Mel Steely: 00:00:29 I'm Mel Steely from the History Department at the University of West Georgia. Today, we're interviewing Reverend Hosea Williams as part of our Georgia's Political Heritage Program. We're at our studios at the university and today is May 15, 1998. Reverend Williams, you were born in, is it, Attapulgus, Georgia? Is that the way you pronounce that?

Hosea Williams: 00:00:53 It's pronounced Attapulgus.

Mel Steely: 00:00:54 Attapulgus.

Hosea Williams: 00:00:55 But I was born in Villas, Florida. That's wrong.

Mel Steely: 00:00:57 Oh, is it?

Hosea Williams: 00:00:58 I was born in Villas, Florida.

Mel Steely: 00:01:00 Okay. January 5, 19... what?

Hosea Williams: 00:01:04 '26.

Mel Steely: 00:01:04 '26. Would you tell us a little bit about your early life?

Hosea Williams: 00:01:09 Well, my mother and father both was blind, and they met at a blind school in Macon, Georgia, which is still in Macon, and she became pregnant. She had a brother that was blind too, Hosea Williams. He was blind. That was her older brother. She ran away from the school. No one knew she was pregnant. She kept herself wrapped in a towel and that was in Villas, Florida, where her family really came into being, because her father used to be a wood rider. A wood rider is a foreman, where they dip the turpentine from the pine trees.

Mel Steely: 00:01:46 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 00:01:47 She went back there, and that night she had this baby at twelve midnight. Well, the pine tree forest where they collect the rubber teal is in Villas, Florida, but it's Port St. Joe where it's redefined. And the next day she put this baby in a trunk, on a wagon, and they drove that wagon for twelve hours. She never fed the baby, the baby never hollered.
Hosea Williams: When she got to Port St. Joe and she found a family that was very friendly to her family before they moved back to Georgia, and she made a deal with them that she'd be back in two weeks to get the baby, and if she didn't get back in two weeks, they could have the baby.

Hosea Williams: Well, she went home. My grandfather, excuse me, was totally illiterate. Totally illiterate. He used to take him, he'd go to the post office sometime and get the letter ... not the post office, the mailbox, come back and say, "This is my mail." Had the mail turned bottom upwards. But he was about as brilliant, as hardworking a man that I met in my seventy-two years. But he was a tough guy, he's really a tough guy. And she went back to the farm up there outside of Attapulgus, and she was afraid.

Hosea Williams: Now where my grandfather was one of the meanest men, human beings, I've ever met, his wife, if there is anyone in heaven beside Jesus, she is there, Lela Williams.

Hosea Williams: My mother went back, was just afraid to tell him. And about three weeks she told them, and they came back to Florida. They wouldn't, wouldn't let her have the baby, and said, "You made a deal with us." Back in those days, a handshake meant more than a signed, notarized contract today.

Hosea Williams: A year later the man died and the lady, she had a lot of [inaudible 00:03:42], and that's how I ended up in an orphan home, which I was booted out at the age of twelve and then that's when I found my family outside of Bainbridge, Georgia, in Attapulgus, on a farm, and I left there and went to the Everglades of Florida. Which I said, "If there's a hell on this Earth, it's the Everglades of Florida," and I left the Everglades of Florida, I went into the United States Army. I lied about my age, and got into the United States Army.

Mel Steely: When was that? About the time the war started?

Hosea Williams: No, I went in the Army in '44. I never had a mother, never had a father. I met my father some thirty-five years later, he was in Jacksonville, Florida. But I came out of the Army. I would've remained in the Army until death, but after I was wounded by the Germans, then I came out of the army, because I couldn't pull full-time duty, and they had too many soldiers anyway.

Hosea Williams: Because I remember when they sent so many of us home, it was after we had really settled the war. Not settled the war, but got down to the nitty gritty of the war in Japan, and they just had
too many soldiers in Europe. So, I came back home and I was discharged.

Mel Steely: 00:05:04 You were a Staff Sergeant, or..?

Hosea Williams: 00:05:08 Yes, I was a Staff Sergeant. At the age of nineteen, a master minder of some sixty-four soldiers. A Platoon Sergeant then, and I went back to school. I don't know why I went back. I do remember, too. I remember I missed a position in the Army. They had a position on for a Master Sergeant, and I just knew I had that position, and they gave it to another man, and when I complained about it, said, "Hosea, you just have a seventh grade education. This man has two years in college." And that really stuck with me because I really wanted that position. I was very hurt. I considered myself a real quality soldier, and I said, "I'm going to get me an education."

Hosea Williams: 00:05:48 So I came back and convinced the principal in Bainbridge, Georgia, Hutto High, Mrs. Hutto. School was named after her, to let me go back to school, and she granted me that privilege. That year was a kind of a miserable year.

Hosea Williams: 00:06:10 I was grown. I wasn't but twenty-three years old, but I'd lived in the streets most of my life. So I was grown, and being in class with those fifteen and sixteen year old kids was a rather grueling moment. I remember when something happened. I had graduation, it was fifty-two of us that graduated that year and this is 1946. I believe it was '46, and I never forget the little girl that began to keep company with me. She was only seventeen, but she was sweet as she could be, and she was very good in science, and that's why I ended up being scientific minded. I couldn't read too well, so in history and all those social sciences, they give you so much to study at night, I never could read them. But in chemistry, or mathematics, or physics, you have two pages to do today.

Hosea Williams: 00:07:01 And I remember at the graduation and what they would do, they would call the student's name, and their parents would go up on the stage, and then the student would come and stand between their parents and they presented them their diploma. When they called Hosea Williams's name, there was no parents. And with all my ego and self-confidence, I froze in the seat. It came, "Hosea Williams," and this young girl got up and went, and her mother and father, and went and stood on the stage, and I went up there and received my diploma.

Hosea Williams: 00:07:31 I didn't have a lot of interest at that time in going to college, but there was a family in Bainbridge, one of Georgia's most
influential political families. It was two brothers, Cheney Griffin and Marvin Griffin. Marvin at that time was in the state legislature, but they were very powerful at that area down there. Well, Cheney became mayor at the age of twenty-six. He was also a veteran, but he was also president of the Junior Chamber of Commerce. So, he took over a club out there at the little air base. He's ready [inaudible 00:08:06] daytime. And Cheney and I became, I mean, inseparable. It's hard to believe, a black man, and a white man at that age. Because we were doing a lot of devilish things. Really devilish things. Women, moonshine, the gambling. And they got on Cheney about this, that his brother was just so strict. Oh God. That man was so strict.

Mel Steely: 00:08:26 Marvin?

Hosea Williams: 00:08:29 Yeah. Yeah, Marvin, who became governor of Georgia. And they got on Cheney. But one of the tricks Cheney and I used to play out at the club at night, these redneck white men who owned these big farms and things, would bring their families out at night and Cheney would go over there, he was drinking. He's a big handsome dude and he just ordered, "Bring us steaks." He was ordering everything. So the bill just ... I mean, it's a huge bill. So, when the time come to pay the bill, the old white man said, "Okay boy, bring me that bill." No, Cheney would say that. "Okay boy, come here, boy, give me that bill. Let me pay that. I said, "No sir, Mr. Mayor, you've already paid three bills tonight. I'm going to let this gentleman here pay this bill."

Hosea Williams: 00:09:11 Well, we were something. We used to go there at night, everybody would go there, the slot machine. And if you put them all on roses, you know, and it'd pay off. I'd hold the slot machine, and Cheney would pull it. Like ... We'd rob the slot machines, every night. But one day Cheney came to me, and it shocked me. He said, "You got to understand one thing, I'm white, and you black." And boy did that hurt me. I said, "Cheney, why did you say it?" And he didn't want to tell me that because we had been doing some terrible things. I mean, Cheney and I. He said, "Hosea," he said, "It is true. I can make it because I am white, and you will not make it here because you are black. Why don't you go to college?"

Hosea Williams: 00:09:58 I said, "Cheney," it's how serious he was then. I said, "I don't have no money to go to no college." He looked at me and said, "If I pay the bill will you go?" I said, "I'll go, Cheney," so we made a deal. So Cheney sent me off to college. The only thing was, after I got in Morris Brown College, one day, I had all these pretty girls out on the lawn and everything and I saw this
limousine roll up, and this white man get out. "Hosea!" He's drunk. "Hosea, goddamn it. Hosea!" I said, "Who in the world is it?" It's Cheney. Cheney Griffin. Said, "Boy, I made a mistake. Leave this damn college. Come on, and go with me." You know? His brother was governor then, and as it ended up, they said Cheney Griffin stole everything at the Capitol, except the gold on the dome. But there will never be another poor Griffin. And purchased, they say, from old Billy Dodger, in Chattahoochee, the Flint River.

Hosea Williams: 00:10:52 But Cheney was a great friend, and still today he is pretty close to the point of death, he is one of the greatest friends in my life.

Mel Steely: 00:11:01 Well now, what was it like being black and growing up in the South, in that period right after the war? You had expectations, I'm sure, being a veteran and all.

Hosea Williams: 00:11:09 It was very, very difficult. It was very difficult. We used to drive from Bainbridge to Atlanta, and if you got a sandwich or anything, there is no restaurant or no cafe that black people could go into, irregardless of how educated, how wealthy. Most of the restaurants and cafes, they had a back window in the kitchen and you'd go there, knock on that back window, and they'd come and serve you out of the kitchen, and they'd have some benches out there that you would be seated in. I remember when I used to be driving a long ways, and these hotels and motels, mainly hotels back then, very few motels, and you see a big light on that hotel blinking, saying, "Vacancy, vacancy." Not for blacks. I used to park my car in the shadows of that light for protection, and sleep in the car. And after I got married, we'd get up that morning, and then I'd have to drive.

Hosea Williams: 00:12:12 I got this wife, this doctor, I'm a research scientist, all these beautiful kids, this new Cadillac, and we'd have to drive out on the highway and my wife would take the girls on the right hand side of the highway to use the bathroom, and I'd take the boys to the left hand side. Let me tell you this, when I came out of the army, I had a terrible experience in Jimmy Carter's hometown. President Jimmy Carter's hometown. Americus, Georgia. Because we were changing buses in Americus. I rode a bus from New York, and was changing buses, to catch another bus to a Bainbridge, and in the meantime only whites could go inside of the bus station. Blacks had to go around to the back of the bus station and sell them anything through the window. I don't drink coffee today, they taught me when I was a little boy coffee make you black. So, well, I'm drinking a coffee. But my body has always been a souped-up body. I take in a lot of liquids every day of my life. So all I wanted was a drink of water. Well,
the lady opened that window, setting the sandwich, I saw that fountain up in the front door.

Hosea Williams: 00:13:23 Now, I got on this army outfit with all these medals and everything. I figured out, I buy you a cup of coffee, and she'll let you have a cup, pour the coffee out. Now listen, I'm still hopping, I'm walking with keys and all this stuff. So I take the cup and go around to the front of that bus station. And I didn't go in, I pushed the door in, pushed the door open, and leaned inside and tried to get some water in that cup. And those white men beat me until I was unconscious.

Hosea Williams: 00:13:54 They thought I was dead. It was a black lady, ran a funeral home, very popular in Americus, Georgia. So they called the undertaker to come and pick me up, because they thought I was dead, and they found out I had pulse. But my heart was beating, and then carried me to a hospital in Thomasville, Georgia, which is still there today, a veteran hospital, and I laid there eight weeks, crying. Hating and wishing that I had fought on the side of Adolf Hitler.

Mel Steely: 00:14:20 Hmm. Pretty strong statement.

Hosea Williams: 00:14:25 Yes, sir. Another thing happened, I was a hustler. I was a hustler. I was really a gangster. But I promised my grandfather that I would hustle all this money in the Army, and send that money back to him, and when I come home he would keep fifty percent of the money and give me fifty percent of the money. So when I got home, and I've been beaten in Americus, Georgia, and my aunt, really she called herself my mother, but she was my aunt. She told me, she said, "Hosea, I love pork chops. If you take the car and go to Attapulgus, we called it Hack, they call it Hack, now. The name of the town is Attapulgus. We're only six miles from the Florida line, into Georgia, and I took the car and went up there.

Hosea Williams: 00:15:04 I'm in uniform, all my medals, everything. And this white man that ran this grocery store, wasn't another grocery store in the town. He was cleaning something. So I said, "I'd like to have two pounds of pork chops." So he was down getting it, pork chops, everybody at my home called me Little Turner. My granddad was named Turner Williams, and he was getting the pork chop, he stood up and he said, "Goddamn boy, aren't you Little Turner?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Say yes, sir, to me." I stood there, he said, "Goddamn it. I said, say yes, sir, to me." And I said, "Yes," again. He jumped up and grabbed his shotgun, it was up over the door and it hadn't been for his wife, he would have killed me because I wouldn't say, "Yes, sir." I got out of the
store and went home, and that's when my granddaddy told me, "Hosea, you know I got all the money, I've saved all the money, but I'll give you all the money to leave because they're going to kill you."

Hosea Williams: 00:16:02 And I'd had a run-in with the Ku Klux Klan there once before. What happened was, from Attapulgus down to our farm was two miles. There's one white family, and I guess that's about the sorriest man I ever met in history. He had four or five kids, named Batchester, and this girl was about my age, one of his younger daughters. And we used to go out into the field and break corn and have a bucket and take the corn down in the swamps and build a fire, and cook the corn and eat it. We used to fish together. At our farm, they keep the hay up in the loft, but what they do, they grow peanuts and they take the peanuts off the bush, to take the bush and make hay. And we used to go up there in the loft and tear open that bales of hay to get peanuts to eat.

Hosea Williams: 00:17:00 I'd never touched her. Kids wasn't into sex, back in those days. And one Sunday, it was a confectionery there, a black lady owned, and this little white girl went up to that confectionery to buy something and my girlfriend was a big, fat black girl, and they start teasing her. "Laura love Hosea, Hosea love Laura." And she became excited and started crying and ran back home and told her mother, and the mother told her father. The next morning before day, they went to that girl's house. A group of white men. Her father was a three hundred pound man. They rounded all the blacks up there, rounded them up, and they made him whip his daughter with a whip, until she was totally unconscious. He would beat her, and every once in a while, okay rest. Well, they rounded up all the blacks. One of the blacks snuck away and told my grandfather, "They going come here to lynch Hosea. They're coming to lynch Hosea."

Hosea Williams: 00:18:06 And my grandfather, he's well-armed. My half-sister was one of the meanest tomboys ever met. So he gave her a shotgun, and he took the rifle and gave me the pistol. Sure enough, the next morning before day, there's a line of white men in cars, and he had to walk about a block up to the house, from the highway. They parked all the cars on the highway and they came up to ... we had a big fence around our yard and Papa, Papa we called him. He recognized a group of white men, just after daybreak and this is one of the days I'll never forget, I guess. They came up and they said, "We want to see Little Turner," talking about me. My granddaddy said, "Little Turner is my boy and whatever Little Turner has done, you hold me responsible for it. You cannot see Little Turner."
Hosea Williams: 00:19:02 And they went to come into the gate and he threw up. They knew him. My grandfather killed three men in my presence, that is, while I was there. He was a bad man. And they, "Turner, don’t shoot, Turner don’t shoot," and they backed off, went back down and got in the car. They got down to the car, "We’re going to come back, n***a, we going kill you." We’re going to kill that damn Little Turner. We’re going to burn this farm."

Hosea Williams: 00:19:24 I mean, and we all believed they would do it. It was a white family. They still down there, the Millers, they ran a tobacco farm, had at least eighty black families living on his tobacco farm. And my granddaddy took my sister and I, and I mean, we walked through the branch, and through the woods, through the swamp, and got to Ronnie Miller’s house.

Hosea Williams: 00:19:44 It was early in the morning, like seven o’clock. He’s sitting up, as a big old fat white man. Had the safe ... if that man didn’t have $40 or $50,000 in that safe, he didn’t have a nickel. He had to sit up there and rock all day, watching that money. So he started on granddaddy, he says everything, before he said something, he’s like, “Turner, what the hell you doing over my house this time in the morning?” And if I ever seen my granddaddy Uncle Tom, act like Uncle Tom, that was the time. He said, "Mr. Griffin, I need help. They’re going to kill my son. And he said, "Who?" "They’re going to kill Little Turner,” and he told Mr. Griffin what happened. Okay, Turner," he said, "Okay." He got up and got his keys, we got in his pickup truck.

