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ALBANY, GEORGIA, 1961–1962

"THE MOTHER LODE"

Demonstrating for integration in Albany, Georgia, activists led by the Reverend Samuel B. Wells (right) conduct a pray-in as local policemen stand by.

W.E.B. Du Bois, in his classic book *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), described Albany, Georgia, in the early 1890s as "a wide-streeted, placid, Southern town, with a broad sweep of stores and saloons, and flanking rows of homes, —whites usually to the north, and blacks to the south. Six days in the week the town looks decidedly too small for itself, and takes frequent and prolonged naps. But on Saturday suddenly the whole county disgorges itself upon the place, and a perfect flood of black peasantry pours through the streets, fills the stores, blocks the sidewalks, chokes the thoroughfares, and takes full possession of the town." It was the "center of the life of ten thousand souls."

Seventy years later, Albany was still the seat of Dougherty County, but by then its population had increased to twenty-three thousand black residents and thirty-three thousand white. It remained a completely segregated town.

Albany was surrounded by fields of cotton and peanuts. Workers from those fields and plantations would come to town to conduct business, buy supplies, attend church, and search out entertainment. The music of Albany, from Ray Charles (a native) to the Shiloh Baptist Church a cappella choir, was an integral part of the city's life. As Bernice Johnson Reagon would later say of her hometown, "There is a point in the gold mine where you have the richest part, and that's called the mother lode. That's what Albany is to black people in terms of just the concentrated essence of the spirit of the people. If you can imagine black people at our most powerful point, in terms of community and peoplehood, then that's Albany, Georgia, during the Albany movement. The singing is just an echo of the society."

In the summer of 1961, the first workers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee arrived to conduct a voter registration project in southwest Georgia, basing themselves in rural Terrell County—known to local blacks as Terrible Terrell—just outside Albany. Charles Sherrod was twenty-two, and Cordell Reagon was eighteen. Both young men were already veterans of direct action protests such as sit-ins and Freedom Rides. By fall they had relocated in Albany.

> When the two young men arrived, Bernice Johnson was a student at all-black Albany State College and was secretary of the local NAACP Youth Council.

BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

In the fall of '61, I was at Albany State and Charles Sherrod came up to me and said, "What do you think about Terrell County?" And I said, "It's a little bitty county." Then he turned to Otis Turner and asked him. Otis was from Terrell County and he started to run down what it was like to be black in Terrell County in terms of black people and white people. And I remember thinking, God, I wish that I'd not been so flip, and had taken the time to take Sherrod seriously. I didn't know who he was. That was my first contact with SNCC.

The first problem I had with SNCC was the name. They said they was the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. Now I had problems with two words in there. I understood *student* and I understood *committee*. I had read *coordinating*, but I'd never said *coordinating* in my life, so that was not a functional word for me. *Nonviolent* I had never really read in my life. I just told them I thought it was a stupid name, that half of their name was totally beyond me. I used to ask them, what was nonviolent? And Cordell Reagon would say, "Nonviolence is love, love for your fellowman," and it just clicked a blank in my head.

But one thing was very clear: they were there full-time, and they were from the movement. I knew that because Cordell talked about being on the Freedom Rides. Charles Sherrod talked about what he was doing. They had already been to Terrell County and had decided they couldn't stay, and if they were going to do anything to overthrow the white power structure in those counties that have more black people than white people, they had to start in Albany, Georgia.

They were for freedom. I understood that, and I had been waiting.

> SNCC, a young organization determined to develop new and nontraditional leadership at the grass roots, was stirring things up. Within weeks of the SNCC workers' arrival in Albany, the goal for that city became not just the vote but total desegregation of the way life was lived. With several groups competing for funds and support in the black community, local leaders felt the need for a more united front, and for more control. An umbrella organization called the Albany Movement was formed, with osteopath William G. Anderson as its president.

WILLIAM G. ANDERSON

Albany was a typical small town in Georgia. In 1961 it had nearly sixty thousand, so it's not small by rural Georgia small-town standards, where the population may be as low as five hundred. But it was a semirural community and in part dependent upon farming. There was very little industry. It was a rather close-knit town in that people knew each other. It was totally segregated. Blacks held no positions in any of the stores downtown as salespersons, clerks, or what have you. Of course, there were no black policemen, and blacks held no political office. As a matter of fact, we weren't even called blacks. We were called Negroes by the ones who were more liberal and benevolent, and we were

called more unsavory things by others. You couldn't say that it was a community where you could experience racial harmony. The interplay was nonexistent. Most of the people who had lived in Albany all of their lives had sort of come to accept things as they were, or at least there was no outward expression of opposition to things as they were.

