



JEAN THOMPSON NEW ORLEANS, LA

ARRESTED AT AGE 19 ON THE TRAILWAYS BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"When the day comes, you should be ready." "My parents always talked about the injustice of segregation, but they were optimistic; they didn't feel like it was going to last forever... I remember my dad saying the day will come, and when the day comes, you should be ready. My father was in Colorado, looking for work, when I was arrested in Jackson, and he found out that I was slapped [during an interrogation].

That was how he found out I was a Freedom Rider. When I got back home he called and said, 'What are you doing this for?' I had to remind him that this is what you told us to do. So, he didn't say anything. Then I said, 'And by the way, Shirley [her sister] is gonna go tomorrow.' He said, 'Let me talk to your mother.'" A CORE activist in New Orleans, Thompson paid bail and returned home to train more Freedom Riders headed to Jackson. She continued to work in civil rights, anti-war, and feminist efforts.



PETER STERLING ITHACA, NY

ARRESTED AT AGE 20 ON THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL TRAIN FROM NEW ORLEANS TO JACKSON

"Before we left, I called my father." "He had certainly seen those photos in the newspapers and on TV.... He was calm and supportive." "Years later... I read the Old Testament for the first time, and of course I read about Abraham and Isaac, and I was stunned to see Abraham risking everything with his son for his commitment. I asked [my father] if he had realized in 1961, when I called to tell him I was going that we were replaying Abraham and Isaac....

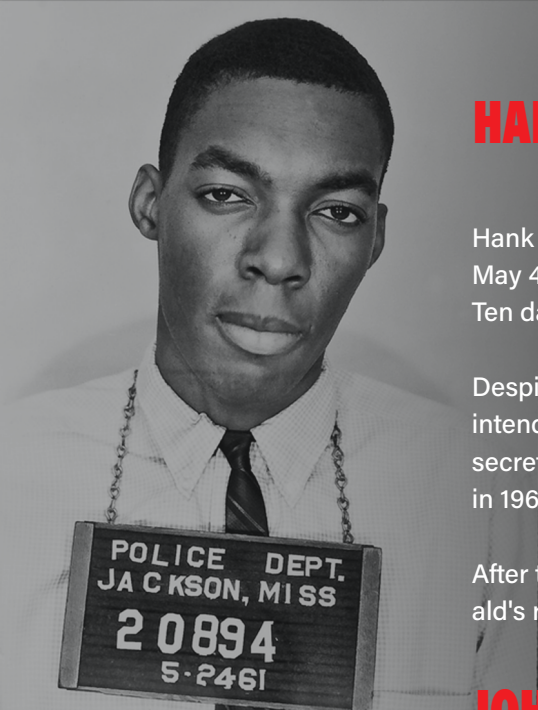
There was a moment of silence and then a choked, 'yes.' That was when I felt the story's full power — a man must have values; he must teach them to his son—but then he must live in silence with their terrifying consequences." A student at Cornell, Sterling later earned a PhD in biology. As a post-doctorate student at Harvard, he protested the Vietnam War. He became a professor of neuroscience at the University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine.



THERESA WALKER ATLANTA, GA

ARRESTED AT AGE 33 ON THE TRAILWAYS BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"I remember the first night in the Jackson City Jail we had cold peas and corn." "Mimi and Sissy were in the cell next to me. I was in a cell by myself I remember the mice coming up the bars and running across. When I slept, every once in a while I'd do my feet like this [shuffles her feet] to try to keep the mice away. The county jail was worse. We were all in one cell with an open toilet. Seems like if you wanted a drink of water, the water would run hot. If you wanted to bathe, the water would run cold. They gave us dirty mattresses and we put them on the floor. If you woke up at night you would see the bugs crawling over the other girls. It was terrible." Like many of the Freedom Riders, Walker was involved in other Alabama campaigns, most notably in Birmingham with her husband, Wyatt Tee Walker, executive director of the Southern Christian leadership Conference at the time.