Hosea Williams: 00:20:25 I’m riding in the back of the pickup truck, he had to drive, so he and Papa ride together. They drive, which is about two miles up in this little town, and this is the truth. And that white man got us, "Hmm Turner, you see anyone else trying to lynch your boy?" My granddad said, "Here’s one over there standing by the post." He go there, and said, "Hey, I heard that you was wanting to lynch Turner’s boy."

Hosea Williams: 00:20:45 And so, Mr. Griffin, goddamn, Griffin kick his butt. I mean, he said, "Turner, who was it?" And he beat white men there, for an hour almost, and finally we left and went on back home. That night I was convinced they’d catch me, they’re going lynch me, one way or the other. And I went and recruited two guys from that farm. My granddaddy was there, couldn’t read or write now, totally literate. But he was the treasurer for the black high school, there. I knew where he kept that money hidden behind a picture on the wall. So I went and took the money, and got these three guys and went back to the Everglades of Florida.

Mel Steely: 00:21:27 And that saved you, you think?
Hosea Williams: 00:21:28 That saved me, unquestionably. They were going to lynch me.

Mel Steely: 00:21:31 And did they come back after your granddad?

Hosea Williams: 00:21:33 No, they didn't come back [crosstalk 00:21:35]-

Mel Steely: 00:21:33 ... once you was gone.

Hosea Williams: 00:21:35 Once I was gone, yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:21:39 Well, after you finished at Morris Brown, you got a degree, BA in Chemistry.

Hosea Williams: 00:21:45 Well, let me tell that story, because that's an important story.

Mel Steely: 00:21:45 Okay.

Hosea Williams: 00:21:47 I had a buddy named Harper, in Bainbridge, and that summer we became very good buddies, like twins. And he wasn't worried because he was a student at Morehouse College and he was pretty popular, basketball player and everything. So he's going to get me into Morehouse. So time to go to college, I packed my bags, everything. That's when Cheney sent me, and we went to Atlanta, and he carried me to Morehouse, and after Morehouse looked at my record, they said, "We can't accept it. We can't accept it. He just does not have an acceptable academic background."

Hosea Williams: 00:22:23 It really hurt both of us, but he was dating the president's secretary at Clark. "Don't worry, I get you into Clark." I went to Clark and we had the same fate. They said, "We cannot accept him. He does not have an acceptable academic background." He thought about his father being friendly with the AME minister in Bainbridge, so he called his father, and he's all tore up, and his father said, "Let me talk to Bishop Fountain." The AME Bishop of Georgia was named Fountain, the president of the college was his son, and so the minister called Bishop Fountain, and then Bishop Fountain called us and told us to come over, and he said to me, "You're a good looking boy. You're a good looking boy and you're acting intelligent and so forth." He said, "I'm going to break the rules of this college. I'm going to let you go to school here. But if you ever violate one, a single rule or regulation, you're out. But I'll give you a chance."

Hosea Williams: 00:23:16 That's why I was so indebted to Morris Brown College today, because if it hadn't have been for Morris Brown College, I would
have never been able to get into a college. I'm greatly indebted to them.

Mel Steely: 00:23:26 And so you went through Morris Brown?

Hosea Williams: 00:23:27 Well, I went through Morris Brown, and I left Morris Brown, and went to Atlanta University. And I told you about the little girl I was dating back in high school. She interests me in the sciences, so I ended up majoring in chemistry and minor in physics. When I finished school, I got a job teaching, I taught one year at Conyers, and the next year I got a job teaching in Douglas, Georgia. I mean it was like a slave plantation for teachers.

Mel Steely: 00:23:57 Douglas, or Douglasville?


Mel Steely: 00:24:00 Douglasville.

Hosea Williams: 00:24:00 Douglas, there down in South Georgia. And one day the School Superintendent, he interviewed me and he just kept using the word n***a, and however these n***a children... And I said, “I don't like the words you use,” and we just got into it and the next day the police came and told me, and the coach was with me, another young coach, we'd finished, all been in state, and he was the coach there. They told me, “You got twenty-four hours to leave town, or we're going to do it different, we going take you to the county line, but never catch you in this county again.”

Hosea Williams: 00:24:32 So we just drove out of Douglas and I came back, and I got a job. Back in those days you had to take a test, I took this test and started working for the United States Post Office. In the meantime, I just looked up and back in those days you had to take the test to become a scientist with the government. I had been out partying all night. This is the truth, I had been out partying all night. I mean, I was cool. I was about drunk, and the next morning, we went up there and took this test, and if you're a disabled veteran you get ten points. I made 105, I made 95 on the test, which was higher than anyone else had made, with the ten points. And that's how I got a job with the United States government.

Mel Steely: 00:25:20 The Agriculture Department.

Hosea Williams: 00:25:21 Agriculture Department, as a research scientist. I was the first black scientist hired by the federal government south of DC.
Mel Steely: 00:25:32 Hmm. And you stayed there from '52 to '63?

Hosea Williams: 00:25:36 Yep.

Mel Steely: 00:25:36 And during that period you published a newspaper?

Hosea Williams: 00:25:39 Yep. Well, I tell you, let me tell you-

Mel Steely: 00:25:40 The Crusader? Chatham County Crusader?

Hosea Williams: 00:25:43 Chatham County Crusader.

Mel Steely: 00:25:44 Tell me more about that.

Hosea Williams: 00:25:44 What happened there, in Savannah, I became a upper middle class Negro. My wife was working at the college, we bought a new Cadillac every year. We didn't even go to nightclubs in the area, they were below our dignity. We'd go on the weekends, go to Bermuda and to the islands, and all. I was making all this money and my wife, teaching at college. I was in debt and all of those ... I was so popular. Savannah don't have many railroads coming through there, it's on the coast. So all of the new cars are brought it on a truck, and I was so popular, when they brought in that first load of Cadillacs, all of the press, all my friends, because Hosea Williams always bought the first Cadillac to hit the ground. Don't care what color, what model? I was just that messed up.

Hosea Williams: 00:26:38 I lived on Gilbert Street, only thing lived on Gilbert Street was lawyers, and doctors, and the college president, and that crowd. Hosea Williams, I was the only one, I had the house full of kids. No one else had over one or two kids, but I was an upper middle class Negro and it began to worry me. I know that was not the thing for me, but out at the chemistry lab, they used to tell me out at the chemistry lab, "Hosea, black people don't have to be down. Black people are down because they are lazy, because they're just dumb. You're smart, you work hard. Look at the progress you've made." And I believed it. I'd go to these white peoples’ houses, and dance with their wives, dine with them, and I really thought I was something special.

Hosea Williams: 00:27:24 But I began to notice one thing, every job that became vacant out there in science, and blacks with super qualifications would apply. White boys and white girls would come in nowhere near the quality of that black, and they'd hire that white person. And when the black person would say, "Y'all are prejudiced," they said, "No, we're not. We have Hosea Williams." And it finally
began to come to me, you're the same thing that the house n****s was in slavery. They're using you, Hosea, to keep your own people down. And brother, I begin to take note and to rebel, and my job became a hell upon this earth.

Mel Steely: 00:28:05 Is that the point where you get actively involved in the NAACP and became kind of a grassroots organizer?

Hosea Williams: 00:28:11 Well-

Mel Steely: 00:28:11 Out of Savannah?

Hosea Williams: 00:28:12 What happened one night was, it was a club and this got out. I danced professional about two years of my life, I was a great dancer. And we're in this club, this guy was supposed to be the best dancer in Savannah. So, and Hosea Williams, people are watching the two of us try out dance one another. And he went outside and got into it with a guy one night, and he came back in and the police came up, and when the police came in that club, that boy threw his hands up, and they shot him three times in the chest. And I was just horribly upset. I went to the NAACP meeting, and here were all these preachers, all the people at the meeting and they all want to talk, they all want to complain. But every time the president would talk about going downtown and make the challenge, they backed up. They weren't available. So, I got sick of that.

Hosea Williams: 00:29:01 I said, "Let me tell y'all something." I said, "I'm a chemist. I work from eight to five, so I'm free from 5:00 PM to 8:00 AM. Anything you want, Mr. Law, you call up at me." And that's when I got deeply involved in civil rights. W. W. Law, it was Hosea Williams, and we really were a hell of a team. Savannah, Georgia, became one of the most active NAACP chapters in the country. But you know, while I was doing my work and fighting for the rights of my people, one thing I became cognizant of, all the national leaders of the civil rights organizations lived in New York City, and they used to send us memorandums, down South telling us how to challenge the Ku Klux Klan.

Hosea Williams: 00:29:56 They was up in New York, sending us memorandums down the South telling us how to fight for freedom, and that worried me. Hell, you're sitting up in New York? And one day I turned that television on, and I saw this man in Montgomery, Alabama telling the people, "Get behind me. I am going to lead you and show you how to get treated." I said, "That's my man. My God." It was like a whole world turned over for me. About three days later, I became so excited. I jumped up and grabbed two young males, they about sixteen, or the young ... I was head of the
Youth Council, and everybody trusted me, and a young girl, about seventeen and we drove to Montgomery, Alabama, and that's where I met God. King was not my God, but God revealed himself, the true God, to me through King.

Hosea Williams: 00:30:46 I'd watched him teach and I'd watched him preach it, and it just became overbearing. I would just ... I kept saying, "If he can do it in Montgomery, Alabama, I can do it in Savannah. If he could do it in Montgomery..." And the third day I became so excited, I grabbed the kids up and threw them in that Cadillac and I took off to Savannah. I was driving a hundred miles an hour. All at once, it hit me, I hit the brakes and it caused scooted over to the side. The kids said, "Hosea, are you crazy? You're going to kill all of us. You're crazy. You know?" I sat there for thirty minutes. Guess what I had remembered?

Mel Steely: 00:31:19 What?

Hosea Williams: 00:31:19 I forgot to introduce myself to King. I sat there for thirty minutes and finally they abused me. I drove the car back to Savannah, but that's when I really became over-sensitive, I would say truly sensitive to the civil rights movement. I never will forget, now, I was a big man in NAACP. I was vice president of the Savannah, Georgia branch, vice president of the Georgia state conference of branches. I was on the region ... NAA broke down in regions, and I was on the NAACP payroll. I was drawing seventy-five dollars a month to do voter registration and political education in the eastern part of Georgia, and in the southern part of South Carolina.

Hosea Williams: 00:32:09 So the NAACP had its convention in Atlanta. It's a national convention, and I was running, you have to get elected on the region, and then they place you on the board. I was running to get elected, so I could serve... I mean, excuse me, my buddy W. W. Law, he was already on the board. He was the youngest member of the board at that time, and I had gotten South Carolina to agree to support me. I was worried about my state, Georgia. Alabama agreed to support me, and I was talking with the guys in Mississippi. And Mississippi said, "Hosea, we can't support you." I'd been over there with Medgar Evers speaking and all. I said, "Why, man?" "Because your own state is not supporting you." I said, "You've got to be crazy. I'm vice president. My buddy is the president." So I go back and I find W. W. Now, I had a lot of temper back in those days. I was more violent then than I am nonviolent now, and I said, "W. W., what is this about that Georgia not going to support me?" He said, "Hosea, I couldn't bring myself to tell you, but Mr. Wilkins, Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP, met with us, and he convinced us
that you just don't project that type of image, that you would hurt the NAACP. And he does not want you on the board." So I went and found Roy. I didn't know whether to whoop him, or what, spit on him, or what. And I said, "Mr. Wilkins, please tell me." He said, "Well, I guess you've heard by now, Hosea," he said, "You know I like you, you're a nice guy, but you do not have a projected image that would be good for the NAACP, and I'd have to defeat you for the election." I started crying. I'll cry in a minute.

Hosea Williams: 00:33:56 I used to be and I started walking the streets and Dr. King office's was not on Auburn Avenue; it was on another close to Five Points. And I saw the SCLC sign, and I said, that's his office. And I went in and I said, I'd like to speak with Dr. King. The nurse said, "Have a seat." So finally, he came out, and he and Ralph came out, and I went in and I started crying again. And I told him my story. He said, "Well, I don't know why you should feel so hurt." He said, "At least you got a chance to run for the national board. The NAACP kicked me out before I had that chance." And that was, shoot, just about all of the hierarchy in SCLC had been kicked out of the NAACP and I asked him about working with him and he said, "Well, he's so glad to have you." You know, SCLC has affiliates, and NAACP has a chapter. So I went back to Savannah.

Hosea Williams: 00:34:56 I was vice president of the branch. I was head of the political action of the Committee Crusade for Voters, which was camouflaged, because the NAACP is a 501c4, it can't endorse candidates. So we pulled the political arm out and I hated that I bolted NAACP about half of the people with me. The Chatham County Crusade for Voters became the SCLC affiliate. And I was the one that started night marches in the Civil Rights Movement. And finally, one night they arrested me and this blind judge had had all these white people to take warrants out for me, peace warrants, and for each one, each one I had, it was $2,500, but if you put up a piece of property, he had it where that piece of property could only stand but one. So they arrested me that night then heard me out.

Hosea Williams: 00:35:53 I remember when I got to the family home because my children, my wife, we always were together. We always marched, we always picket. And I helped get those kids to bed. I didn't have nothing on but my shorts. And someone knocked on the door and I opened the door and people are out there. There's three white men with guns and they said, "You're under arrest." I honestly thought they were the Ku Klux Klan and I had to think fast. If you rebel, they're going to kill you right here and your
wife and your children are going to witness this terrible thing. Go ahead with them and let them kill you out in the woods.

Hosea Williams: 00:36:24 So I said, "Okay, I'm under arrest." And I called my wife, she brought my pants. So I dressed. But when you leave my house and you go this way, you're going into town, make a left, you're going into town, make another left, another left. So when I saw this going to town, to hell with it, give me a book, let me go to sleep, man. You know. So I had these night marches going on and they put me in jail. And the first day my bond went up to $25,000. That's five times or ten times. The next day it went up to $150,000. And they had me in that jail and I spent on bread and water, thirty-five days. But I had trained those kids, I'd organize it, we had a commitment. If any of us were in jail, we going to march. We going to march every night until everybody's out of jail. And so every night they marched, one night they burned, I don't know who burned it down, but one night Sears Roebuck's was burned down, one night a Firestone was burned down. And one day, the old sheriff came to my cell, I had me in the basement in a cell and he got me and came up to his office and said, answer the phone. And I had heard talk of Mills B. Lane. Like you hear talk of Rockefeller. You know what I mean?

Hosea Williams: 00:37:39 So I pick up the phone and said, "Hello." And someone said, this is Mills B. Lane, Jr., "You know, Mills B. Lane, see this bank was the richest bank in Georgia and they were from Savannah. I'd heard about this man. I didn't believe Mills B. Lane would call me. So I hung up the phone. That sheriff knocked me down. He stomped me and kicked me and I said, "I just don't believe it's Mills B. Lane." So finally he said, pick up the phone. I picked up the phone and called Atlanta and it was Mills B. Lane. And he said, "What happened?" I said, "Mr. Lane, I hung up the phone. I just didn't believe you'd call Hosea Williams." He said, "I want to make a deal with you Hosea. Savannah is my home. I don't want to see it go down in ashes. I don't want to see a blood bath there. I'll get you out of jail if you stop those marches."

Hosea Williams: 00:38:25 And I'm telling you, sir, that's when the... Because I had almost gone crazy in that jail thirty-five days. I felt my wife was missing [inaudible 00:38:33]. I feel like those guys in the movement was messing with my girls. I just went crazy as hell, but you know when that man told me, he said, "I would get you out of jail if you stop those marches." You know what I told him? Mr. Lane, if you get me out of jail today and they don't integrate Savannah tomorrow, I will be leading another march. Now, I really didn't mean it. So he said, "Oh, I got that all worked out." He called his lawyer over and we worked out everything, that
was that day. And I was supposed to get out the next morning, but that night they marched and W. W. Law, head of the NAACP, tried to stop them. They threw bricks at him.

Hosea Williams: **00:39:10** They had to come to the jail to get me to go out there and stop that night march. And Dr. King held his convention in Savannah that year. And now, Savannah, Georgia was the most integrated city south of the Mason-Dixon Line. And I just caught so much hell on my job, my job turned into a true hell. I would be... It's about eleven chemists and nobody other than fifteen samples behind, I would be a hundred samples behind and a hundred more samples come in, they assign them to me. But you know, I'm a workaholic. I'm really a workaholic. Souped up, you know, even seventy-two, and so I just worked all the time. But finally when they couldn't run away like that, I sat at my desk sometime for three weeks and a sample was never assigned to me and that's when they fired me. You know, I went to Washington and I won it back, but my job became a hell.