I first got the impression that we were caught up in what was happening nationwide when the SNCC representatives came into Albany. They sort of infiltrated all the social, civic, and religious organizations in the community and became a part of us.

Charlie Sherrod looked like the typical college kid who had been caught up with the excitement of the times. He was very dedicated, very well motivated, and he was received very well.

As a result of the catalytic reaction created by the SNCC students, a number of the black civic and social organizations got together and decided all in one night that the people in the community apparently are ready for whatever is happening. We are their leaders. And we are not ready for what the people appear to be ready for. We decided it would be better for us local leaders to give some direction to whatever is happening. So the Albany Movement was sort of a spontaneous thing.

CHARLES SHERROD

Now, we had been walking them dusty roads, and talking to the young people, and the old people. They had a very good feeling of our presence. We had become, in a sense, one with those that we had been talking with. Then came this ICC ruling, that interstate travel should be desegregated effective in November, and I said to myself, Wow, this is it. Here we go. I had anticipated moving into sit-ins or something else later on. But when this ruling came through, we were ready. So we got some students from Albany State College. We picked out this nice little innocent but big-mouthed girl—she could talk, and she could sing. Bertha Gober, I remember her very clearly. And a fellow by the name of Blanton Hall. We told them that they would be the beginning, and we had people ready to go to the station right after they would be arrested, if they were to be arrested. Actually, some of us really didn't think they would get arrested, because this was a federal mandate. I mean, we had constitutional rights. They mess with

us now, they're going to get the federal government on them. Nobody is going to mess with the federal government, we thought.

We walked in there, and we had five students. They each understood that we would be nonviolent, we'd been slapped around and kicked around and pushed around in workshops, so they were accustomed to what might happen. They were accosted by the police, they really wanted the students to leave. The police tried to scare them, they tried to cajole them, they tried all kinds of ways of getting them out of there, aside from arresting them. But the young people stayed. I wasn't in there, this first arrest. Bertha, and the other, Hall, went limp, so they had to drag them out. This was all planned, of course.

> The students were arrested on November 22 for entering a white waiting room and for attempting to eat in the bus terminal's dining room. But Police Chief Laurie Pritchett was anxious to avoid a confrontation with federal authorities.

LAURIE PRITCHETT

Those students were not arrested on a federal charge, they were arrested on a city ordinance of failing to obey the orders of a law enforcement officer. It had nothing to do with interstate commerce. They were violating a city ordinance. They were asked to leave. They was not on any bus. They were not eating at any counters. They were obstructing the flow of pedestrian travel in and out of the bus station. They were asked to disperse, they failed to do so, and they were arrested.

> The next wave of arrests occurred in early December. Nine Freedom Riders traveling from Atlanta were charged with trespassing at the Albany train station. As far as the city government was concerned, segregation of the races was permanent and nonnegotiable.

WILLIAM G. ANDERSON

When the Albany Movement was organized, we drafted a purpose for the organization, which was to seek a means of desegregating the city of Albany, and we presented it as a petition to the city

council. I went to the next city council meeting to get a response to our petition. The council conducted its business as usual on that evening, and Mayor Asa Kelley, who chaired the council, announced that the meeting was about to adjourn. Whereupon I asked for a hearing. This was granted, and I asked about our petition. I said, "We have petitioned the city council to set into place some mechanism whereby we can seek means of desegregating the city of Albany. And we gave all the reasons why we felt this should be done."

Well, Mayor Kelley said: "We discussed this in the executive session of the city council and we determined that there is no common ground for discussion, and did not deem it appropriate to have it as an agenda item. Adjourned."

Before I left I said, "It is regrettable. This is not in the best interest of Albany." And I left.