HANK THOMAS

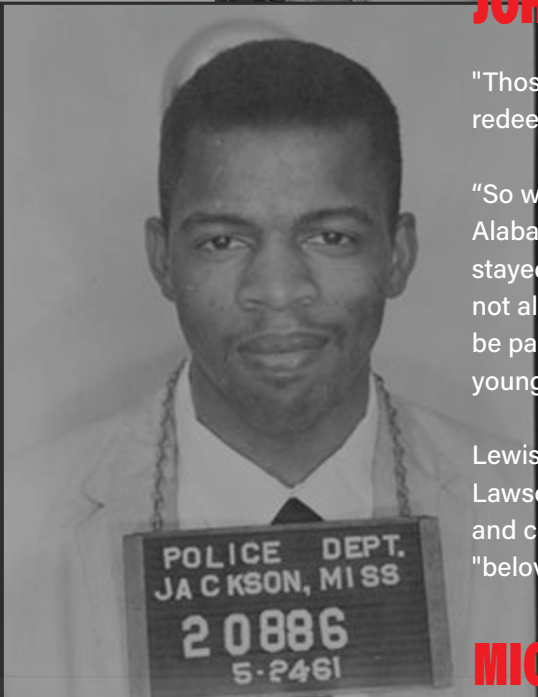
ARRESTED AT AGE 19 ON THE TRAILWAYS BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"WHEN THE DAY COMES, YOU SHOULD BE READY!"

Hank Thomas was one of the original thirteen Freedom Riders who left Washington, D.C., on May 4, 1961. Ten days later he was on the bus firebombed outside of Anniston, Alabama. Ten days after that he rode on the second bus into Jackson, Mississippi.

Despite the overwhelming violence the Riders faced, Thomas maintains that he "never intended to be attacked. I did not intend to be anybody's martyr." He worked as a field secretary for the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in 1962 and was inducted into the Army in 1963, serving a tour of duty as a medic in Vietnam from 1965 to 1966.

After the war, he settled in Atlanta, Georgia. Today, Thomas and his wife own two McDonald's restaurants and four Marriott hotels. They live in Stone Mountain, Georgia.



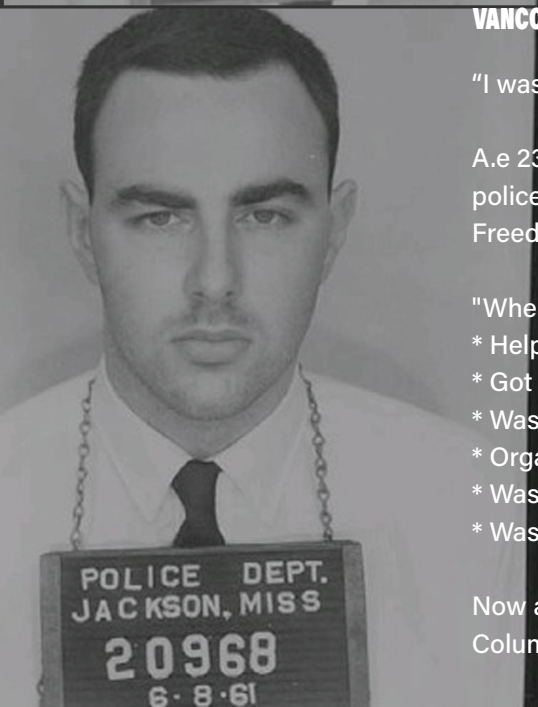
JOHN LEWIS

ARRESTED AT AGE 21 ON THE MAY 5TH GREYHOUND BUS FROM WASHINGTON TO NEW ORLEANS, THE MAY 17TH GREYHOUND BUS FROM NASHVILLE TO BIRMINGHAM, THE MAY 20TH GREYHOUND BUS FROM BIRMINGHAM TO MONTGOMERY, AND THE MAY 24TH GREYHOUND BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"Those of us in Nashville, ...we were committed to this idea of the beloved community, the redeemed America."

"So when people left Parchman and went to southwest Georgia and the black belt of Alabama, to Arkansas and eastern North Carolina and others parts of Mississippi, and stayed there and started working, it became a different movement. These new people were not altogether grounded in the philosophy and discipline of nonviolence. But they want to be part of this effort to change America.... These young people—and some not so young—were demanding change now."