Mel Steely: **00:40:08** Well, is that during the period when you decided you were going to enter politics?

Hosea Williams: **00:40:13** Well, yeah. I decided to go with my wife. After we got voter registration really going in Savannah, my wife ran for office, city council. She's the first black person to run for office to Savannah in a hundred years, but after I left the chemistry lab, I took a leave of absence for one year. They were supposed to give you a leave of absence if you are studying, involved in something going to raise your quality, potential quality of service. But they didn't know what I was doing. I went with Dr. King. After the second year, I put in for... After the first year, I put in for second year, they approved that. They didn't want me back at that lab. No one's supposed to ever get over a two years leave of absence without pay. I put in for six months and they said, "Okay." I just told them if I come back to Savannah, and in that lab, there's going to be some confrontation. And they said, "Okay, we're going to give you six months more." And they find a job by these points. I didn't want to leave civil rights and when that six months is up, I just turned in my resignation.

Hosea Williams: **00:41:12** But I got involved and became Dr. King's... First, Dr. King assigned me head of political action. That's to get people registered, to get people to running for office, and holding office, but also put pressure on the white politicians. It wasn't many people registered in the South other than cities like Atlanta, just a few of the major cities.
Hosea Williams: 00:41:33 And then I became Dr. King’s field general. I was in charge of all field activities and that’s when I really got deep into politics and we went ended up in Selma, Alabama.

Mel Steely: 00:41:44 Tell me about Selma.

Hosea Williams: 00:41:46 Well, what people don't know, Birmingham, Alabama wrote the civil rights bill under Bull Connor, Chief of Police down there. But the bill was bogged down in Congress and it was a chance it was not going to pass. So then, King carried us to Saint Augustine, Florida, and on the [inaudible 00:09:12]. That was the bad white band down there. One thing that helped us, a lot of whites, particularly from Boston. In fact, the mother of the... It’s Peabody, the mother of the governor came down, and she was arrested, put in jail. But it was Saint Augustine, Florida that got the civil rights bill through the United States Congress.

Hosea Williams: 00:42:38 And when we go into a town and we upset that town, my job... Okay, they’re the two pronged organization, had the militant arm and the conservative, Hosea Williams, who was ultra-militant, headed the militant arm. Andrew Young, an ultra conservative. I mean I was sick and tired of being a slave. I just wanted to burn the town down, tear things up, kill everybody. I’m just sick and tired of being a slave. I don't want my children to be raised in this. Well, on the other end you had Andy Young, he never wanted to do nothing but pray. I don't care what it, Andy just wanted to pray.

Hosea Williams: 00:43:12 Dr. King, the wise man, would always take his position between the two of us, but I would go down there and in my job, I had a beautiful field staff. I tell people I had twenty Mike Tysons on my staff. It's just that he hid the nonviolence and it was demonstration. But our job was to go into a community and break the fear that binded blacks and get them just walking and marching and sitting in and picketing, clapping their hands, stomping their feet and really get a movement going. And we upset the town, we used to call it, wreck the town. We spoke Ebonics. We laid it to the masses.

Hosea Williams: 00:43:48 Then the nice guys would come to town, Abernathy, Andy Young, Dr. King. They did the negotiating because those white folk powers wasn’t about to negotiate with us. So Dr. King sent me into Selma, Alabama and we met in Birmingham at the black motel there. They got some motels and after we finish a movement, the question was always presented to us, where do we go from here? And after about a three or four days battle, the next was the vote for the disenfranchisement of black
people, blacks being able to register, vote, to run the whole public office.

Hosea Williams: 00:44:27 And so I spent the next three days what community to share, we choose to dramatize this national issue. And we had chose several other towns and someone came in and said, "Do you know that down in Selma, Alabama and Jim Clark, he does not allow black people to have a mass meeting?" And see John Lewis and SNCC and those, that's part of their territory. He had beat SNCC out of Selma, out of Dallas County. They had closed the office. And Dr. King said, "My God, that's the place that maybe we should go." And so Dr. King told James Bevel, said "Bevel, you go to Selma, and meet with the preachers, and tell them we're going to have a civil rights rally there January 1." So Bevel goes to Selma.

Hosea Williams: 00:45:16 Some of them, Uncle Toms, went and told Jim Clark that. So Jim Clark sent Dr. King, "I welcome you here to January 1 to have a rally. I enjoy seeing niggers celebrate a false emancipation." That really got to King, you know, because he was a cool man. You didn't get... He said, "Ralph...Bevel, you go back to Selma and you tell Jim Clark, Abernathy will be there on the first. I'll be there on the second." And we chose Selma to dramatize the disenfranchisement of black people nationwide.

Hosea Williams: 00:45:53 Now, when we went into Selma, George Wallace sent in about twelve, fifteen troopers to dilute our power and help the law enforcement of Dallas County. Well, I took on a couple other counties. Every time I would expand our territory, George Wallace would send in more troopers. I'd take it and they'd release eight counties. He was sending in mostly troopers.

Hosea Williams: 00:46:16 So Dr. King said, well, if George Wallace wants this fight, let's take this fight to him." And that's when we organized the march from Selma to Montgomery. And that Sunday we marched... Dr. King didn't know how many people I had gotten organized from all those surrounding counties. I got a lot of parents and children, but I wanted to march Sunday because these parents that got to be parents got to be back to work Monday and these children got to be in school. But I wanted to start off with a huge march.

Hosea Williams: 00:46:46 So, that Saturday morning, like a good soldier should, I got in my car and I drove from Selma to Montgomery and you know, this is so many miles, this is where we can eat lunch, and this is where we would sleep tonight. And you know, when I got in Montgomery, they said, "Dr. King is terribly upset with you.” I said, why? He said, he's been trying to reach you all day. And if
anything that Dr. King was a sissy for, anything that man liked to do, it was preach in the pulpit. The only difference is Dr. King, and most of the preachers... I used to hear him preach on Sunday, and I said, well, Hosea, go home and get some rest because you’re going to catch hell next week. Because when King left that pulpit Sunday: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, he was in the streets of America, perpetrating that sermon he preached last Sunday.

Hosea Williams: 00:47:33 So Dr. King got us on the phone that Saturday and, “Hosea where you been? Bayard Rustin is in New York, Walter Fauntleroy Is in Washington, people all everywhere.” He said, "Gentleman, Abernathy, Andy," he said, "Dad is ill." Talking about his father. "And he asked me to preach Sunday and I want y’all to endorse this idea. I want to go ahead and preach for dad Sunday and I come and lead the march off Monday morning.” I said, Oh my God, half my... two-thirds of my people going home. He said, "I'm going to call the room." So he called. Everybody said, “Yeah, Dr. K., we with you, yeah.” He said, “Hosea Williams, for the last? All right, Hosea?” I said, “Dr. King, I can't be with you.” And he got upset. He said, "Hosea, you need to pray. You need to get with me. Hosea, you need to pray. You're not right. Well, we're not marching until Monday morning.” One guy they didn't get, this boy, named James Bevel, couldn't find James.

Hosea Williams: 00:48:32 So I jumped in the car and go back to Selma. If anybody can change K’s mind is Bevel. So I told Bevel about it. Bevel, Dr. King, the preacher at the church, the local church, he had him on the phone too, where we met all the time. And Bevel and Dr. King got into kind of like all them men, but finally they cooled down. And finally Bevel said, "Well Dr. King, we thank you. We will forever appreciate this decision and we are going to make you proud of us. Thank you and goodbye." They were going to vote. Say you got it. Go.

Hosea Williams: 00:49:01 Well, I go out there and start organizing like a crazy man then. This is Saturday night. Sunday morning, the preacher let me speak. I wasn't even ordained then and I had them people jumping over benches. I mean, I really... So the preacher kept pulling my coat. You can’t do this. Hosea, you know what Dr. K. told us, you can't do this, you ain't having no march today. The preacher jumps up and runs to the telephone and call Dr. King. The people won't stop King from preaching at Ebenezer. But he called Abernathy, and Abernathy came to the phone. When he told Abernathy what I was doing and Abernathy left the church and got in his car and went over there and told King.
So they said, Andy, you got to go down and stop him. So, Andy called me, and I didn't know nothing about all this. Bevel told me, he said, go. So Andy said, meet me at the airport. I met Andy at the airport and he was so bitter. When they got up, man, what's wrong with you? It's just insubordination. We are going to get rid of you. So we got in the car. Dr. King had told Bevel I could lead fifty people across the bridge and when I couldn't... When the police confront me, have a prayer and come back. And the big march would take place Monday. So I... No, no, no. But Andy went back to that church with me and he tried to talk to them people and they just went crazy. Andy called Dr. King said, "The march can't be stopped." SNCC, Stokely Carmichael and that crowd, was going to lead that march.

See they was upset because we had taken over that territory even though they had been driven out that territory. So Andy told Dr. King. Dr. King said, "Okay. I tell you what Andy, let him go ahead and lead the march over the bridge. And whenever he confront the police, just start praying and pray a long time. Come on back." So we got all the people ready. Now what upset me, we had at the front of the line, a SNCC, SCLC, a SNCC, SCLC about ten deep. John Lewis came to town that Saturday. No, John Lewis came that Saturday. We marched that Sunday. So Andy had written the press statement, so he was so bitter with me. We got ready to leave the church, he gave John Lewis the statement to read to the press. That made John the spokesman. That is the truth before God. John likes for me to tell this. So we got over that bridge and there was an army. Every policeman from every city...

That's the Edmund Pettus Bridge, that big one.

Edmund Pettus Bridge. There was an army. Then they had all the policemen and they had all the sheriffs of all the surrounding countis. Then they had all the state troopers. Then they had Alabama state militia. So we got over that bridge and I said, "Oh my God." And Al Lingo was George Wallace’s public safety director. He said, "Halt." And we stopped. He said, "Turn around and take those niggers back to the church." Well I was waiting for John Lewis to speak. Andy had ordained him as the speaker and I looked at John and he said, "Move forward." He said, "I said, take those niggers back home." And I finally muscled up enough strength. I said, "May we talk with you sir?" My voice trembling. He said, "We don't talk today. You got fifteen... You got two minutes to take them niggers back over that bridge." And by that time the strength had come to me.
I said, "Sir, there'll be no turning back, not this day. The days of turning back is over." And although he said we had two minutes, he said, "Charge." And I'm telling you, those policemen beat us down to the ground and then they gassed us so heavy you couldn't see your hand that far in front of your face. But as God would have it, the wind blew the gas away. He said, "Charge again." They beat us down to the ground. But I still... After the army... What are they trying to do? And I looked over to the left hand side of that highway, that was a deep ravine. They was trying to drive us down in that ravine. So then when they gassed us, the wind wouldn't blow it up and we'd have mass death.

So I told everybody to get down, get down, get down. So everybody got down and they beat us again and they gassed us. And I looked and there come a hundred white men on horses. And they had these horses and they had these walking sick, big cane and on the end was a huge iron nut. And they was just running those horses through the people. Now listen, on that march I had eight hundred. I had seventy black men and twenty-five white people. The rest of them are black women and children. And I said, oh God, they running the horses through us and the horses and they wop, wop and I just could hear brains jumping out people's head and hearts being busted.

And I said, you done it this time Mr. Bad Man, you were too bad. You was too gutsy to take those people back. How many deaths are you causing today? And I swear to God, blood was flowing down that bridge like water into the gutter. They'd beat us. And when all those horses went over, I can't believe it when I saw the people. It reminded me what happened in Egypt land. All those people started rising up. And then we started trying to go back towards the bridge.

I'll tell you this little joke. It was a young girl, and I don't know how a mother trusted her, because we slept in churches, the SCLC staff and the mother used to let us sleep with us every night over there. She was about six or seven years old and my assistant who didn't weigh but a hundred and thirty pounds, he had her running back across the bridge and I said, "Ben, let me have her. Let me..." So Ben hand her to me and I had this funny, she looked me in the face and she said, "Mr., Please put me down." I said, what? She said, "You just ain't running fast enough." I put that little girl down. But let me tell you something, she ain't but seven.

We got back, Jim Clark had about seven hundred white men over that bridge and went about fifty of us would come off that
bridge, seven old white men had these clubs and they start beating us again. And a black lady that I knew very well, she ran up to me and threw this quilt over my head. I said, "Are you crazy?" She's said, "Shut up." And I wasn't far from, there was a house there. She pushed me under the quilt on the porch. Jim Clark had told those men, find Hosea Williams. I want him killed. But the Selma to Montgomery March, it gave us the right to register and vote across this nation. I'm disappointed very much now because so many black politicians get elected. Nowadays they forget from whence they come and many of the black politicians have become a greater enemy to the progress of black people than the white politicians.

Mel Steely: 00:55:18 Did you find the Kennedys helpful during this period?

Hosea Williams: 00:55:22 They were inspirational. The Kennedys are very misinterpreted. People got to understand, Kennedy was a United States Senator. You can't tell me nothing he did for black folk, and he's from Boston, until after he got to be president. And let me tell you how he got to be president. Dr. King had been arrested by old George, he's a buddy of mine now, right down there in DeKalb County. They caught Dr. King driving, when he moved back here, with an Alabama license. Just put him under probation. And later on they say he was speeding 45 in a thirty mile zone. And that's when they sent Dr. King to the state prison in Reidsville to serve one year. Well, the race for president was real hot between Kennedy and Nixon and both of them had planned to say something about King.

Hosea Williams: 00:56:10 Kennedy found out Nixon had a 12:00 press conference. Kennedy held his press conference at 10:00. Demanded that Dr. King be released. And that's, you know, Kennedy won by a small margin. We believe that if Nixon had come out before Kennedy, Nixon would have been the president. But the Kennedys, after they got an office and then Robert became the United States Attorney General, they worked fairly well with us. Their leadership, that political leadership was inspiring. But I do believe the same element of our society that killed Kennedy, killed Dr. King.

Mel Steely: 00:56:48 What element would that be?

Hosea Williams: 00:56:49 That was a clique articulated by the head of FBI, J. Edgar Hoover. J. Edgar Hoover had a folder, just like you got your hand, of almost every relevant leader in America. What extramarital relationships they'd had, what money they had squandered at a bar they shouldn't have, all the bad things about them. And that's how he was controlling them. So he
tried to control Dr. King and one night, we led that march, I was the chief organizer. Dr. King took over the march, from Memphis, Tennessee to Jackson. That's when James Meredith got shot down. James would go with his peculiar self, the man is smart, he was going to march from Memphis to Jackson. He said to rid my body, my soul, of the fear that had been ingrained in me since I was born, and black folks had that fear. Well the first day, they shot him down and we went and took that march up.

Hosea Williams: 00:57:51 But one of the roughest places between Memphis and Jackson was Grenada, Mississippi. And when we got to Jackson, Dr. King was thanking me, I said, no, no, no, no. I'm not going home. I am going back to Grenada, them are the baddest white folks I met yet. I'm going to give them the opportunity that they seek. But one night, we were marching, they'd beat us up every night, beat us up every night, and one night we marched and two car loads of FBI men led the march. They led us down to the courthouse. They got us to the courthouse and I'm waiting to get the hell beat out of us. They beat us every night. And nobody showed up. You've got two car loads of FBI men. We started back to the black community, we got to a huge building, those cars took off. I said, Whoa. Still got an army, military instinct and we peeped around that corner. There was a huge group of white men with all kinds of weapons and I said, let's back up slowly and quietly. And we backed to the courthouse, and that night Dr. King denounced the actions of the FBI.

Hosea Williams: 00:58:56 J. Edgar Hoover, head of FBI, called Dr. King and said, "I'm calling the press conference and you are going to make the statement, you are going to apologize to the FBI." Dr. King said, "I never will because I told the truth." And then he and King started having meetings. And this is not widely known. I think they had four private, big, long secret meetings. At the last meeting, J. Edgar Hoover told Dr. King, the only way you can protect this legacy that you've built with your life is to commit suicide. Otherwise I'm going to destroy it.

Mel Steely: 00:59:34 You mean he was going to take all that information and put it out?

Hosea Williams: 00:59:37 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 00:59:38 He did send a lot of it to Ms. King, didn't he?