The next day the local newspaper, the *Albany Herald*, edited by our "friend" Mr. James Gray, who was at that time state Democratic chairman, had on the front page of his newspaper that the Albany Movement demands complete and total desegregation of the city of Albany. And it went on to relate my attending the city council meeting and "storming out"—he described it as storming out of the meeting—indicating that this was not in the best interest of Albany. I might add that he put in that same article not only my address but my phone number. This led to a series of events that coincided with the arrival of the Freedom Riders. They came into Albany on a Sunday. I can remember very vividly. They were arrested as they got off the train. That night we had a meeting of the Albany Movement and decided that we would not let these people stay in jail alone, we would fill up the jails.

That next morning, at breakfast, I was advising my wife and my kids that their husband and father would very likely wind up in jail before the week was out, because the Albany Movement had decided that the best way to respond would be mass demonstrations. You'd have to understand that going to jail was probably one of the most feared things in rural Georgia. There were many blacks who were arrested in small towns in Georgia never to be heard from again. We have every reason to believe many of these were lynched. So going to jail was no small thing. It was nothing to be taken lightly by any black. Because there were all kinds of horror stories of atrocities that had been suffered by blacks in jails.

On this Monday morning following the arrests on Sunday, we met at a church, and we started a march downtown, and we were going to walk around the courthouse and go back to the church. We made it around the first time, and I was at the head of the line with my wife. After we made it around the first time not getting arrested, I went on to my office, but the group went around the second time to make this impression that we are united behind these people that you have unjustly arrested. The second time around they were arrested. And some seven hundred were arrested before they stopped.

When we had this many people in jail, we had a meeting of the Albany Movement that night, and we all recognized that we had no experience in what we were doing. We had never been involved in mass demonstrations, mass arrests. We had no provisions for bonding. No provisions for taking care of families of people who were in jail. Recognize that this was not a select group. These were common, ordinary, everyday people—housewives, cooks, maids, laborers, children out of school. We had made no provisions for these people going to jail because we did not anticipate the mass arrests. So we concluded that night that we really need some expert help here, someone who has had the experience.

I knew Dr. King from years earlier. I knew him well enough that if I were to call him he would come down and help us. Needless to say, there was not total agreement initially with issuing this call. Because recognizing that now SNCC was on the scene and, by virtue of the Freedom Riders coming through, CORE was on the scene, and they did also have established organizations. We also recognized that to the extent that they received some publicity it helped to further their cause, and they would be able to raise money to continue their activities. But anyway, we were able to get a unanimous decision of the Albany Movement to call in Dr. King. I called him personally. And he merely asked if this is the desire of all involved. And I said, "Yes, it is." And he asked that I send him a telegram to that extent. I indicated on the telegram all the organizations that were represented now in the Albany Movement. And he responded to that call.

Andrew Young, a twenty-nine-year-old minister who had recently gone to work at the Southern Christian Leadership Con-

ference headquarters in Atlanta, traveled the two hundred miles to Albany in the company of King and other SCLC staffers.

ANDREW YOUNG

The Albany Movement had asked Martin to come down just to make a speech, and he went only to make a speech. But people came from all over the region, and there were two big churches right across the street from each other that were filled, and people were all out in the streets in between. Dr. Anderson got carried away, and in public asked Martin to demonstrate, to lead the march with him. And he agreed, and then he got put in jail, with no plan, no thought of what we were going to do.

King and more than 250 demonstrators were arrested on December 16. He vowed to stay in jail until the city desegregated.

CHARLES SHERROD

When the decision was made by the movement to call in Dr. King, we had about five hundred to seven hundred people already in jail. I was in jail, and Cordell was in jail. There was only one of our group left out. I was in jail to stay, and I had programmed everybody to follow me in jail. We were going to break the system down from within. Our ability to suffer was somehow going to overcome their ability to hurt us.

