Montgomery, and Birmingham, and the mayor up there. You know the story about the dogs, and the firehose, and what have you. But John was able to go in and integrate these restaurants. And like I said, it wasn't too much said behind it. Now, it was amazing to me how he could do that. And naturally, he wasn't afraid to lead.

B: Did he consider anything to be a failure? Like, did he ever have a sense of failure about anything that he was working on in civil rights?

R: Oh, sure. Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. He, you know, he ran up against many things that was troubling. But he was a person with that determination to overcome whatever it might confront him. He was determined not to let nothing stop him or deter him from his goal. He was that type of person. And usually, now, when you pursue a certain goal—now, don't mistake me—that you usually put your life on the line in a lot of instances to accomplish certain things. And I found out that any great leader must put his life secondarily when he's trying to accomplish a goal, because you may lose it. And Mr. LeFlore was not afraid to lose his life to accomplish his goal. Naturally, he wanted a better day for his people, and under the conditions that we were living on at that time, it was, you might say, unbearable. And he was the leader that pursued those different goals and things. And whoever is reaping the benefit of it now, that I would like for them to know that it is due largely to his perseverance, persistence, and not giving up.

[Break in recording]

F: —express it, that's all. See, you had all that; you've been carrying around with you all the time, and you been waiting for us to come and get it. [Laughter] You been waiting for us to come and get it. See, I knew you could do it!

R: What you said?

F: We knew you could do that. It's not many more left that can, Mr. Randolph.

R: Yes, you know, it's 80-some years has taken its toll with me, too.

F: Sure! Sure it has, but you—

R: I cannot articulate as sharp as once had.

F: You're doing pretty good. [Laughter]

F: You're doing pretty good Mr. Randolph.

R: Aw, don't kid me. [Laughter] No, really now. Are you making me feel good, or just—?

F: No, I'm just telling you the truth.

R: Well, then that's what I want.

F: You know, when I first called you and asked you to do this, I—

B: To wrap up here, Mr. Randolph, what was John LeFlore, what was his hope? What was his hope? What was his dream? What was that dream inside? What was his hope? What did he see in the future, the ideal dream, what was he hoping for?

R: After working with Mr. John LeFlore over many years, his hope and dream—for especially Mobile County, where most of his activities took place—is that he wanted justice. You know. And he wanted to be represented. And he just wanted to be respected for who he was, and as a person. Not only did he want that for himself, but he wanted that for all that were left out of this society. He wanted all included in it. That was his goal. He was not in it for personal gain, fame, nor recognition. But he wanted his work that he was doing, did do, and has done, to speak for him.

B: That's good. It does. [Laughter] It does. What do you remember about the day he died? Tell us about that day. What do you remember about the response from the community?

R: Naturally, that shocked all of us. We were stunned because it was so sudden. It was a overnight thing. The night before that we had a meeting. He was jolly. He liked to joke, and play around and everything. And woke up the next morning, he was gone. And at his funeral, Dr. Gaines gave a wonderful rendition of his life, at the funeral. Dr Gaines, principal of Central High at that time.

B: Do you remember his last words to you? Do you remember what he was working on at that last meeting? What was he working on?

R: What, at that last meeting?

B: His last one.

R: He was getting together—he had not got it all together, but it was in the making to file a suit in the federal court to, you might say, desegregate the system that we was operating under at that time. Which was three commissioners. And he felt we were left out of being represented in the political process of policymaking of Mobile County. Naturally, all of us who were back there in that time knew that he was exactly right. We *were* left out of the policy making decisions of the various governments of the county. And that was his last goal. Hopefully he is resting in peace, because the goal that he sought was reached.

B: That's good, that's good. Do you remember what he last said to you at that meeting, or do you remember some of the things he said there at that last meeting, or—?

R: The last thing that I remember him telling me—he called me Randy. You know, somehow or another, that's what he started out calling me: "Randy." He said, "Hey, Randy!" Patted me on the shoulder. He said, "You know what?" I said, "What that, Mr. LeFlore?" "Keep your head up. Keep going. Don't give up." Those are his words. Said, "Now, the goal that we are pursuing maybe," he said, "going get pretty rough and dark. But don't give up. Hang in there. Because the goal that we are pursuing is noble, and it's right, and it's just." I said, "Well okay, buddy." Those was the last words I remember him speaking.

B: Wow. That's good, that's good. And let me just wrap up: what should John LeFlore be remembered for? What should we remember about him? And maybe some young people don't know. What should we remember about John LeFlore? What are some of his accomplishments?

- R: What we should remember about John LeFlore is that a lot of privileges and other rights that you are now enjoying is the result of his work and his efforts. Not that you would not have never gained those privileges and rights; but you would not have gained them in that day and time. Which all of us know that we are living in a different period of American history now than it was back there under John LeFlore. In other words, as the old saying goes about this appliance that's on the market, the Panasonic—I think I'm pronouncing it right—that he was slightly ahead of his time.
- B: That's how good leaders are. That's good. Anything else I haven't asked you that you want to—?
- R: No, I believe I done about—. [Laughter]
- B: I asked you just about everything, didn't I? I want to ask you just a final—tell us about his relationship with people. Tell us about his term in the legislature. What do you remember about that? Tell us what you were telling about the people thing you were talking about.
- R: It was during his term in the legislature.
- B: Okay, hold up for a sec. Tell us about his relationship with people, and—
- R: After observing Mr. LeFlore over the years, I saw in him that love that he had for people. He loved people. And wherever he could help, during his stay in the legislature, he—I don't think he finished his term. I believe he died before his term was up. But anyway, it's amazing how fast that he was able to get a bill through the legislature. That we are benefiting from it today. For an instance, he was able to get a bill passed where the county would spray these infested areas where a lot of us live. And that was a good thing. You just think, perhaps we will never know; but just think how many mosquitoes and other insects that is being eradicated because of the bill that he was able to get through to the legislature to help the people. And the amazing part about it is that, sometimes it takes you a long time, you got to be known, you got to, you might say, build yourself up to accomplish some things. But he was able to do it in short periods of time. And I'm sure that a lot of us, in the evening especially, we hear that truck going to and fro, and up and down the street. I want you to know, that is a part of his leadership, and his effort, and his love for people.

B: Was he excited about being in the Legislature? Was he excited about that, or when he was first elected, or what was his feeling?

R: He was. He was. But at times, you know, his love was the Non-Partisan Voters League. That was his love. That's where he was married to. But on the other hand, you know, he loved his other duties too. But his first priority was the Non-Partisan Voters League. I want to let you know that. That was his first priority. He loved it. And because so many times, he was a early riser. He would call me sometime at the dawn of day. [Laughter] He kind of get my sleep a little kind of out of order, you might say. But he would call. You know, and he would call you and ask you. Like he would say, "Randy, I been thinking about it. What do you think about such-and-such a thing?" He would get other people' opinion, and from that, he was able to put those opinions together and arrive at what is best for the organization. He was that type of man. That's about the end of the story.

B: That's good. Thank you so much. Appreciate it.

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