Hosea Williams: 00:59:40 Oh you sent a lot of it Ms. King. So we knew some of it, but he'd planted other folks... Dr. King's head on bodies, claiming he was places we knew he was in another city. And they started bugging us. Dr. King went and hired a boy, a fellow from
Holland, a world renowned expert on bugging. And I'm telling you we could call three hours that we flying in New York. And going here, the hotel, those rooms had already been bugged. He had Dr. King under close scrutiny. I remember the time we went... The last flight he took with us was to Memphis and we ran out the airport and we always used to say, if Dr. King was going to ever be killed, it would be really that airport because he was always at the office late. So, this day, we ran to the airport and got out there, and got down to the gate, the plane was supposed to leave at 9:00, we got to the gate by 9:10. Nobody had been loaded on the airplane.

Hosea Williams: 01:00:34 So finally, they start loading the airplane, we all got on the airplane, the plane took off and the pilot said on that flight, as his last flight to Memphis, "I want to apologize for the late departure. Even though last night we were required to search the whole plane, explosives. When we pulled the plane up to the gate this morning, they required we search the plane again, we do have a celebrity on this flight. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." You know, King was easy embarrassed. He was sitting... Ralph was sitting here. I looked over there and he was holding his head down hoping nobody would see him. And we got in Memphis, we were going to the Holiday Inn and he was living in the Holiday Inn when we was in Memphis the last time. And the reason he's going to Holiday Inn, they didn't charge us, but something came in that airport about Lorraine Motel.

Hosea Williams: 01:01:27 But I didn't worry about things like that. Fine, I said, what the hell is the problem? They said, Dr. King has given it and we are going to the Lorraine Motel and we got that Lorraine motel, that was a lot of manipulation about his room because he thought he was going to get the room that I got. I got 106. It is on the ground floor. He was up there, called it 306, on the second floor. But no question about J. Edgar Hoover masterminded the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. And the other thing that stick with me, I said is that if Ray killed Dr. K, we wanted a trial. That's the only way you're going to bring out information in the trial. So when they caught Ray and first Ray said, didn't kill King. Then they said kill... The most expensive criminal lawyer in America, I can't think of his name right now, he showed up in Memphis and volunteer...

Mel Steely: 01:02:21 Percy Foreman.

Hosea Williams: 01:02:23 Percy was sudden... Anyways. Percy.

Mel Steely: 01:02:28 Percy Foreman.
Hosea Williams: 01:02:29  Percy Foreman. He convinced Ray, if you go to trial, you going to be found guilty and you're going to die in the electric chair. But if you would plead guilty, I could get you a life sentence. And Ray pleaded guilty for a few days and then he tried to recant and they wouldn't let him recant. Of course what is not known, I'm glad to see the King family finally taking a position. Because at that time, the district attorney in Memphis, Tennessee, said we will not accept Ray's plea and we will try Ray, unless the King family accepts the plea. And that's why Ray never got tried. But I know I'm telling you when I was.

Mel Steely: 01:03:08  Why do you think they accepted the plea though? Did Hoover contact them and say either you accept this, or let it go?

Hosea Williams: 01:03:13  Well it was all out... Said Dr. King was having sex with some black man's wife and some dentist's wife in New Orleans. He had taken a hit out on him. Say he's also going with some beautiful woman in California, her husband taking a hit out on him and they're going to bring all this mess. But we didn't care about that. You know, like Abernathy's book, which Abernathy is not responsible for. But actually, Dr. King knew that they were going to kill him. The last retreat he carried us to was in... Dr. King amazes me and I tell you, I admired the man, so as tough as I'm supposed to be, I used to sit up in those meetings sometimes and start crying. I wouldn't let nobody see me cry and I would ask God, why were you so good to me? What did I do to deserve this honor to be around the hem of this man's garment?

Hosea Williams: 01:04:06  But Dr. King carried us on a retreat, his last retreat was on South Carolina island, and that's where he and I got in kind of a heated argument. Because he kept saying something about, I'd been in jail then, eighty-three times. I could name you twenty or twenty-five people I led to their death following me in those marches. But he kept telling me, going around the mountain long enough to finally I challenged him and he tried to explain to me, "Hosea, racism is not our problem. The lack of immigration is not our problem. Those are results, effects, of the problem." And then he said to us, that black people will never be free in America if we wipe out every aspect of racism, black people will never be free if we totally integrated everything about American life. Black people never be free. Black people, he said, will never be free until we control our fair share of the economy. And that's why they killed him.

Mel Steely: 01:05:11  Well now, after his death in '68, you entered politics by running for the Georgia House of Representatives and did not win. What
would you tell us a little bit about why you decided to do that? Because most of the others didn't do that at that time.

Hosea Williams: 01:05:23 Well, I'm going to tell you. I was hurt very bad. And I'm still hurting today. Dr. King's dream is as dead as he is. The pathetic thing about it, white racists didn't kill the dream. Nor did our true economic exploiters killed the dream, corporate America, the people that killed Dr. King's dream were black people and particularly those that were closest to him. They're the slayers of the dream. And I'd struggled so hard and worked so hard because what Dr. King got us to promise him, that man talked to us just like he was Jesus. He said, "If I do not change," and that's where he's going after the economic situation, he said, "They're going to get me, but I cannot change because I'm right." He said, "But they're going to be surprised when they get me, because getting King ain't going to stop nothing. The power to take our people to the mountaintop, the power to free our people is not in me, it's in this team we put together. So whatever happens when they get me, y'all keep the team together." And he went on and made some prediction, like he said. "Now when they get me, they're going to offer some of y'all the highest paying, most prestigious jobs in politics. Don't take them. Keep the team together. They're going to offer you all some of the highest paying and most prestigious jobs in private industry. Don't take it. Keep the team. Going to offer some of y'all to set up your own national organization. Don't take it. Keep the team together."

Hosea Williams: 01:07:01 And when I saw Dr. King's body lying on the Lorraine Motel-

Mel Steely: 01:07:05 Now you were there when he was shot. You were just downstairs and he was upstairs.

Hosea Williams: 01:07:08 Yes. I was the third person to get to him.

Mel Steely: 01:07:10 Now Jesse Jackson said he was the last man to be there, and Dr. King told him to keep the movement going, or something of that sort.

Hosea Williams: 01:07:17 No.

Mel Steely: 01:07:17 Tell us what happened, there.

Hosea Williams: 01:07:18 All right. Let me finish this one, though.

Mel Steely: 01:07:20 Okay.
Hosea Williams: 01:07:21 Now, when I saw King's body lying there, I said to myself, "America, you just messed up. It's all over now. We're fit to end this business. Black folk going to be free." And I really felt that. I was dumb enough. When Andrew Young, my friend, was offered the United Nations ambassadorship by Jimmy Carter, I went to Andrew's house, I said, "Andrew, don't take that job. That's a political job. You're not a politician. You're a theologian, tell you the truth." And I said-

Mel Steely: 01:07:52 But he was already in Congress.

Hosea Williams: 01:07:53 Well, he's out of Congress then. And I said, "Andy, you really need to stick with SCLC." Andy took the job. And when Andy was [inaudible 01:08:03] for the United Nations, it was that he's finished with SCLC. SCLC lost a lot of influence across the nation. The next one was Coretta King, the wife. When Coretta talked about leaving the SCLC, they set up the King Center. Does it make any sense to leave King's organization, to set up the King Center separately? The Center should be set up as a part of the organization. But Coretta left us. When Coretta left, a lot of national influence left SCLC.

Hosea Williams: 01:08:32 The next was Jesse Jackson. I asked Jesse, "Why would you set up another civil rights organization?" He went and set up PUSH. Why another civil rights organization? Jesse, remember we prayed and cried, and held our hands on Dr. King's hand and say, "We will stick together until we take our people to the mountaintop." Jesse set up PUSH, so then it was just so fragmented. Dr. King's dream is as dead as he is.

Hosea Williams: 01:08:56 Now, the thing I've talked about Jesse many times, was when after Dr. King was shot, I was the third man to get to the body, and Abernathy and Andy agreed to take the body, rush to the hospital. I thought he was dead, because the bullet struck him in the right nostril, went around here and severed the medulla oblongata. I'm an ex-scientist. Ain't no human being ever survived a severed medulla oblongata. But they went on ... so I was there, I really tried to go crazy because I wanted to take me some molecules and protons out of the air, and make me a weapon, and just kill some people. Kill me some white people. Because I know they done killed Dr. King.

Hosea Williams: 01:09:38 Then it came to me, "You would have done the exact thing that he begged you not to do. You're allowing the hate to control you. You're being weak, Hosea." And I started crying and walking, and "Lord, please don't let me do anything that's unacceptable, or out of line." And we're out in the yard, by this time all of the press literally called us from the hospital. And
they're neither crying or moaning a bit. He's dead. That's over, this is a new day. I was out in the yard. Didn't want to be with nobody, just walk around by myself. And I heard Jesse Jackson. See, Jesse knows all around, they're getting ready. I hear Billy [inaudible 00:01:10:16] tell that, live from Memphis. If he spent the last one hour with Dr. King, I'm a roach.

Hosea Williams: 01:10:19 All us at that meeting, and Dr. King, we were supposed to be at this lady's house by five, put our feet under her table for a hell of a soul food cooked dinner. Now, it's 4:45, about 4:45. He says, "Everybody ..." So Jesse goes around in the room getting ready. So when Andy and those carried him to the hospital. I tell you this, when I got up to the bar, there was three people there. It was a guy from South Africa, he's supposed to have been a journalist. He was a photographer. We found out later on, by the Freedom of Information Act, he was working for the CIA, but he was there and he was taking pictures. Bullet hit Dr. King, in the right nostril, knocked some teeth out. Cut the back.

Hosea Williams: 01:11:04 And I grabbed him in the throat. I was strong back in those days and I started choking him. I said, "Empty the camera." I didn't want nobody to remember Dr. King with half his face shot off. By the time Andy ran and got a towel, that's the only picture exists and put that towel over his face, and Andy and Abernathy went into the hospital with King, and I was out in this yard walking around, and I heard Jesse Jackson tell the press, "I was the last man in the world he talked to," which I know was a lie. My key wouldn't fit in my door, and we had been loaned a limousine and the driver was there. I could touch the limousine. The last thing King said in the world, the driver said, "Dr. King, even though I have the car on, I advise you get your top coat." The last words he said in this world, "Okay John," he said, "I'll get my top coat."

Hosea Williams: 01:11:55 That's when the bullet was fired. So I'm standing up there, out in the yard at this motel, and heard Jesse telling the press, "Oh, I was the last man in the world he talked to. He told me, Jesse, take our people on to the Promised Land, take them to the mountaintop." And that didn't make me angry, for some reason. I didn't get upset. And then I heard Jesse say, "I held his head, see all this blood on my shirt?" And I looked around, and sure enough, Jesse's ... I went crazy. I could have whumped Holyfield and Mike Tyson, in one ... I just went crazy. But he got us all separated and everything. See, there is but one place-

Mel Steely: 01:12:38 How did he get blood all over-
Hosea Williams: 01:12:39... one place in the world, Jesse could have got that blood. He had to have gone up on that balcony, stooped down on that floor and raked that blood up with his hand and put that blood on his shirt.

Hosea Williams: 01:12:51 That's no other way he could've gotten the blood. Anyway, when Abernathy and Andy came back, and Jesse was kind of apologetic about it, and it was all in the media and Jesse would be like he was sick.

Hosea Williams: 01:13:02 A lot of people were really getting sick, and Ralph said, "Go ahead to your room, Jesse, and lie down and relax. Go ahead to your room and drink some coffee or something." So Jesse makes like he's going to his room. It's about eight o'clock. Jesse had to rush to that airport. He didn't go to the room. You know where we saw Jesse, the next time? The next morning on The Today Show, with that same bloody shirt on.

Mel Steely: 01:13:24 Hmm.

Hosea Williams: 01:13:24 So I lost respect for Jesse Jackson, which I know I can never regain.

Mel Steely: 01:13:30 Hmm. Well now, you in 1970, after having lost the race in '68, you switched parties. You ran for Secretary of State as a Republican, and seem to have had kind of a love hate relationship with the Republicans over the years. Tell us a little about that.

Hosea Williams: 01:13:49 Let me tell you about that. See, but I came up as a boy. We wasn't ... Blacks wasn't, in the county I was raised in three folks voted. My granddaddy, that illiterate man, the black doctor and the black school superintendent. But basically, like in Atlanta and Savannah, blacks were Republican. It was Republicans that won the Civil War. So blacks are Republican. Now, I came up being sympathetic to the Republican Party for those reasons. But as I grew up and got older, the greatest mistake black people have made was partisan politics. We should have never gone in either party. We should have had a black party. And when the election come along, we ask the Democrats, "What will you all do for black folks?" And then we ask the Republican, what will you all do for black folk?" And whichever one would do the most, that's the way we should have gone. But those Democrats had got us over there and you know, there was certainly control in Georgia recently.
Hosea Williams: 01:14:47  But I wanted to get blacks to understand, they were not accepted in partisan politics, and all of them Democrats ... well, the thing about it, I noticed this. When the Republicans get in office, and when you go to Republicans and say, "What you going to do for black folks?" "Nothing." "Nothing, why?" "Because don't care what we do, they're not going to vote Republican. So we will do nothing." When the Democrats get in, you go ask the Democrats, "What are you all going to do for black folks?" "Nothing." "Nothing, why?" "We don't have to do nothing. They go vote Democratic every time, anyway." And that has gone over the years. And when I went out there, I was trying to say to black folk, your racial interests should be your primary political interest, and not no party. All the Democrats, they're in a bind over a few blacks giving them money.

Hosea Williams: 01:15:43  So I was trying to get blacks to run for Republican, and I didn't want to go into politics, I'll be frank with you. Because I knew, like Jesus Christ, he dwelled, they call it the highways and the byways. Like Martin Luther King, Jr. But politics was becoming ... we've suffered so for it. For the participants in the political arena, and even though we had blacks elected, black folks wasn't receiving nothing, nothing whatsoever. We'd be better off, like the Jews had little or nobody in politics at that time. And I just tried to get involved, and my wife was the first one to run in Savannah. And my campaigns were protest campaigns.

Hosea Williams: 01:16:28  Well, I knew I wasn't going to win, but I was trying to pull them blacks away from them Democrats, and make those Democrats do something for them to deserve the vote. So you know, I hold some of the honors I hold, I'm the only person in the history of Georgia, only person in the history of the state, that's ever held all three positions. City council, county commissioner, and the state legislature. I'm the only person. Of course, I'm also the only person in the history of Georgia ever been elected to the state legislature where I've been in prison. That too, see.

Hosea Williams: 01:17:02  But you know, one day I got so disgusted at the state legislature. One day we passed a health bill and it was a pretty damn good health bill for poor people. It only won by say about twelve votes. Tom Murphy recessed that House, those insurance lobbyists went out in that lobby and bought off enough blacks, came back in meeting, called that bill back up and defeated it. That's the day I jumped up and raised hell. And I said, everybody, I said, "I'm leaving, not going to waste my time." Of course, I went down there and joined the...

Hosea Williams: 01:17:41  I beat politicians, nobody could believe I'd ever beat them, because I had no money. And I elected to the Atlanta City
Council and God, I found bigger Uncle Toms down there than I left on Capitol Hill, and I got sick of them, and left them. Then I went out in the richest county south of the Mason-Dixon Line, DeKalb County, and I got myself elected. I was the only black elected out there, on the county commission. And I said, "Now you did got yourself elected, Hosea." How are you going to manipulate these white folk, now? Because I wanted to go for one of the toughest and most powerful committees the commission had. Sure enough, I got to politicking and manipulating and them white folks elected me to the most powerful committee on the commission, the finance committee. Boy, did I feel big. It took me three years to find out, what they had made an Uncle Tom out of me. I'm chairman of the finance committee. I can't vote unless there's a tie. I'm chairman of the finance committee and I can't argue for a debate. You know, the chairman's not the chairman. They got me fixed right where they want me.

Hosea Williams: 01:18:47
So one day they had a lot of corporate executives come to the meeting, and I came to the meeting late. I went and got my lovely attire, this thing I wore at Dr. King's funeral, that's what make it so famous. And I got all my paraphernalia together, and I went to the meeting about ten or fifteen minutes late, with all of those corporate executives, and they said, "Mr. Chairman, don't y'all know we had those executive corporate executives, Mr. Chairman?" I said, "Just wait a minute. Just wait a minute." I walked into the room, I said, "May I have everybody's attention?" So everybody got just quiet, and I had all this stuff I had in my arm, I dropped it all. I can't say what I said, I said, "There you white folks' stuff." They all looked at me.