It was the frustration on the parts of the adults who were then in charge while we were in jail that made them feel like they needed Dr. King. In jail all kinds of things happen. Kids are being hurt, females had physical needs, somebody's getting smacked. All kinds of pressures are brought upon the leadership. But pressure is also being brought against the opposition, which is the intention of the whole thing. One old person said, "Pressure make a monkey eat pebble," and we just pushed: pressure, pressure, pressure. Sometimes we don't know who controls this, who controls the other. So we stomp and stomp, and see whose feet we get. And then somebody's going to holler, "Oh, you got me." So then, when he hollers, that's the direction we go in. And that was the general strategy. We didn't know what we were doing. We'd never done it before. Nobody had never got that many people to go to jail. And I'm not talking about just the hoi polloi, I'm talking about the upper crust. The great people in Albany. Even some white folk went to jail with us, from Albany. So we were steamrolling. After the fact, they come up with all these theoretical things about what happened in Albany. And perhaps some of them were true. Sure, there were conflicts. When you get a personality—I'm soft-spoken now, for the most part, till you get me riled up, you know—but when you get a soft-spoken personality, but a stout personality, like myself, coming head to head with Dr. Wyatt Tee Walker, who was the executive director at that time of SCLC, you going to have a few fireworks. So what? What's most important? They don't talk about the unity we had. About the strength we had, for the first time.

The Reverend Wyatt Tee Walker was no stranger to Charles Sherrod. They both came from Petersburg, Virginia, where Sherrod had been a member of Walker's church.

WYATT TEE WALKER

In Albany we in SCLC were like fire fighters. The fire was already burning and, I try to say this as charitably as I can, SNCC was in over its head. They wanted the international and national attention that Martin Luther King's presence would generate, but they did not want the input of his organization, nor his strategy, which was considerably different from the methodology and strategy of SNCC.

Dr. King felt he was between a rock and a hard place. He could not say at Dr. Anderson's invitation that it won't work into my schedule, or I can't come, because nonviolent struggle is what Dr. King was about, and it was under the aegis of his leadership that it was introduced on the American scene. It had been introduced before, but Dr. King introduced it on a mass scale. So it was a natural place for him to be. But without having organizational input and control it was a very difficult campaign for him.

LAURIE PRITCHETT

After the SNCCs came into Albany, I had information from a law enforcement agency, a federal agency, who I worked with quite close. They informed me that Dr. King's intentions were to come

into Albany and join the Albany Movement. Upon learning this, I did research. I found his method was nonviolence, that his method was to fill the jails—same as in India. And once they filled the jails, we'd have no capacity to arrest and then we'd have to give in to his demands. After learning this and studying this research, I started orientation of the police department into nonviolent movement—no violence, no dogs, no show of force. I even took up some of the training the SNCCs originated there—like sitting at the counter and being slapped, spit upon. I said, "If they do this, you will not use force. We're going to out-nonviolent them," and this is what the police department and the other people did.

Prior to King's arrival, I had sat down and took a map and went fifteen miles. How many jails was in a fifteen-mile radius, on up to maybe a fifty- or sixty-mile radius. I contacted those authorities, and they assured us that we could use their facilities. When the mass arrests started, we'd have marches and there'd be two hundred, three hundred—at one time there I think we had almost two thousand—but none in our jail. They were in surrounding counties under our supervision, so as nothing would happen to them. We never had any in our jail, they were all in surrounding counties. So when these mass marches started, we were well prepared.

My position was chief of police. It didn't deal in segregation or integration. My responsibility was to enforce the ordinances and laws of that city and state. As I told Dr. King many times, I did not disagree with his motives or his objectives, it was his method. I believed in the courts, he believed in the streets. So I've never been classified as a segregationist, and not as an integrationist. I was administrator of the city of Albany's police department.

WYATT TEE WALKER

Laurie Pritchett posed as a sophisticated law enforcement official. A more apt description would be slick. He was not nonviolent, as I've seen some people write. He was nonbrutal.

He developed the reputation that he was using Dr. King's nonviolence to blunt Dr. King's campaign, which was not true. The foil for our nonviolent campaigns in the South had been the anticipated response of segregationist law enforcement officers

such as Bull Connor in Birmingham, Alabama. Laurie Pritchett was of a different stripe. He probably had finished high school, and he did have enough intelligence to read Dr. King's book on the Montgomery boycott. He culled from that a way to avoid confrontation in inducing the great ferment in the national community by being nonbrutal rather than being nonviolent. It's bizarre to say that a segregationist system or a law enforcement official of a segregationist system could be nonviolent, because, first of all, nonviolence works in a moral climate, and segregation is not a moral climate.