Lewis grew up on a farm near Troy, Alabama. A seminary student in Nashville, he joined Lawson's group. Eventually he became one of the most respected members of Congress, and continuing participating in nonviolent protests throughout his lifetime to build a "beloved community, a nation and a world at peace with itself."



MICHAEL AUDAIN

ARRESTED AT AGE 22 ON THE GREYHOUND BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA, CANADA

"I was involved in a lot of stuff, but it all stemmed from the Freedom Riders."

A.e 23 Cobrbio, / 7, 90600. "I'd never really been politically involved before. 'The Jackson police didn't have to arrest me, but since they did, fine. I was so delighted to meet the other Freedom Riders in jail. In many ways, the experience changed my life

"When I came back to Canada, I:

- * Helped start the BC Civil Liberties Association
- * Got involved in the peace movement
- * Was president of the Nuclear Disarmament Club at UBC (University of British Columbia)
- * Organized marches and sit-ins for peace
- * Was involved with Vietnam War resistance
- * Was sent as o delegate from the London School of Economics to the general strike in Paris

Now a residential real estate developer in Vancouver, Audain is a member of the British Columbia Arts Council and a trustee of the National Gallery of Canada.



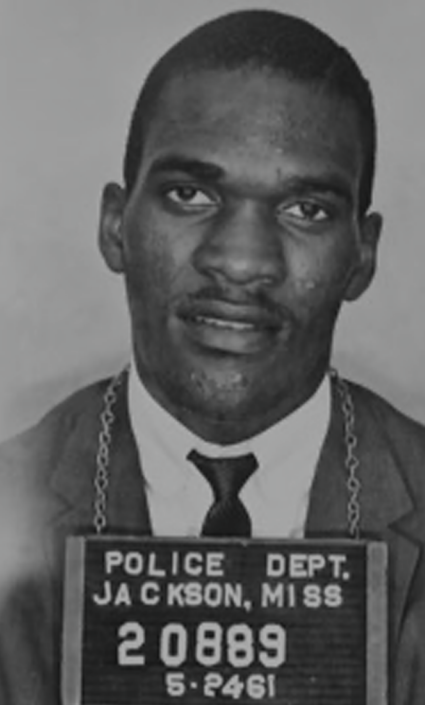
LARRY BELL
LOS ANGELES, CA

ARRESTED AT AGE 19 AT THE ILLINOIS CENTRAL TRAIN STATION FROM NEW ORLEANS TO JACKSON

"Nonviolence wasn't necessarily a way of life, but it was a tactic."

"The clothing that they gave us in Parchman was a t-shirt that was military green and some green boxer shorts. No shoes. No. And as began to protest, they took them from us and left us with nothing. Then they took the mattresses, so now had to lie on a metal slab with them little round holes—and boy, you talk about some hard sleeping at night? When you're sleeping on the thing, there's that indentation where your skin goes through that little round hole, and there you are, half of you is like being suffocated and the other half is being cut out, you couldn't sleep any way you tried."

The freedom songs annoyed the guards so much that they retaliated by taking the riders' mattresses. Returning to Los Angeles, Bell worked as a janitor during the day, attending City College at night. In 1966, he was one of the first blacks to work for United Airlines in California.



FRANK HOLLOWAY
ATLANTA, GA

ARRESTED AT AGE 22 ON THE GREYHOUND BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"Nonviolence wasn't necessarily a way of life, but it was a tactic." "We felt like it was a tactic that worked... it showed white folks that these Negroes are not afraid... it also helped the people in the community to see these young people who are not afraid. I can't speak for nobody else, but I know for myself, I felt that this was what I was supposed to do.

I didn't feel like I was a hero or anything like that. I just felt that this was what I was supposed to do. And I did it and when I stopped doing it, I didn't feel like anybody needed to reward me or congratulate me or pat me on my back. I did what I felt like I had to do." Holloway worked as a SNCC field secretary in Mississippi, and Georgia from 1961 to 1967. He led the voting rights campaign in Wilcox County there were no registered voters. He has spent his career working for poverty and employment agencies.