Hosea Williams: 01:19:33
I said, "And I want to make an announcement. I'm resigning from this committee, as chairman. But I'm not only resigning from the finance committee, I'm resigning from the county commission. I'm going to give up the luxuries of the political suite, to go back to the streets from which I should have never come. Jesus described the streets as the highways and byways. Martin Luther King, Jr. described them as the ghetto." So I walked out of politics. I tell you, politics, it's rough. It's a science. You scratch my back, and I scratch your back. And if you don't scratch no backs, you ain't get nothing through. And honest to God, I scratch back some time. This, Hosea, you know this wrong, you know this wrong. So I just, I want to help politics. I want to see a fight. I've run the largest and most effective voter registration campaigns in the history of the country, but politics, holding public offices, it's not for-
Mel Steely: 01:20:30 It's interesting because you really fought hard to get in. You lost a race in '68, another one in '70, in '72 in '73, for mayor-

Hosea Williams: 01:20:39 Yes.

Mel Steely: 01:20:39 And you finally won in '74-

Hosea Williams: 01:20:40 Well, I know I could-

Mel Steely: 01:20:40 Go ahead.

Hosea Williams: 01:20:43 I wasn't ... most of those were protest candidates, protest elections. I knew I wasn't going to win. Like when I ran for mayor against Maynard Jackson.

Hosea Williams: 01:20:52 What happened was, one of Maynard's friends who was chairman of the county commissions in Fulton County, he qualified to run for mayor, and that was Lomax.

Mel Steely: 01:21:04 Michael Lomax.

Hosea Williams: 01:21:04 Michael. He had plenty of money, and then Maynard Jackson qualified. Who going to run against me? They scared everybody else out and I said, "I'm running." I remember I met with the black leadership and they said, "You are not going to mess up this city, you're not running." I said, "The hell you preach. I'm going to have enough money to qualify. I'm going to even qualify now." I tell you what my campaign did. I made Maynard Jackson campaign, because Lomax pulled out. Maynard was going unopposed. I made him campaign. I made him discuss issues. I made him make promises. It was very necessary, not to just let him walk in. So a lot of those campaigns I ran, when I ran for United States Congress, I ran as a protest candidate. I would be able to bring up issues, and discuss issues, and highlight issues that otherwise would have been swept under the rug.

Mel Steely: 01:21:53 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Now, when you got into the state House, tell us a little bit about your reception there and your relationship with Speaker Murphy.

Hosea Williams: 01:22:03 Well, when I got into the house, I was elected, they was scared to death, all up at the ... I'd walk in the meetings and even the blacks, I remember one day, Billy McKinney, I said something, and he came out screaming and going to jump on me, and fight me, and I won a lot of white respect. I just stood there while Billy screamed and raged. A lot of white people came up to me
after that and said, "I didn't know you was that intelligent, but you damn sure won me today."

Hosea Williams:  01:22:28  But when I went to the House, everybody figured, he is going to tear up. We are never have another session. Hosea Williams going to tear this legislature up. Tear up the legislature, and violent Tom Murphy called me in. And as bad as he was, I could see him trembling.

Hosea Williams:  01:22:47  He was nervous, and he said, "Hosea, you know that people said a lot of bad things about you, and I'm not sure what they said about you is not correct. So I've called you, what kind of politics are you going to play?" And I sit down and I had a serious meeting with the speaker. I said, "I'm here not just to fight for black folks, but to bring about a true republican form of government in Georgia. I'm here to fight that every human being would have equal access, it's not a race thing to me."

Hosea Williams:  01:23:24  When I finished talking, Murphy said, "If that's why you're here, I'll work with you, and I welcome you." Because they were going to try to do something to get me excommunicated. But I made many friends. There was three of us used to go to the well, up there. But when I used to go to that well, those white people would get as quiet as a mice and I used to stand there and just look around for maybe a minute, and then I started speaking.

Hosea Williams:  01:23:48  But that's where my image, I think, begin changing in the white community. My role in the state legislature. The most successful bill, and I shouldn't be telling this, but I got a bill through. At that time, if a man lost his job, whatever the reason, as long as he stayed with that woman and them children in that house, they could get no federal support, no welfare, no food stamps, or nothing. So many of the men wanted to leave the family anyway, so they tell their wife, "I'm leaving so y'all can get on food stamps," and many of the men hid in the house, never go out. "Just tell them I left you," and I passed the bill up there, if you been in prison, you got out, those who had even lost jobs, if you lost that job through no fault of your own, and you can prove that you are looking for another job every day, then they're entitled to food stamps.

Hosea Williams:  01:24:45  And I went to Tom Murphy, I said, "Mr. Speaker," I said "I got a bill here, I want you to help me get through." Tom probably wouldn't like me telling this, and I explained it to him, and I said, "It's just to help people deserve help," and I said, "If you help me get this bill through, I won't put it in another bill this year, and you help me get this bill through, I'll vote just like you say vote on all the rest."
So Tom agreed, and that bill went through the House. I'll never forget, I was on the rules committee. The rules committee is the one that sets the daily agenda. I was on the rules committee.

That's a very powerful committee.

Very powerful committee. So, the day my bill came up, all the redneck boys who raise hell all the time, they were absent. I couldn't believe, the man brought my bill, all the rednecks was absent. Soon as we passed our bill, my bill, they came in door. "All right, let's get started, Mr. Chairman." The chairman said, "Oh yes, we were." "Let's get started." Say, "We already started, we already passed our bill." Said, "Yeah, we passed Hosea's bill." Oh, they just raised hell. Same thing happened when it came up on the floor of the House, you know, but Tom Murphy, he is a mighty strong man. Tom Murphy is to some degree a dictator, but he's about as honest a politician as I ever met.

You think of him as a friend?

I think of Tom Murphy as my friend, I certainly do. Of course, up there, that's the state capitol. Those lobbyists will buy you in a minute, and what hurt me was when I was there, there was eighteen blacks elected. They would not get together. They walked around there just like they was shadows, or skeletons, trying to get some of that money. But I like Tom Murphy. I like him. I hate to see, I know he's old, almost as I am, and going to have to resign soon. But Georgia is going to lose a great politico.

Now you said that the blacks that were in the house there did not form a caucus. Yet today they have a very strong caucus. How did the caucus develop?

Well, as younger persons, and women, black women were elected at the state legislature, but those older guys up there had been there a long time. Like Billy McKinney, and Billy is my friend. I fought hard for his daughter and he knows that, but they were just into that selfish thing, getting for themselves. But their family, that priority is not what is good for the African American community, but what is good for them and their friends. So the black caucus came about, I think more and more, even Billy McKinney, God bless Billy. Billy, you could hear me talking about you. He used to wear a hangman's noose around his neck. You know, he got rid of all that stuff and so, the black caucus has been here, but basically for the young men and women, that was the backbone and the wisdom that built the black caucus.
Mel Steely: 01:27:33 Was any one person-

Hosea Williams: 01:27:38 I don't think, I can't name one.

Mel Steely: 01:27:40 It really happened after you left, didn't it?

Hosea Williams: 01:27:42 Yes. Well no, it started before I left.

Mel Steely: 01:27:44 Okay.

Hosea Williams: 01:27:45 But it was just a shadow until I left. But the black caucus now, they are effective in their legislature.

Speaker 1: 01:27:54 Now, as a political figure, you've been in both parties at one time or another. Sometimes you were more radical, sometimes you were activist more than others. If you had to define yourself as a political person, how would you define yourself?

Hosea Williams: 01:28:10 Well, I was, I would define myself as a model, as an example that black elected officials was convinced, if they do what they ought to be doing, they'd be defeated next election. The black elected officials was convinced, for them to continue in politics, they had to have the blessing of the white power structure and their money. See? Not Hosea Williams. Nobody's never gave me a dime, and I never lost a race that I thought I could win.

Mel Steely: 01:28:42 What was your slogan? Unbought and unbound?

Hosea Williams: 01:28:46 Unbought and un-bossed, and thank God as it made me, black all the way through. But also, a slogan was, under Dr. King, you must never, never judge any person by the color of their skin. You must judge every person by the content of their character. It's taken to our state politicians today, even the white ones. I never, once I got in a position, I never worried about losing it, even though I didn't have no money to spend during the campaign.

Hosea Williams: 01:29:15 And the reason I never lost an election I thought I could win. I went with them people every day, most of these guys get elected and you don't see them, and these gals too, women. You don't see them until the next election, the next campaign. I worked with those people every day, and that's what kept me into politics. And I also responded to the needs ... you have down in there, in the political position, your first obligation is to respond positively to the demands of the will of your constituents, then you take on the other. But those other, most of those politicians down there, just for self.
Hosea Williams: 01:29:54 And that's why I was telling someone this morning, when I was raised up as a boy, it's three persons in our community, you did not challenge. You believed everything they told you. One was the preacher, the other one was the politician, and that other one was the parent, and all three of those elements in our society now has deteriorated into a truly dangerous era.

Mel Steely: 01:30:25 Hmm. Now, in '72 you were organizing and led pickets against the Mead Corporation. What was the objective of that? And do you feel you have achieved your objective?

Hosea Williams: 01:30:38 Yes, I did, I did achieve my objective, and put Atlanta on the right road. They have veered away from it now, but I was motivated by Dr. King. There were two things that King wanted to do desperately before he died. One, he wanted to get all the leaders of America, the civil rights leaders to meet with the leaders of Africa, because he was saying, "Racism is an international fight and that's the only way you can confront it effectively, internationally." So he wanted to do that before he died, which he didn't get chance to do. The other thing Dr. King wanted to do very, very badly. He wanted to leave all these movements he led across this nation, thousands of them. He never led a movement in Atlanta, Georgia. And one of the things that was close to his heart, he wanted to lead a movement in Atlanta.

Hosea Williams: 01:31:31 And you know, every time we found a good reason to come into Atlanta with a movement, the black leaders would get together and sign a letter asking Dr. King not to come to Atlanta. His own father signed those letters. So King never got... so, when King was killed, I said, I'm going carry out both of those wills for him. So I started working in Atlanta and they tried to run me out of Atlanta. They set up everything, got me kicked out of SCLC. And so, I knew I had the grassroots people with me. I had a hit list of twelve. If I want to excite somebody, I ain't going to whup a man like you, I'm going to whup Holyfield. I'm going in, whup Mike Tyson, and then I ain't got no trouble at you. So we had a hit list of twelve, the major corporations in Atlanta, and honest to God, we hit eight of the twelve, and brought them to the conference table and got justice.

Hosea Williams: 01:32:26 First we hit was Church Fried Chicken, and the second we hit was Mead, the largest employer in Atlanta. The third we hit was Sears and Roebuck, the fourth we hit was CNS Bank. Fifth, Rich's. We went right through them and we changed, truly, I worry some now because all of the beatings we took, in Atlanta, the people that died and all the blood, and this is not true for Atlanta, but it's true for America. Black people are worse off this
day than we were thirty years ago. Black people. And one of the problems has been, and no one in America, no one's living today that didn't more for integration than this man right here.

Hosea Williams: 01:33:20 But what we call integration turned out to be the biggest enemy of black people. Really integration never did take place. What took place was an assimilation of integration, because when that white power structure saw this force coming, and they just backed up and said, "Let them in." Well, when they integrated black people went all out across America spending all that money, and the white community, white people did not reciprocate, and black people today are in worse shape than they were thirty years ago.

Mel Steely: 01:33:50 Because of the economics of it?

Hosea Williams: 01:33:51 Because of the economics.

Mel Steely: 01:33:52 Mm-hmm (affirmative). You've been accused of, along with some others that were involved with King, of being a communist and having ties to the Florida mafia, and a whole series of things. Tell us about that.

Hosea Williams: 01:34:04 Well, if you didn't cater to the will of the white power structure, you were something odd and evil, and the thing they always choose to belittle us, or to destroy us, was communism. Well, I can tell you I don't like communism. But the way black folks were living, I didn't accept anything. When you think about, black people could not use a restroom, and they had white women and they're told that they could go in that restroom, and black women have to go down in the bushes. When you think about, black people couldn't go in a restaurant, when you think that black people could not check in a hotel or a motel. Black kids were going to segregated schools that was inferior because the biggest part of the money was ... when you think about those days, I don't know why we didn't accept communism more than we did, the way we suffered and raising our children and it was just terrible.

Hosea Williams: 01:35:09 But I have never been told, I've never been told until I grew up, after Dr. King's death, the true essence of communism. I don't think there's another group in America, no group in America is more committed to America than black folk. And ain't nobody paid no greater dues to make this nation what it is today, than black folk since they came to Africa, where we was born to be free, and brought us down to slavery. And upon our bodies, they put a price like we was merchandise. But black folks paid that, we paid our dues. Now one thing I want black folks to
know, don't nobody owe you nothing. Black folk have a lot of enemies in America, but the biggest enemy of black folks are black folks themselves. Ain't nobody going to do for you, if you would not do for yourself.

Hosea Williams: 01:36:03 And I tell them sometimes, I don't know why God made me black. Why God didn't make me a Jew? Because them Jews stick together. And after World War II, America treated Jews about as bad as they treated blacks. I bet a lot of Jews left Germany, those that Adolf Hitler didn't kill, came to America, and they wouldn't let them get off the ship. Many Jews died, I didn't see. But them Jews got in this country, them Jews stuck together. I said, "Why God couldn't make me a Korean? Them Koreans stick together." Why couldn't he make me a Japanese? Because black folk, I tell them, I tell my people that, now God, as good as God is, God is not [inaudible 01:36:39] by black folk. God helps those who helped themselves. Yeah, you got the whites and all this, but the greatest enemy of black people is black people themselves.

Hosea Williams: 01:36:49 And we would become the lost generation. We will not exist in this country. I'm putting a group together now. One day you got too many black, you've got too many organizations. You don't go in no other community, whether it's the Hispanics, the Japanese, the I don't care what. No other community got all those organizations, and they got us divided and conquered.

Hosea Williams: 01:37:12 But what I'm trying to do, I'm putting a group together called a coalition. I'm not setting up another organization, a coalition of existing organizations, a coalition to save affirmative action. Now affirmative action, I never was too hip, or hyped by affirmative action because I thought it was a trick from the beginning. The first thing, they made white women a minority. White women are the majority numerically in America. White women own more money than any other group in America.

Hosea Williams: 01:37:39 Because you white boys die a little earlier than your women. But they brought in white women, made them a minority, so the poor white business man struggling, all he had to do is put his business in his wife's name and then she got the benefits. You see what I'm saying? And the other thing they did with that affirmative action program, they'd go in a situation and say that's fifty blacks qualify, and they'd pick three or four blacks, like they did with slavery, and let them get super rich, and all the rest of the blacks went out of business.

Hosea Williams: 01:38:09 But affirmative action is the best we have, as weak as it is. And so, I put this group together, a coalition to save affirmative...
action, and I think it's working well, because a lot of people
don't ... now I'll be frank with you, what is NAACP doing, besides
sending memberships and holding press conferences? What is
SCLC doing besides sending membership and having pressure?
What is CORE? None of them doing nothing. Evidence was they
separated and then sat it out, sat it out. Our people, when they
came out against Texaco, they had Texaco over a barrel, and
they should have dealt very militant with Texaco, sending a
message to other companies. Now we've met Texaco, we're
coming after you. What happened in Texaco? One day Jesse
Jackson calls a national press conference, two or three days
later, Joe Lowery is still [inaudible 01:39:05] and calls another
press conference. Two or three days later, a group of the
NAACP... Why all of them didn't get together and call one press
conference? They selling out. That's what I'm saying, black
people, if they don't come together, we're going to be a race of
people disappear from the American scene.

Mel Steely: 01:39:23 I know your reputation is organizer, a rabble-rouser, heard you
that first time with the NAACP. Since that time you've worked
almost to cultivate it. You had been thought of as a rabble-
rouser, or a gun-toting drunk driver, a Republican sellout. I
mean you name it. Have you found that this publicity that you
get from it has been a help or a hindrance to you?

Hosea Williams: 01:39:49 Well, I'm a novelty. I'm a novelty because the vast majority, the
average American get the publicity I've gotten is destroyed. But
I kept going. I tell you, it's hard to say this. I don't know anybody
around this area that's more popular than Hosea Williams. Not
only black, but white as well. Because white people was led to
believe I was a hustler, that I

Mel Steely: 01:40:25 But you are a hustler.

Hosea Williams: 01:40:26 But not for myself.

Mel Steely: 01:40:27 Right.