CHARLES SHERROD

Some people say Chief Pritchett was nonviolent. How could a man be nonviolent who observed people being beaten with billy clubs? One young lady was dragged up the steps of the courthouse, after being arrested, by her hair. Another man, Reverend Samuel Wells, was dragged into the courtroom by his gonads. One person was hung in the jailhouse by his thumbs. All under the direction and authorization and officiating of this nonviolent police chief, Laurie Pritchett. I just don't understand how they could come up with this, but it has been the case.

I remember a statement that Chief Pritchett made to me one time. "You know, Sherrod," he says, "it's just a matter of mind over matter. I don't mind, and you don't matter." That statement was certainly true of people that he sent to Terrell County and Baker County, 'cause I witnessed it myself. The deputy sheriff slapped me almost unconscious, just because I said yes and no. Those were the early days when I didn't know that you just didn't say yes or no to these white folks, you had to say yes, sir, and no, sir. And the same things were done a thousand times all over. They took the heat off us in the winter, and wouldn't give us any blankets or mattresses, and they stuffed forty people in cells.

BERNICE JOHNSON REAGON

What I can remember is being very alive and very clear, the clearest I've ever been in my life. I knew that every minute, I was doing what I was supposed to do. That was the way it was in jail and on the marches. In "We Shall Overcome" there's a verse that

says "God is on our side," and there was a theological discussion that said maybe we should say, "We are on God's side." God was lucky to have us in Albany doing what we were doing. I mean, what better case would He have? So it was really like God would be very, very happy to be on my side. There's a bit of arrogance about that, but that was the way it felt.

I think Albany settled the issue of whether to go to jail. Songs helped to do that, because in the songs you could just name the people who were trying to use this against you—Asa Kelley, who was the mayor, Chief Pritchett, who was the police. This behavior is new behavior for black people in the United States of America. You would every once in a while have a crazy black person going up against some white person and they would hang him. But this time, with a song, there was nothing they could do to block what we were saying. Not only did you call their names and say what you wanted to say, but they could not stop your sound. Singing is different than talking, because no matter what they do, they would have to kill me to stop me from singing, if they were arresting me. Sometimes they would plead and say, "Please stop singing." And you would just know that your word is being heard. There was a real sense of platformness and clearly empowerment, and it was like just saying, "Put me in jail, that's not an issue of power. My freedom has nothing to do with putting me in jail." And so there was this joy.

There's a song that a Reverend Hollaway would do, and it's called "Shine on Me." [*Begins singing.*] "Shine on me, shine on me, let the light from the lighthouse shine on me. Shine on me, shine on me, let the light from the lighthouse shine on me." It's like claiming your space. We had been too long out of the light. It was our time. It still is.

On December 18, 1961, two days after King's arrest and vow to stay in jail until the city was desegregated, the city and the Albany Movement announced a truce. According to the oral agreement, the movement would call off mass demonstrations in return for concessions from the city government. It felt like a victory for Albany's black community, so King and most of the prisoners accepted release from jail.

The bus and train stations were, in fact, desegregated. But with King returned to Atlanta and the national reporters gone, the city began to drag its feet on most concessions and, ultimately, refused to negotiate further. The movement, in turn, boycotted the segregated bus line and the stores downtown.

As the months wore on, small skirmishes like sit-ins replaced the head-on assault of the earlier mass marches. One of the Albany Movement's great frustrations was the apparent inability, or unwillingness, of the federal government to intervene.

WILLIAM G. ANDERSON

We never at any time got any of the Justice Department officials [from the civil rights division] to come in, to my knowledge. Even as observers during the arrests or the court hearings. There were FBI agents on the scene, but no one from the Justice Department. I would have expected a representative from the Justice Department to be on the scene as an observer if nothing else. Because civil rights were being violated. For example, we were not permitted to demonstrate at all, even following all the guidelines that had been set forth by the city. We attempted picketing of selected stores in small numbers, widely spaced, not blocking any ingress or egress. We would do that and still get arrested. I was arrested on several occasions just walking down the street holding a piece of paper in my hand, under the pretext of passing out literature without a permit or something to that effect. I'm saying that Justice officials were not there as observers, and if they were there, mind you, they were not identified as such. To my knowledge, no action was taken relative to the violation of our civil rights.

BURKE MARSHALL

My recollection with Albany, Georgia, is that the city claimed they weren't arresting people to enforce segregation. They were arresting them for some other purpose. So that was a dispute. I have no doubt about which side of the dispute was right, but there was a dispute and an argument. When the movement in Albany moved out of the bus station where it started from and into other areas of the city and other problems, we didn't have the authority we could wave at the city of Albany that we had in the case of the bus stations.