CATHERINE BURKS-BROOKS
BIRMINGHAM, AL

ARRESTED AT AGE 17 AT THE GREYHOUND BUS STATION

Protest was already a big part of Catherine Burks-Brooks' life when she became involved with the Freedom Rides.

"It might have been around fifth or sixth grade when I began to protest the way things were," says Burks-Brooks. "I refused to step aside when walking downtown, when a white person would approach me. In high school, we rode city buses to school and one day my friends and I threw the 'colored' sign out the window."

A student at Tennessee State University, Nashville and a member of the Nashville Student Movement in 1961, Burks-Brooks later worked as a fundraiser for the movement.

She eventually returned to Birmingham, where she became a district sales manager retired in 1998 and now works as a substitute teacher in the public schools.

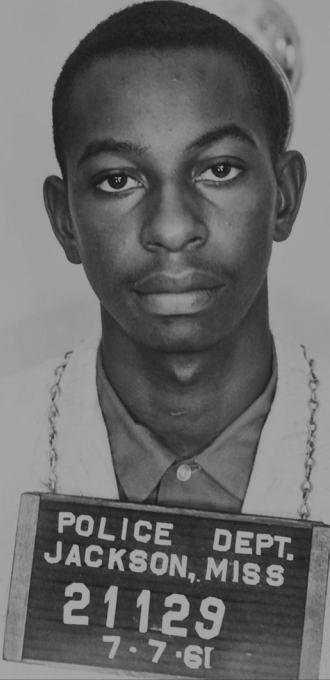
HEZEKIAH WATKINS JACKSON, MS

ARRESTED AT AGE 13 AT THE GREYHOUND BUS STATION

The youngest Freedom Rider, Hezekiah Watkins was a ninth-grade student at Rowan Junior High in Jackson when he was arrested. Watkins remained active in the movement throughout high school. He was arrested more than one hundred times.

He attended Utica Junior College, Mississippi, before he was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1967. After two years of service, including a tour of duty in South Korea, Watkins returned to Jackson and worked for the Jackson-Hinds Comprehensive Health Agency.

Watkins now owns Corner Food Market and Deli near Jackson State University, which he purchased in 1987. Watkins currently works as a counselor in the Cancer Institute at the Jackson Medical Mall, and he continues to participate in community affairs.



BERNARD LAFAYETTE NASHVILLE, TN

ARRESTED AT AGE 20 ON THE TRAILWAYS BUS FROM MONTGOMERY TO JACKSON

"When I get grown I'm going to do something about this." I was about seven, the city transportation system in Tampa, Florida, was segregated. You would get on in the front and put your money in the receptacle... then you would get off and go to the back, where there was another door... I with my grandmother and we put the money in... Well you had to run because sometimes they would fold the steps up and close the doors and take off with your money. I ran and I caught the door and was holding it. My grandmother was also running and she had on high heel shoes... and she fell. I tried to reach back for her and hold the door, which was impossible. I felt really torn, like a sword cut me in half."

A Lawson-trained Freedom Rider, Lafayette is a passionate advocate of nonviolence. In 1962, he moved to Selma to work on voting rights and laid the groundwork for the 1965 Selma to Montgomery Voting Rights March



REV. JAMES LAWSON NASHVILLE, TN

ARRESTED AT AGE 32 ON THE TRAILWAYS BUS FROM

"Jesus provided me with the spirituality of the nonviolence. But Gandi...showed me the methodology..."

"Our intention was that no matter how many people got beat up, we'd have another crew. If we got beat up in Jackson, we'd put another crew into Jackson who would go from Jackson to whatever the next stop was. That was the notion. But as the arrests took place in Jackson, and as we saw their effect, we decided to put out the cry and let people get arrested in Jackson and go after filling up the jails."

A missionary in India during the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Lawson moved to Nashville to train college students in nonviolent theory and direct action protests. The Nashville Student Movement grew out of his workshops. Their 1960 protests ended lunch counter segregated in local stores. Expelled from Vanderbilt's Divinity School in 1960 for his role in the sit-ins, he has been a visiting professor there since 2006.