Hosea Williams: 01:40:28 Not for myself. That makes a difference. So they believe... That's
why in Atlanta, Georgia, I have a lot of dissenters. I fed 41,000
hungry people in this so called “Black Mecca,” the city too busy
to hate. You know what I mean?

Mel Steely: 01:40:43 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:40:44 Last Christmas. So whites like blacks now. Although I'm,
seventy-two years old, they truly begin to understand that I'm
not a selfish person. I still live in the ghetto. I don't have to live in the ghetto. I drive a 1985 automobile. I don't have to wear overalls in church, but I ain't selling out. Give me limited-

Mel Steely: 01:41:07 Well, the truth is you're a very successful businessman.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:08 Well not-

Mel Steely: 01:41:10 You and your family have done fairly well on all these things.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:13 No, I-

Mel Steely: 01:41:13 You don't have to do it, but you choose to do it.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:16 I gave up the business to the family. I'll be frank with you-

Mel Steely: 01:41:21 Yeah. But you built that business though.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:22 I built the business.

Mel Steely: 01:41:23 I mean you're not some kind of dumb street guy.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:25 Well no-

Mel Steely: 01:41:26 You know what you're doing.

Hosea Williams: 01:41:27 My family owns the largest black janitorial and cleaning chemical manufacturer in America. But I love what I'm doing. I think I've been blessed especially God. I see people like Dr. King, live their life at least outwardly because I think black folks are beginning now to come around. One have to accept themselves. You know the biggest enemy... I preach this every day. The biggest enemy to black people in America was not some president, or Ku Klux Klan. It was Willie Lynch.

Hosea Williams: 01:42:03 Lynch said, "Don't die in no civil war fighting for blacks. Let the blacks... turn them loose. Just keep from them knowledge of their history. He who knows his history is destined to repeat it." That's why black folks thought they were going to be free after the Civil War. Went right up, and came right down. They thought they were going to be free again after Reconstruction. They went right up and came back down. Certainly, they thought they were going to be free with the Civil Rights Movement. Willie Lynch, the idea of Willie Lynch, robbed us of our self-esteem, robbed us of our "somebodiness," acceptive of ourself.
Hosea Williams: 01:42:34 So I'm glad that I stayed out there now and I knew I won't get my due until I'm dead and gone, but I'm going to still fight. I'm going to fight... And I don't want nobody come telling me about my age. Yeah, I'm 72, but I am little stay out here on the battlefield. I'm going to fight till black folks are free until I'm dead.

Mel Steely: 01:42:57 I believe it was Julian Bond when he was a senator, he and I ended up late one night in pouring rain in the Capitol waiting for to clear a little bit. We got to talking and he was assessing different leaders, black and white. I asked him about you, and he said, "Well, you know he could have been a great leader. Could have been a great leader." He said, "But his problem was he thought with his heart instead of his head."

Hosea Williams: 01:43:25 That's true.

Mel Steely: 01:43:26 Is that, a fair statement.

Hosea Williams: 01:43:27 That's a fair statement. But so did Dr. King. Dr. King never got the critics that he deserved. And Sojourner Truth and many others. Yes, I somewhat have rejected wealth. A lot of these companies that I confronted, they tried to get me involved. I said, "No, no, no, no, no, no. You can't pay my bills." I've never taken any money. IRS have always investigated me. I think the true leaders of the universe are those that lead with their hearts, and not their head.

Mel Steely: 01:44:06 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:44:06 Seeking wealth... Now, I don't have anything against wealth. I just want it to be used in a proper way. But so many black leaders and that hurts me so dearly, knowing what price we pay to become a leader. Like after we did all that beating in Selma and Montgomery, inspired black people across the country, we've got the right to register to vote. Oh yeah. They jumped up and elected a black mayor in Los Angeles, California. They elected a black mayor in New York City. They elected a black mayor in Chicago, Buffalo... All of them got white males again because those blacks got in there and sold their people out. Blacks either stopped voting, or start voting for white men.

Hosea Williams: 01:44:45 I preach it. You must never judge a person by the color of that skin. You judge every person by the conduct intent of their character. You know I got raised seven children, I got seventeen grandchildren. I try to teach my children. I'm on a long term journey. No, I don't drive a Mercedes. I don't have the huge
home, and all that thing, but I'm happy. When you... That's, I think I've done something worthy with my life and nobody... Like the people I feed every Christmas and Thanksgiving. I fill up those bellies and they want to come up and hug me. They want to come up and kiss me. I said, "What's wrong with you?" I said, "What are you doing?" I said, "That's God's food and you are God's child. Now God's child going to thank Hosea for eating God's food?"

Mel Steely: 01:45:27 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:45:28 I said, "You're really crazy." But I'll get my due in time.

Mel Steely: 01:45:31 Now you served with two governors in the legislature with George Busbee and Joe Frank Harris. How would you evaluate those men?

Hosea Williams: 01:45:38 Oh, I'll be frank with you, George Busbee and Joe Frank surprised me. They were country boys. Basically they weren't from wealthy families. They didn't go to Harvard, Yale, or Princeton. But they probably was two of the most effective governors. I mean they were concerned about everybody. They concerned about the state, they were concerned about the well-being of poor people as well as white. I have to tell you this, I got in with the mafia, and I didn't know it was the mafia. They were really controlling the mafia, the real mafia now, was controlling bingo in the state of Georgia.

Hosea Williams: 01:46:26 So Georgia placed the law, and outlawed the mafia operation. So I was trying to get into something to make some money to pay my staff to feed my hungry people. The mafia found that out, so they came to me and said... Had this big beautiful bingo, out there in South DeKalb. And said, "We'll let you." Let me run it, didn't charge me a dime. I'm making all that money. So then he came to me, he said "We wanted to talk with you about the possibility of associating with us." But I didn't know it was the mafia, as smart as I think I am.

Hosea Williams: 01:46:55 They carried me to a hotel, I never forget that Saturday, and they approved me. So when they approved me, what they wanted me to do, they going to give me the bingo hall to operate Atlanta, but they want me to help them set up a syndicate across America. One was that they would open up at every SCLC chapter, would open up a bingo hall. I promised them it can be done. Then I think it was in every NAACP chapter. Here's where I thought I'd get out, now y'all are giving me a bingo hall, Joe Lowery runs SCLC, so I'm going to take
them to Joe Lowery, and Joe Lowery can tell them SCLC is not interested. I've done my job.

Hosea Williams: 01:47:33 I tried to apply for a license to run that bingo hall, under Busbee. I was turned down twice. My friend George Busbee, I went to Busbee, and asked him "Why?" He said, "Hosea, you are committing suicide if tied in with the mafia." He knew that I had made them a promise to get them in the SCLC chapter. He said, "You don't tell them Joe Lowery said, no. You promised them you would get them in every chapter and you get them in every chapter. Or you a dead man."

Hosea Williams: 01:48:03 He said, "Now what I'll do, I will approve your license the day you come to this Capitol and show me how you paid for that furniture, how you paid for that equipment, and how you're going to operate that bingo hall. You prove to me that you can finance it and I'll approve the license." And I left. I never did thank George Busbee. He carried me to Japan with him in one trip and we both was in there feeling good. I told him that night, "You did save my life." But I think that it's amazing. It is truly amazing these country boys that came from, I would almost say, a regular family, a white family, a hillbilly family or whatever you, was probably the most... When it come to the overall well-being of our state was two of the most effective governors in the history of our country.

Mel Steely: 01:48:54 Well, another governor you worked with at that time and in the Senate was Zell Miller. What do you think of Zell?

Hosea Williams: 01:48:59 Well you know I got on Zell, Zell was made. You know who made Zell?

Mel Steely: 01:49:04 Who?

Hosea Williams: 01:49:05 Lester Maddox. My friend.

Mel Steely: 01:49:08 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:49:10 Zell, was a professor at a little college up there in North Georgia.

Mel Steely: 01:49:15 Young Harris.

Hosea Williams: 01:49:16 Young Harris. Young Harris. And Zell broke down and made him his executive director. I kind of compare Zell with... I just had one thing that couldn't agree with Zell, and that was the lottery. I don't think the government should be into lottery. I think the lottery has caused more poverty than anything in our society
today. It's the masses buying all the lottery, but who gets scoped, shot, and shipped? The glasses. I just think if it was going to be done, it should have been done by a private industry.

Mel Steely: 01:49:50 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:49:51 But I think Zell has brought about more international fame for Georgia. I think Zell has gotten Georgia more acceptable internationally than any other governor, and Georgia has that potential, unquestioned about it. With all of Atlanta's deficiency, Atlanta will become the greatest city in the world of tomorrow. Without Georgia support we wouldn't have no Atlanta.

Mel Steely: 01:50:16 Well, now you were involved in Atlanta. In '85 you left the legislature and went to the city council-

Hosea Williams: 01:50:21 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:50:21 ... Atlanta City Council, and you've worked with, I guess, what? Three mayors-

Hosea Williams: 01:50:26 Yes.

Mel Steely: 01:50:26 ... Over there with Maynard and Andy Young-

Hosea Williams: 01:50:28 Yes.

Mel Steely: 01:50:29 ... And Campbell, all three. Tell us about that time on the council and working with those guys.

Hosea Williams: 01:50:36 Well, Maynard Jackson, I believe out there in Clayton County, they arrested me one night, I think it was a DUI charge. I never forget, was in a council meeting and Marvin Arrington recessed the meeting. When I walked out of the meeting, the Clayton County sheriff arrested me, which was totally illegal. He has no right to arrest anybody in Fulton County. What should happen is the sheriff in Fulton arrests you, and turn you over. But the black sheriff there, I guess he chickened out. But anyway, they arrested me and carried me to Clayton County. Now when they got me down in Clayton County, finally the sheriff said, "Okay, here's some bonding companies and you call one and bond you." I said, "I didn't pay to get in here, and I ain't paying to get out."
Hosea Williams: 01:51:35 So people begin to congregate out around the jail. So finally he walked in and said, "All right, we know where you are. You better come back and sign this document. You can walk on out." Walk out. I said, "I didn't sign in and I ain't signing out." When you opened that door, I walk out. So, so many people was crowding up around the jail house. So, they finally came in and open the door. Said, "All right, you can walk out. Get out." I wasn't coming out then, but I saw all these TV cameras. I said, "They going to blow me if I don't go out now." So, I came on out.

Hosea Williams: 01:52:04 But Atlanta... And this is the hurting thing. Under all those black male administrations, blacks are worse off in Atlanta today than they were before they had a black mayor. The black business community is dead. Auburn Avenue, very few people... It's hard to find a person who did not visit Auburn Avenue at its peak. To be able to visualize what an economic heaven it was. Two black banks, the richest black bank in America. Atlanta Life Insurance Company, the richest black company in America. Had two fine hotels, they got it. What is Auburn Avenue today? It's a slum. You go down Auburn, you see prostitutes, pimps, you see drug pushers. What happened to us? The few made it, but the masses are worse off today.

Mel Steely: 01:53:04 Well, I know-

Hosea Williams: 01:53:05 It's all those black mayors.

Mel Steely: 01:53:08 Well I know back in the '80s I was working for Newt Gingrich at the time, and we got a young black woman who was the best graduate they had at Clark and hired her. Sent her into City Hall to work with Maynard. Her job was to tie black businessmen into the Small Business Administration, get them off the ground, get businesses going. Wyche Fowler... It was working well. Wyche Fowler, who was the Congressman, came in and objected to the mayor to having one of Gingrich's people working in his district. And it was downtown.

Hosea Williams: 01:53:43 Yeah.

Mel Steely: 01:53:43 It was in his district, and he wanted it removed. And I know they ask Congressman Fowler, "Are you going to replace her and do this?" And he said, "No, I just want her out of here." So they moved her out to the old airport. It was closed down at the time and the whole thing fell apart. But they were actively trying to get businessmen operated and the mayor participated in killing the effort that he knew was working.
Hosea Williams: 01:54:07 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Mel Steely: 01:54:08 I never understood that.

Hosea Williams: 01:54:09 Well, I'll tell you there has not been any considerable amount of growth and development, particularly economic growth in the black community under the administration of the black mayors. Things black mayors have done to the black community, insults. No white mayor would've ever done that, and if a white mayor did that, blacks would be all over town, marching and picketing. But because this is a black guy, they let them get away with murder. But it's a shame how we suffered to get blacks in the office and-

Mel Steely: 01:54:40 It is strange. I mean what else politically can be done? You've got a black mayor, you've got a black council, basically. Black police, the congressman is black.

Hosea Williams: 01:54:49 That's right.

Mel Steely: 01:54:50 Black representatives in the state legislature.

Hosea Williams: 01:54:52 That's right. That's right.

Mel Steely: 01:54:55 What else can be done to, to help blacks in a major city like Atlanta? It's not just Atlanta-

Hosea Williams: 01:54:59 It's not just Atlanta.

Mel Steely: 01:55:00 You mentioned, it's every major city in the County.

Hosea Williams: 01:55:03 See, what the white power structure like the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, what they do... And they did this during the days of slavery. When the slaves began to rebuild and rise up, they'd go get the most influential sleeve and give him a place in that white masters house. His job was to keep those other slaves screwed down. He was called a house nigger.

Mel Steely: 01:55:23 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:55:24 That's what you got now, blacks being elected into office by white money. Their commitment is not to the masses of people, particularly their people. Their commitment is to that white man with all that money. That's why if you check it out, who getting all the big contracts, who handling the bonding business? It's some black that is a go-between between the super-rich white and the power structure. But right now I tell
you, don't come telling me anything about no color, because they're proven just because it's black, it does not work. Black elected officials have been a hindrance to the progress of black people. No white would have got in there and mistreated blacks like they have mistreated us.

Mel Steely: 01:56:07 Is this why you switched over from the city council to the DeKalb County Commission?


Mel Steely: 01:56:14 That was in what? '90? 1990 I think when you switched.

Hosea Williams: 01:56:15 Yeah. 1990. I became as the black on that force. Because we had another black there before me and they caught him tangling with the money like these other, but... Here's what I believe, I'm hoping that black people are now surpassing the black thing, and then will choose the candidate that is best to make democracy a living reality. Maybe a lot of decent black people will not run for office because these black crooks controlling politics in the black community. It's being controlled by the white power structure. But I do think we are coming more and more, that's why I can't give up even at the age of seventy-two. That I must keep going.

Mel Steely: 01:56:59 Well now as you look back on your career, political career, what are you most proud of and what is your biggest disappointment?

Hosea Williams: 01:57:08 Well, I guess I'm most proud of, I proved that you didn't have to be an Uncle Tom. I prove you didn't have to be a sellout to the rich white power structure to get elected. I proved that you could stand up like a man and speak your opinion. You may be wrong, but that's your opinion. You didn't have to, I think... All of them are talking about... When I was in politics, those other black elected officials was very careful about selling out. Because Hosea Williams, going back to that community and tell it.

Mel Steely: 01:57:47 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 01:57:47 So they were much more like the do-right when I was there than they are after I left. So that's the thing that I'm most proud of, that I did prove that you could be a true black man, and stand up like a man, and still get elected. That's it. I guess the worst thing that I'm so sorry for in this country it's about economics. I just let the people down economically. I got so
caught up on fighting for less irrelevant things, against racism, ‘til I really has nothing to point back to, and it's all about economics.

Mel Steely: 01:58:37 The one thing we haven't talked about is the Forsyth County March. That probably got you more fame nationally than anything since Selma.

Hosea Williams: 01:58:46 Well, let me tell you why I went to Forsyth County. I was sick and tired, I knew about Forsyth, blacks had not been able to participate there in seventy-five years. But I got sick and tired of black leaders getting publicity of a South Africa. These black leaders would go to Washington, D.C. and picket the South African Embassy. Just as sure as you picket the South African Embassy, you were going to be arrested. But you're out of jail in two hours on your way back home.

Hosea Williams: 01:59:22 And I was saying, I too am concerned about the plight of blacks in South Africa, the apartheid in Africa. But why are we not more concerned about the apartheid right here at home? It's in Atlanta's back yard. You know blacks are being treated worse there then they're being treated in South Africa. So I highly publicize it, maybe my thought we could. We are going back to Forsyth and have a march. That Saturday morning I had four large buses. I was able to just about fill one large bus.

Hosea Williams: 01:59:56 To be honest with you, I probably would have gone on but I didn't know what we was going into. When got into Forsyth, there was a mountain there, a hill covered with white folk. When they saw the bus stop and we started to get out they just went berserk. They start screaming, and hollering, and yelling. I'll tell you what, I knew we was in trouble. During my civil rights career, those mobs of basically white males, older white males. When I saw all those women, and all of those children, and all those young... I said, "We are in trouble."