The FBI had a mindset—I don't know whether I'd call it a southern mindset, I would call it a Hoover mindset. And the

Hoover mindset was anti–civil rights movement. For reasons that may have been pure racism. It may have had other motives in it, I don't know. Mr. Hoover at that time was not showing good judgment about anything, in my opinion. That is not, however, the complete explanation for the reasons that the civil rights movement complained about the behavior of the Bureau.

Wholly apart from Mr. Hoover's feelings about the civil rights movement, he had for a long time stuck to the notion that the Bureau was purely an investigative agency. It worked in his highly bureaucratic mind this way: if there was reason to believe that what happened violated a federal law, wasn't just wrong or unjust, or hurt somebody, but violated some federal law that you could name, then some lawyer in the Justice Department—civil rights division in this case—would write him a memo, addressed to Mr. Hoover, saying please make a preliminary investigation or please make a full investigation of the following matter. Then he would insist on knowing what federal law had been violated.

So just speaking very broadly, if somebody beat somebody up on the streets of Albany, that violates justice. It violates a city ordinance in Albany, it may violate the law of the state of Georgia. But it doesn't violate, normally, any federal law, so the FBI will say that it's none of their business. And it will say that it's none of their business not only to investigate it afterwards, but that it's doubly none of its business to interfere with what's going on at the time, since Bureau agents are not policemen, they're investigators. Their job is to produce evidence to go into court later and not to interfere. Now that's the position. Of course, he didn't hold to that position with, say, bank robberies, so it's not a coherent or consistent position. But as I understood it, that was his position throughout the period.

When King and Ralph Abernathy returned to Albany in July 1962 for sentencing on their December arrests, the two men chose forty-five days in jail rather than admit guilt by paying a fine. With King in jail, the conflict in Albany was once again national news. The mass marches resumed, and black youngsters stoned Pritchett's police cars.

For the second time, King vowed to stay in jail. Also for the second time, Pritchett and the city fathers maneuvered to get him out.

LAURIE PRITCHETT

I knew that if Dr. King stayed in jail, we'd continue to have problems, so I talked to some people. I said, "We've got to get him out, and once we do, I think he'll leave here." An arrangement was made. Frankly, I don't know who the man was that paid the bond, but it was done at my request.

It sort of surprised Dr. King. This was the only time when it seemed he didn't know which way to go. 'Cause, see, when we went back and got him, he thought he was being transferred to a better jail in Americus, Georgia. When I said, "No, you're leaving," he said, "I can't go, Chief Pritchett. I'll lose face if I go." I said, "Well, you've got to go, Dr. King." Later on, after it was all over, we discussed this, and he told me, "This is one time, not only did you out-nonviolent me, but you outsmarted me." You know, it was a shrewd move, but it accomplished what we wanted to do.

After King's release, the campaign to immobilize him continued when the city attorney on July 21 obtained a federal court order that enjoined King and other leaders from demonstrating.

CORETTA SCOTT KING

In Albany we had a federal injunction placed against us. And when the federal court started ruling against us, that created a whole different thing in terms of what strategy do you use now? Because up to that point, Martin had been willing to break state laws that were unjust laws, and our ally was the federal judiciary. So if we would take our case to the federal court, and the federal court ruled against us, what recourse did we have? So we were working in concert with the federal laws, all the time, in the South, up to that point. [Now] he was asking President Kennedy, and the attorney general, Bobby Kennedy, for an intercession in Albany. He was asking the Justice Department to intercede as a friend of the court, so that injunction could be lifted. Because if you break the federal injunction, that would be a problem.

CHARLES SHERROD

The injunction didn't have a great immobilizing effect on us. We had a mass meeting that very night. I remember it very clearly. Reverend Samuel B. Wells got up in the mass meeting—we had talked before, because we talked about these things before we did them, most of the time; a lot of things were spontaneous, but not everything—Reverend got up there, we called him black Jesus, he was a beautiful black man, big. He got up there and he held up the injunction that the judge had handed down. He said, "I see Dr. King's name, and I see Dr. Anderson's name, and I see Charles Sherrod, and I see this, but I don't see Samuel Wells, and I don't see Mrs. Sue Samples, and I don't see Mrs. Rufus Grant. Now, where are those names?" And with that, and two or three other very colorful expressions, taken out of the great tradition of our church, he marched about seventy-five folk out of that church, and they went to jail that night. So the movement did not stall. We did not stop doing anything that we had been doing.