Hosea Williams: 02:00:32 So we got off the bus and they just came down screaming. The sheriff, he thought he could scare us out. He had a lot of his security people in trucks, on trucks. So they came around to us and I already... You know what about that Forsyth march? One of the things that I never will forget. My daughter had flown in from New York and she has a son and a daughter, they was about ten or eleven years old. I kept marching on there and I say, "Hosea. It's going to be mass murder and your grandkids going to get killed because you was so tough." I kept watching them, but when those people surrounded us, I never witnessed a mob like that in my civil rights career.
Hosea Williams: 02:01:15 The sheriff said, "I tell you what, Williams." After he couldn't scare us to get off the bus. But I started to get off the bus and the sheriff said, "See all those people up there. See all those Ku Klux Klan?" I said, "Yes, I see them." And I said, Do you see me?" I said, "I know ain't nobody marched in Forsyth in seventy-five years. We are marching this day, Mister."

Hosea Williams: 02:01:32 So the sheriff told us to get everybody back on the bus, and they got us surrounded, and we can drive through the mob, and then "I'll block them off and you can go ahead and finish with your march." First I said I wasn't going to do it. But then my mind said, Hosea, you're going to get a bunch of people killed here today. So I said, "We'll do it." So we got on the bus and the sheriff, the posse that was surrounding the bus, and we got the bus through the mob. The bus just going and I said, "Stop the bus." The sheriff tried to get me down further. I said, "Stop this bus." I started raising hell. The sheriff said, "No. No." And I said, "Stop the bus."

Hosea Williams: 02:02:08 So we got off the bus, and we got off the bus. I said, "We marching. Didn't I tell you we was marching today in Forsyth." He's said, "Oh my God, you're going to get a bunch of people killed." So we marched, and the sheriff kept trying to lead the march. I said, "Sheriff, you walking too fast. We ain't walking that fast." We got to the place we was supposed to stop. He said, "All right man, get on the bus. You finish your march." I said, "What?" He said, "Get on the bus. You've finished your march."

Mel Steely: 02:02:49 We good?

Speaker 2: 02:02:49 We can go.

Mel Steely: 02:02:51 All right. This is the second part of the tape on the interview with Reverend Hosea Williams. May 15, 1998 for the Georgia Political Heritage. Reverend Williams, you had worked with each of these Atlanta mayors, as I mentioned earlier. You talked a little bit about the fact that you were disappointed after having three mayors, not much had changed. Would you take each of them in turn and give us an assessment of how you think they were as a mayor? First Maynard Jackson.

Hosea Williams: 02:03:23 Well, Maynard was the first black mayor. Maynard's duty being the first black mayor, I would say he did a pretty fair job. He really tried to make things a little too black. I think Maynard would have done a much greater job for black people if he had been more compromising. But he had been supported by wealthy blacks, and they was demanding equal access now in
the economic arena. But I do think that Maynard, he did pretty fair, I guess. See Maynard, the problem I have with Maynard... Always had with him. He was a very brilliant, well-educated man, but he has not accepted black people himself.

Hosea Williams: 02:04:24 Right now, Maynard Jackson lives up there in North Atlanta, where just about only white people live. I told him one day, Maynard, your job, like Dr. King explained to us, should be in the community of our people, as a role model. I said, "You done move way up yonder, in Buckhead, with the white folk. And they'll never accept you because they feel by you leaving your black community, you haven't accepted yourself. And as much money as you have and as fine as your house, when they see your little children in the street. They say, 'Here come the little niggers.'" But I just think he made a terrible mistake and he kind of aided it himself to some degree, from the masses, from the people he claimed he was going to help. Stupid.

Hosea Williams: 02:05:08 Andrew Young came in, I was on the city council and Andy and I just didn't hit it off too well. Because Andy too, like Maynard, was more concerned about the development of the most successful blacks then helping the masses get on a journey to self-help, to save themselves and their family. I just don't think Andy... He stayed there for, for two terms, but I think Andy association... He did not get out in... You got to get out in the black community to inspire that community to do what is right. I call it God's will.

Mel Steely: 02:05:53 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 02:05:54 So when Andy left there a very little change had been made in the city of Atlanta for black people. Now I think Bill Campbell is changing. I really think Bill Campbell is changing because the first four years he kind of took on that same tension, but it looked like to me, what I see out of Bill Campbell recently, Bill Campbell... And I think what shocked Bill Campbell, he didn't get the true support of the big white rich community. It went with Marvin Arrington. So Bill Campbell got to see now, feel like he would not have been mayor, had not it been for the masses of black people.

Hosea Williams: 02:06:38 So I see Bill seemed to be more willing now to... Because what is needed, doctor so-in-so, a PhD of so... They are doing all right. It's the masses that are further being destroyed by alcohol, by drugs... Which really is the results of the breaking down of the family and frustration. Well, I told Bill, he and I had a run-in about Freaknik, because I think the major problem with Freaknik, they were not organizing for Freaknik. I went down
there one day, this last year at the homosexual convention. One guy called me down and said, "I want to see, you see, this homosexual convention."

Hosea Williams: 02:07:21 I went down there, they'd had large barrels, big old fifty-five gallon barrels. Paper, plastic, or glass. They had portable toilets. They had portable water fountain. They had security. Bill, if you could organize like this for the homosexuals, why can you organize like this for Freaknik? Because those Freaknik kids are from some of the better families, going to the better schools. A lot of the trash, and filth, and dirtiness is not being committed by the Freaknik kids. They were committed by thugs living in Atlanta, Georgia every day. Those thugs in Atlanta are now bringing thugs in from Macon, and Augusta, and all these other places. That's what I told Bill. I said, "Bill." It was not this past year, year before last. "If a white male treated those black kids like you treated them, black people would tear up this city. You are getting by because you a black man. And you ain't got long history or nothing."

Hosea Williams: 02:08:21 But I do think Bill Campbell, because he did not take the masses, a large chunk of the rich super white rich element of Atlanta in the last election, they went with Marvin Arrington. Bill was elected by poor people and I think Bill, I think he is changing. But I've been telling you, when you look at Atlanta, the so-called Black Mecca, ain't the so-called Black Mecca. You look at Atlanta, the city used to be too busy to hate. Uh-uh (negative). It's a lot of hate in Atlanta right now. It all came about under these black mayors.

Mel Steely: 02:09:00 There are two or three problems that are spinoffs that are keeping the city from being what it might be. From your experience, if you'd comment on each of them. One of them is keeping the streets clean of derelicts I guess, bums, homeless people, that kind of thing. There's recently been a series of articles in the Atlanta newspapers about the problem. How do we deal with it? Are we violating their rights? And if we don't keep them away, then people aren't going to come down here. The city is going to become a ghost town, et cetera, except for them. What's the solution to-

Hosea Williams: 02:09:34 Well, it is not near as bad as they said it is today. When they cleaned Atlanta of the homeless for the Olympics, and that's one of the mysteries of our life, what happened to those people? Because they sure ain't in Atlanta anymore. You go downtown, the only problem is Atlanta in the evening, it's like a desert. There's nobody down there. They all up in Buckhead, spending that money. But it's nothing... Now the poor... Let me
tell you what worries me and I see some of them every day. They are locked out that good element of our society. They're not capable mentally of existing in a competitive society. So the way we would take them, if I had the money, I'd have a huge farm, wouldn't have no tractors, and no mules, or horses. They'd have to work. A little old house, and you pay fifteen dollars a month for that.

Hosea Williams: 02:10:26 But give them something to do, that they can do, physically and mentally to earn a living. Because you just can't treat them like you treat dogs, and so forth. There is still... But the large element... I was surprised at Christmas, when 40,000 showed up to eat. But the large element... But what I think we got to do, see I got some people right now, one is the artist. A person that I found in the homeless shelter. We got to find out we got to... This would save money, it would save our country. Are these persons re-habitable? Can they be rehabilitated? If not, that just means we have to find some way. That's the thing about the homeless. But, the homeless not near as... You go down to Atlanta now and after four or five o'clock and it's a vacuum. It's empty city.

Hosea Williams: 02:11:19 Yeah.

Hosea Williams: 02:11:19 Yeah. What was the other ones?

Mel Steely: 02:11:21 Second one was Sandy Springs. What do you do about groups in say, the northern part of the county... This was again, it's true for cities around the country that are more affluent, that want to pull away and form their own group. Should they have the right to do that?

Hosea Williams: 02:11:35 Well, in all reality, I hate to see Sandy Springs pull away. I really hate to see that. Sandy Springs too, have benefited greatly from the city of Atlanta. But I believe in our society that people should be given the right to make the decision. Now if the people in the Sandy Spring were to set up their own corporate city, I don't know why we in Atlanta stop them. Now we ought to be very certain, let them misuse our taxpayers' money for hospital, or for the fire, or police protection, other things. But if people that own homes, and live in Sandy Springs want to set up a municipality, I'd give them 100%.

Mel Steely: 02:12:23 In DeKalb County, where you've had your most recent political service, the biggest question there for years on both a national and state level was the school integration question. What's your observation on how that ought to work?
Hosea Williams: 02:12:39 Well, it's true that the whites have deserted the public schools. And I think we should spend the money based upon people, the same money you spend in Buckhead on the student, ought to be spent over there at East Lake Meadows on a student. That's the only way I see you can qualify the education, because my children up there at Northside High, they caught up with some huge schooling, schools in the north of town. But the residents up there are now sending their kids to private school. And I just think that, and we've got to do this.

Hosea Williams: 02:13:29 Some people say it's impossible. The quality of education must not be based upon the racial issue. The quality of education should be plain and consistent across the county. Now the white folk want to send their kids to private school, let them send them, same as blacks. But the quality of education in DeKalb County, I think the money is being misused. I don't think they're giving us a dollar for a dollar's worth.

Mel Steely: 02:13:56 So it's not so much on busing and that sort of thing, as it is in putting the money into quality education.

Hosea Williams: 02:14:01 Quality education, and having a program, and administrating that program. I think DeKalb County lacks a lot in that area.

Mel Steely: 02:14:09 Mm-hmm (affirmative). Why do you think, and you mentioned this before, why do you think the black vote is so predictably democratic?

Hosea Williams: 02:14:20 When blacks were politically, I guess, salivated. Well, I put it another way. The Depression, the era of the Depression, which came right after the Civil War. And because Roosevelt, his ability to develop jobs, and blacks just look at it as Democratic, as economic survival as being Democratic, which is a terrible... Let me tell you what I try to tell them. I endorsed Ronald Reagan, all right? Because Reagan promised he'd make the birthday a legal holiday. I was touched that night in Hollywood at the victory party. A bunch of Jews was there. And I noticed some of them Jews, a lot of them Jews supported Ronald Reagan. A lot of them Jews supported Jimmy Carter.

Hosea Williams: 02:15:21 When the election was over, them Jimmy Carter Jews told them Reagan Jews, "Your boy has won, now you take over and deliver for our people." So you don't care which one go in, the Democrats or the Republicans, them Jews had it made. But blacks cast their whole lot in one bucket. And I think that is a terrible, terrible mistake. Because if you go back and look at the history, both have had glorious days in the black community. If it hadn't been for the Republican administration, I doubt we
would have won the Civil War, we would have got free. But I think blacks are making a terrible mistake. And I tell you, it's hurt the Democratic Party, because a lot of whites who have gone into Republican Party, they'd rejected the domination of blacks in the Democratic Party. So we ought to go into all parties.

Mel Steely: 02:16:16 Some say that's what's happening with the legislature, Georgia legislature, is it's now divided into three parties.

Hosea Williams: 02:16:21 That's right.

Mel Steely: 02:16:21 Republicans, white Democrats, black Democrats.

Hosea Williams: 02:16:24 The black Democrats is the balance of power. And that's why the Republicans are careful about implementing over-conservative political affairs. But the Democrats are over-conservative about those ultra-liberal affairs. If that black vote is standing there, to sensitize both parties to the needs of the masses of people. And I'm happy to see that.

Mel Steely: 02:16:51 Now you're a little critical of President Carter here, and yet you were the only black man to stand up and endorse him in 1970 when he ran against Carl Sanders. Why did you do that?

Hosea Williams: 02:17:00 Well, Jimmy Carter was my hometown boy, more or less. He is from Americus, Plains, and I am from down in Bainbridge, Georgia. And when Jimmy decided to run for governor, Jimmy's closest associate, and the person most influential was Charlie Kirbo from Bainbridge. The late Charlie Kirbo now. So, all the blacks had gotten together, and they were going to support Carl Sanders -

Mel Steely: 02:17:31 It was Carl Sanders, mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 02:17:35 So Charlie Kirbo came to me and said, "Hosea, if you... " If my grandfather was still living, would take a switch and beat your butt and tell you to come and support your homeboy. But he's dead now, so we've got to cover you, Hosea, begging, "Please, help Jimmy out." And you know, I start thinking that I didn't see a lot of difference in the two men. But Jimmy was my home boy. I had served in the state legislature with Jimmy Carter. And he's a pretty nice guy. So I said, "Okay, I'm going to break from the black leadership to go with Jimmy, because I think he deserves some black support."
Hosea Williams: 02:18:13

Well that first day Jimmy sent me out, Jimmy Carter gave me $18,000, his campaign did, Charlie Kirbo did. Now that was just a token, because I'd probably used at least $100,000. Because back in those days, the head, the state-wide leader would take the money from the politicians, and he would divide the money with the regional leaders, and then the regional leaders would divide the money with both of us keeping money though, divide the money with the counties. So I went out and I start thinking, that it's not money that's the political problem with black people, it's the lack of political influence. So I went out and convinced all the black leaders across this state, and the margin that Jimmy Carter won by was a black margin, the black vote he got.

Hosea Williams: 02:19:02

I start telling them, "Now listen, we don't have to take no money from these politicians. If anything, we ought to give them money. But we ought to go to them and see, can we get on some of the, a single black on a board, or a single black on an authority, or a single black on the commission, a state commission." So I went to Jimmy and we made a deal, that he would appoint blacks to all of the boards and commissions that we would desire to be on. What Jimmy told me to do, "Okay Hosea, what you do, you go get me three names for each one of the positions you want me to appoint black folks, and I will choose one of those three names." So I went out to get some blacks, the first time in the history of Georgia blacks participating. We did not accept a dime from a politician. And all of them was upset about it.

Hosea Williams: 02:19:46

We had a meeting, making they have to pay their own way there. We didn't have them pay for their own lunches. Go back, have to pay for making up their own leaflets, and hand bills, and have to distribute them. No money to be taken from a politician. So when the election was over, my home boy, Jimmy Carter became the Governor of Georgia. And I went over that election day to celebrate with him, and they said, "Hosea, come back tomorrow at 12:00, and bring us all those names." I went back and got all my names ready. The following day after the election day, I drive up on 14th Street at that little hotel. And Jimmy was in a car driving off. Charlie Kirbo came over to me, the strongest man in the world with Jimmy Carter, and said, "Hosea, I've got good news and bad news. Jimmy will not be able to appoint one of them. But if you have incurred a financial obligation, we'll meet it all."

Hosea Williams: 02:20:46

I said, "Man, you're telling me to sell out? Just be another sellout, nigga? I done promised all those people." He said, "Hosea, but Jimmy won't be able to appoint one of them. He'll
bring you, get you that money." I said, "You go over and tell
Jimmy Carter, some day, some way, I'll get even with him." I
went back and called a meeting. The black people wanted to kill
me. I had to run out the meeting. They said, "You took that
white man's money, you lying rascal. You took that white man's
money and didn't divide that money with us." And I'm trying to
plead with them, and I had to run out that meeting. Now I'm
chairman of the state. That destroyed the Georgia Voters
League.

Hosea Williams: 02:21:24 So, Jimmy went on as governor, and then he went on to run for
president. He got tied in with the King family. If there's any one
thing that helped Jimmy Carter get elected as President of the
United States, it was when Daddy King hugged him that time,
and that picture went all over America, Daddy King hugging this
white boy from Georgia, Jimmy Carter. So Jimmy Carter got
elected. And he really didn't do anything for the masses of the
black people. All he helped his guys who up on a limb, the upper
crowd. But the masses is where the help needed to save
America, to make America become the true America.