Now, I can't help how Dr. King might have felt, or Wyatt Tee might have felt, or Bernard Lee, or any of the rest of them in SCLC, NAACP, CORE, any of the groups, but as far as we were concerned, things moved on. We didn't skip one beat.

SNCC never did consider Albany a defeat. But for King and the ministers of SCLC, the small city in southwest Georgia had become a morass. After the brutal beating of a pregnant black woman, Mrs. Slater King, at one of the outlying jails in Laurie Pritchett's rural network, blacks in Albany again responded by hurling bottles and bricks at Albany police, a rejection of King's nonviolent credo. To reassert moral leadership, King went to jail in Albany for the third time, but again he was soon released.

Mass meetings and protests would continue in Albany for most of the decade. But King's participation ended when he left the city in August 1962.

ANDREW YOUNG

When Martin left Albany he was very depressed. But he knew what had happened. He really felt that it was a federal judge that called off that movement. He had a very emotional exchange with Burke Marshall over that, because he felt that the Kennedy administration had helped to undercut the possibility of continuing in Albany.

The weakness of the Albany Movement was that it was totally unplanned and we were totally unprepared. It was a miscalculation on the part of a number of people that a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King could bring change—that it wasn't just a spontaneous appearance by Martin Luther King, it was the planning, the organizing, the strategy that he brought with him that brought change. The weakness was not understanding that.

The strength was that I don't know that there were any more powerful and beautiful people. Albany was one of those areas where blacks seemed to be still intact culturally. The singing, the folklore, had a kind of indigenous power to it that meant you couldn't walk away from Albany, Georgia.

WILLIAM G. ANDERSON

The Albany Movement was a qualified success. Qualified in that at the time the movement came to an end—and it didn't come to an abrupt end; it was sort of phased out, marked by the cessation of the mass demonstrations and the picketing—none of the facilities had been voluntarily desegregated. The buses had become desegregated, the train station, the bus station. But these were being desegregated by federal edict. It was not a voluntary move on the part of the people of Albany. But the lunch counters, the parks, and other public accommodations were not desegregated and there were no blacks employed as clerks in the stores at the time the Albany Movement came to an end, that is, in the sense of no more mass demonstrations.

But the Albany Movement was an overwhelming success in that, first of all, there was a change in the attitude of the people: the people who were involved in the movement, the people involved in the demonstrations, because they had made a determination within their own minds that they would never accept that segregated society as it was, anymore. There was a change in attitude of the kids who saw their parents step into the forefront and lead the demonstrations. They were determined that they would never go through what their parents went through to get the recognition that they should have as citizens.

Secondly, the Albany Movement was a success in that it served as a trial or as a proving ground for a subsequent civil rights movement. It gave some direction. The mistakes that were made in Albany were not to be repeated. For example, that settlement on a handshake in December 1961. That would never be repeated anytime in the future.

Bringing in Dr. King was probably the smartest thing that we ever did. Not only did we get the benefit of having a well-established, well-experienced civil rights organization as a part of the Albany Movement, but it also brought in world attention. The eyes of the world were focused on Albany primarily because of Dr. King. There was not a major newspaper in the world that was not represented in Albany. Not a major television network in the United States that was not represented in Albany. Having seen the results of his coming there in terms of the increase in the number of media people present, I know that they came there because Dr. King was there. He was a media event. We needed the media attention because we thought that we could not get what we were looking for by appealing to the local people. There would have to be outside pressure, and the only way we could get the pressure would be for the media to call to the attention of those outside people what was happening in Albany.

In 1976, fifteen years after he first arrived, Charles Sherrod was elected to the city commission of Albany, Georgia.

CHARLES SHERROD

Some people talk about failure. Where's the failure? Are we not integrated in every facet? Did we stop at any time? What stopped us? Did any injunction stop us? Did any white man stop us? Did any black man stop us? Nothing stopped us in Albany, Georgia. We showed the world.