Hosea Williams: 02:22:02 Jimmy did very little and nothing for the masses of the people.
And then he was going to re-run for President, and all the black
leaders, the big shots running for him, because he let just about
all of them make some good money. I got the word that Ronald
Reagan wanted to talk to me. He was running against Jimmy
Carter. So I flew to Detroit to talk to Ronald Reagan. And I'm still
upset with Jimmy Carter, the way he treated me. He destroyed
the Georgia Voters League.

Mel Steely: 02:22:28 He lied to you, didn't he?

Hosea Williams: 02:22:29 He lied to me. He lied. He lie, he and Charlie Kirbo my home
boy. So I went on to Detroit and met with Reagan. And all of the
black leaders up there meeting Reagan and Reagan had a
program they wanted funded. They wanted the President to
help with it. I didn't have no program. Reagan was surprised
when I said, "If I endorse you, will you make Dr. King's birthday
a legal holiday?" Reagan looked at me and said, "I'm surprised
you asked me that." He said, "President Carter is like a member
of the King family. He dines in their home, he lectures in their
church, he socializes with them." I said, "But he never made
that birthday a legal holiday."

Hosea Williams: 02:23:07 So Reagan agreed that if I support him, he'd make the birthday
a legal holiday. And I went with Reagan. Now the word got back
down South. Hosea Williams is going to break again from the
black leaders and go on his own way. And so they called me in a
meeting and said, Daddy King did. He said, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, endorsing that white conservative over Jimmy Carter, your home boy. You know we love you. Hosea, please don't embarrass the black leadership and embarrass Jimmy." So I had known this was a time to get back at Jimmy. So I said, "Okay, I'll consider this. We're going to call a meeting."

Hosea Williams: 02:23:42 So they got Jimmy in a meeting. "Mr. President, Hosea would like to say something to you. We've talked to him." It's Daddy King. I said, "Jimmy," I told him, I wanted to say it to him for a long time, the way he treated me in Georgia. And I went over to Ronald Reagan, and Ronald Reagan won. And Ronald Reagan made Dr. King's birthday a national legal holiday. The first black African American man to get a national legal holiday in any country in the Western Hemisphere, to Ronald Reagan, the conservative.

Mel Steely: 02:24:20 What was Carter's reaction?

Hosea Williams: 02:24:21 Oh, Jimmy Carter, my home boy was very cold on me for many, many years. But some of his folk, like [inaudible 02:24:29]. Jimmy was very cold on me, until recently. I remember one time he wrote me a letter. I was criticizing the Carter project. And Jimmy wrote me a long letter. I still have that letter, saying he thought that I shouldn't do that, and he thought I was hurting black people rather than helping them, and so forth. And I kept saying I was going to answer that letter. You know, I kept that letter so long, then I got ashamed to answer it. But Jimmy published his autobiography, and he remembered me, he sent me a copy with a long statement in there about how he appreciated the works.

Mel Steely: 02:25:06 Well that was nice.

Hosea Williams: 02:25:07 Yes.

Mel Steely: 02:25:07 So you all have kind of gotten back together now.

Hosea Williams: 02:25:11 Yeah, we speak. Yes.

Mel Steely: 02:25:11 Now another fellow that ran for president and of course didn't make it was Lester Maddox. How would you assess Lester as a state politician? I believe you were one of the people that tried to integrate his restaurant back in the '50s.
Hosea Williams: 02:25:25 Well, I was one of the persons back in the ’50s that tried to integrate Lester’s restaurant. What was the name of that restaurant?

Mel Steely: 02:25:29 The Pickrick.

Hosea Williams: 02:25:29 The Pickrick. And he held a gun on us, and they beat us so bad. Lester Maddox is truly a political novelty. He did what he had to do to get elected. He did what he was, compared with a lot of the persons that he had to beat, he didn't have that money, he didn't have the education, he didn't have the social standing. But Lester Maddox did what he had to do to get elected. Now, I was scared to death of Lester until Lester got elected. But old Lester Maddox, the redneck governor, the racist governor from the state of Georgia, did more for black people than any president and any governor in the history of this state, and that's including my friend George Busbee, all of them, Zell Miller, all of them.

Hosea Williams: 02:26:20 The first thing Lester did, when Lester was elected governor on that very racist campaign, he appointed the first black to the state troopers in the history of Georgia. I knew the guy from Savannah, the guy's pretty militant. Then Lester Maddox appointed the first black to the GBI in the history of Georgia. Then Lester Maddox appointed the first black department head. The fellow used to play the accordion for the President of the United States, one of the department heads. Lester Maddox... outside of the metropolitan areas, a lot of trading was done at the farmers’ markets. That was always a white line. They would not let black people get in that line, and a black line. They never waited on the black folks until the white folks had been completely waited on. Lester Maddox integrated those lines. One line, first come, first served.

Hosea Williams: 02:27:22 Lester Maddox, that old racist, stopped state troopers from calling black folks niggers. He issued an executive order, he said, "I'd better not hear another state trooper call a black person a nigger." I could go on and on. But the greatest thing that Lester Maddox... Oh, he was the first governor in the history of Georgia to name a day after a black person, young black female down at Fort Battle State College had won several Olympic medals, and Lester Maddox named a day. But the greatest thing Lester did, because I can run on and on, he tells me sometimes, "Hosea, please don’t say nothing about me when you talking about me. You’re going to make me an integrationist before I die. I don’t want to be that." But when Lester Maddox took over, the two governors, Carl Sanders, and what was the other one?
Hosea Williams: 02:28:08 Vandiver. Vandiver was the governor when the food stamp program came into being. In four years, he got that food stamp program in eight counties. Then Vandiver came in.

Mel Steely: 02:28:23 Sanders.

Hosea Williams: 02:28:24 Sanders came in. When Sanders became governor, you had the food stamp program in eight counties. In four years, he catered to thirteen counties. When old Lester Maddox got in, he catered from thirteen to 147. He was the best friend. Lester talked that racist talk, but if you look at his record, he did more for black people, and that's why I tried to get, when I was in the state legislature, and Zell and some others fought me. Lester, one thing about old Lester Maddox, he's the only governor, he left the capital poorer than he was when he was first elected. All the rest of them left rich. Lester left there poor. He's the only one that I know stayed in politics eight years and got no support in the state of Georgia. And they say because he was governor four years, and it was lieutenant governor four years, therefore he didn't qualify.

Hosea Williams: 02:29:22 I tried to get a bill through the state legislature. He had served four years, as an exec, eight years, as executive, and is entitled to a picture. I got shut down, I got beat down. And Zell and those were the ones who really helped beat me down. But I'm trying, a Jewish friend of mine, an old Jew, and old Hosea, an old black guy, we are now organizing to give a fundraiser for Lester Maddox. He needs it, he needs it very, very bad. Lester is poverty-stricken, he's old, he's sick, he's dying. But Georgia owes, and particularly blacks in Georgia, and blacks in Atlanta, they owe Lester Maddox a hell of a lot.

Mel Steely: 02:30:06 Good. And if you had to fundraise and put my name on the list -

Hosea Williams: 02:30:10 Oh God, thank you. Thank you.

Mel Steely: 02:30:14 I want to come to do that.

Hosea Williams: 02:30:14 I want to tell you this joke here, it's the truth. Lester made Zell Miller. Zell Miller was a college professor up there at what school?

Mel Steely: 02:30:24 Young Harris.
Hosea Williams: 02:30:24 Yeah. Lester brought that young college professor in, and put him in the camp as Executive Director, Executive Assistant. And so, about three years ago, four years ago, Zell did give in and give a party for Lester at the mansion.

Mel Steely: 02:30:41 Yeah, I went out to that.

Hosea Williams: 02:30:42 You did go out there?

Mel Steely: 02:30:42 Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Hosea Williams: 02:30:43 Well, Zell called me, and I drove my car out to Peachtree Street, the limousine pick you up at Peachtree Street. And I got back to the mansion, and I didn't see nothing but white folks. And most of them, they was country white folks. Goddamn, that's old Hosea. Boy, goddamn, you're still a good-looking nigger. I said, "Jesus." I come to find out there was two blacks there, guess who the other blacks were? James Brown.

Mel Steely: 02:31:12 I saw him there.

Hosea Williams: 02:31:13 James Brown was up twisting on the stage and going over. So I went to Zell and I said, "Zell, why the hell would you invite me to a party like this?" He said, "Well I had to invite you, or Lester may not come." So, Lester has a lot of respect for me. I was supposed to take him to dinner just a few Sundays ago, but we are going to give, if anybody deserve, he's a man, Lester's a man. He has faith and confidence in himself. But I don't want to see him begging, so you and I and this Jewish friend of mine, we're coming together soon, and we're going to give a state-wide fundraiser for Lester Maddox.

Mel Steely: 02:31:52 We can probably get more people than that.

Hosea Williams: 02:31:53 I think so too.

Mel Steely: 02:31:54 Get involved in it. We'll do that. We need to get through this thing first, though. If you're going to look back and say, "I've looked at it all. I'm satisfied with some things I've done, some things I'm not," what would you change? What would you do different?

Hosea Williams: 02:32:11 Well you know, when Dr. King convinced us in 1967, the struggle, the true essence of the struggle was all about economics. I don't know why it took me so long, even after his death, to come to that point. I should have somewhat after his death faded from fighting racism, faded from fighting for blacks
to have equal this and equal that. And I should have spent my last twenty-five years on developing the economics of the black community. That's the great mistake I've made. And I ask God sometime, why did you allow me to stay for so long, fighting for this little thing, when the big picture was the development of the economics of the black community?

Hosea Williams: 02:33:15 We will never be free in America until we do that, until we maximize our business, our economic potential. Let me show you how sad we are. Atlanta, Georgia is looked upon truly as the Black Mecca. Atlanta, Georgia is looked upon one of the greatest cities in the world for black people. Now with all those black PhDs in Atlanta, all those black millionaires, we do not own a single grocery store. Now you've got to eat to live. You don't eat, you're going to die. Well we don't own a single grocery store. And all these nice clothes, I've got some nice clothes, we don't own a single clothing store. With all those PhDs, all those millionaires, all those master's degrees, you see.

Hosea Williams: 02:34:06 So we must, one of the things as I was coming up, Jews control the majority of the business in the black community. Jews. We kept fussing with the Jews, and fighting the Jews, and Jews finally just walked out. Blacks sat right around, and left the businesses there, until the Koreans came in, until the Indians came in. And I tell you, they are less sensitive to our needs than the Jews. But those Jews, they stuck together. I tell the story all the time. I had an old Jewish friend in Savannah, Georgia, and he and I was about as big of devils as Griffin and I used to be. We did a lot of devils. And one day we got in an argument. And that Jew told me, "Yeah, if I had to buy one weenie, I'd walk all across town to buy it from another Jew." And that is why the Jews were so progressive in this nation. They stuck together. It was not that they were against anybody. They wasn't against anybody. They were just for themselves.

Hosea Williams: 02:35:14 Blacks have to learn that, because ain't nobody going to free us but us, and nobody's talking about us. And I just hate to see even today, why did it not... Now right now, I'm deeply involved in the economic development of the black community. I'm deeply involved. And it goes much farther than just the grocery store, and just the clothing store. But why all of these years when I was much stronger, and to tell you the truth, much wiser, why didn't I contribute my being to development of the economics of the black community, than just fighting racism and developing integration?

Mel Steely: 02:35:53 Good question. You learned, but it's not too late. You're not that old.
Hosea Williams: 02:35:57 Well, it ain't too late, but it's sure getting late.

Mel Steely: 02:36:01 Is there a political future for Hosea Williams?

Hosea Williams: 02:36:04 Yes. Yes, definitely. There is a great political future for Hosea Williams. Making those elected do right, or get them defeated, and not sitting by and letting them rob people. Black politicians, I'm telling you, I've got evidence, they rob black folk worse than white people. My job, in which I have the influence, and I have the attention, I have the voice, I can get it out. Black politician that does not do right, let's get... I want to have some recourse right now to prove that we can have some recourse.

Hosea Williams: 02:36:39 Because these black politicians are getting into office, and their primary concern is that big white money. They're only out here doing something for poor whites and blacks when they have extra leisure time. But their primary being is to satisfy the super rich. I really got to become very active politically, and educate, and stimulate, and say, you must judge a person not by the color of their skin, but what they contribute to society. So I think I have the chance, particularly this [inaudible 02:37:15] here, of really making our government a true republic.

Mel Steely: 02:37:20 Well all right, that about covers everything I've got. Is there anything we've left out that you want to cover that I haven't been over?

Hosea Williams: 02:37:27 Well, I guess not, other than I would like to say this, that the greatest problem that faces our nation today, and it's indirectly affiliated with the economic deprivation, we can only save America by saving the family. As powerful as our nation is, it probably is militarily, we are crumbling, we are falling out, we have been destroyed internally, just like the Roman Empire was destroyed. During the height of the Roman Empire, there was no another single military army or military might in the world would challenge Rome. No military might. Rome caved in from within. Rome was destroyed. The Romans destroyed Rome. America's in that same gate today. There is no, you talk about China, or you talk about Russia, there is no military might in this world today that would confront America, yet still, America is being destroyed, is being destroyed from within, primarily due to the deterioration of the family.

Hosea Williams: 02:38:51 The only way we can save America is to save that family. And that's the thing I really want to work on nowadays, because these children, these young people, I can't believe how sinful, how corrupt, how criminal. Children are not born bad. It's something they learn. And you've got to understand that in
raising children, children cannot raise themselves. And even though the children are committing the crime and they're being punished, we've got to find some way to punish or bring it to the attention of these parents. I raised seven kids. I'll tell you this. As big a devil as I am, I don't have a single alcoholic, I don't have a single drug addict. My kids have finished school, got families doing well, and let me tell you why.

Hosea Williams: 02:39:38
I was a research scientist. My wife was a college professor. She got pregnant, she had the baby. A few months later, I got her pregnant again. Now one day, I just walked by that place where she'd leave our kids every day. And I looked over in the corner, and my two kids were beside one another. "Ahhhh! Ahhhh! Ahhhh!" And I thought about my young days when I had no mother or father. I could not work harder, I went back home, and I told my wife, "We are going out darling to have some fun tonight." Oh yeah, she's a beautiful woman, she got all dressed, and we went out, and we had a big steak and a few drinks. I said, "We are fixing to fight." "Oh darling, we're not going to fight. We're going to make love." I said, "No. We're fixing to fight." She said, "What you mean?" I said, "You've got to give up that job." "No! No, I'm not giving up my job." I said, "Now, listen. I'm a chemist, I'm a scientist, but I'm a hell of a waiter. I'll take a job at night waiting tables in this hotel." And she said, "No," and she got so divided.

Hosea Williams: 02:40:44
And within ninety days, she came to me one night, she said, "I've just been worried. I've been thinking about what you said, about my children." And she said... to tell you the truth, I had gotten her pregnant again. She didn't know it at the moment, but she said, "I will leave the job. You pay the bills." And I'm telling you, that woman came in that house, she started raising those children. One of the greatest and most [inaudible 02:41:15] things I can remember in my life. I'd be standing on the porch some evenings, all dressed up. And then my kids, "Hi, Daddy." They run back, "Hi, Daddy," and they grab that woman around them thighs, and she'd pat them on the head. And they're all trying to tell their problems. "Mama, Mama, Mama," and she'd take them to the side. It's the greatest thing that ever happened to my family.

Hosea Williams: 02:41:36
There was another family that I lived next to, it was a PhD and a doctor. They had two kids, and both of those kids ended up as drug addicts. Why? Because when those kids came home in the afternoon, wasn't nobody there. You've got to raise children. The greatest thing I want to work on today, and tell you the truth, I've been involved recently with this man Moon from Korea. He's been having some national conferences on this
subject. So I know in my neighborhood, I know the destruction of our neighborhood is our children. We are not raising our children. They're breaking down in that family. If we do not re-institute the value of the America family, America is certainly going the way of the Roman Empire.

Mel Steely: 02:42:21 Okay. All right, thank you very much.

Hosea Williams: 02:42:24 Thank you.

Mel Steely: 02:42:25 Thank you, sir. Okay. That was very good.

Hosea Williams: 02:42:31 Okay, you're going to send Terry a copy, right?

Mel Steely: 02:42:33 Yes, I will give you a copy of the tape, and I will send you a copy of the release form. You look it over, and have a place at the bottom for restrictions. But we've got a thing at the top of it, that's printed that says it's for academic use, and that sort of thing. And I'll give you a self-addressed envelope.

Hosea Williams: 02:42:48 Yeah, you give me your card, so we -