

PROTESTS, RALLIES, AND DEMONSTRATIONS
FREEDOM NOW! 1963 CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH, PART II

**Pacifica Radio Archives: “Protests, Rallies,
Demonstrations”**
(Funded by The Ford Foundation)

**Transcript of Freedom Now! Documentary of 1963 Civil
Rights March, Part II.**

Produced by from tape recordings made in Birmingham, Alabama, between May 11 and May 14, 1963. Contains actuality of the rally, riot, and the voices of Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Reverend Ralph Abernathy and Birmingham’s Mayor and Sheriff with demonstrators, organizers, and citizens of Birmingham. Produced by Chris Koch, Dale Minor, and Robert Kramer. Announcer is Dale Minor.

Broadcast on WBAI, 1963

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We appreciate your comments, additions and corrections. Please address them to: Brian DeShazor, Director, Pacifica Radio Archives, 3729 Cahuenga Blvd., West, North Hollywood, CA 91604. Phone: (800) 735-0230, e-mail: pacarchive@aol.com. Also contact Pacifica Radio Archives for information regarding audio CDs.

Transcript

**FREEDOM NOW! – DOCUMENTARY OF 1963 CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH IN
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA, PART II**

[SOUND: Crowd, Street, Demonstration]

DEMONSTRATOR [Female]: - This is (NAME - UNCLEAR) from Birmingham. And I just said, “we want our freedom.” We gonna get it one way or another. They’re gonna mess up right here in Birmingham. We gonna mess up too. We want freedom! I mean, we’re for freedom! I wanna know why did they blow up the house? Why did they blow up the house? We want freedom and we gonna get it! I mean it! And we gonna fight for it to remember. (UNCLEAR NAME), Birmingham, Alabama.

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DEMONSTRATOR [Male]: We've been suffering too long, we got to go. Know what I'm saying? (UNCLEAR) Tonight if necessary....

ANNOUNCER / DALE MINOR: Pacifica Radio presents, "Freedom Now! Part II"

[SOUND: Crowd, Whistles, Shouts – Continues behind narration]

DALE MINOR: At about twelve midnight, we received word that the home of Reverend A.D. King, brother of Martin Luther King, had been bombed. It was a ten-minute drive from the Gaston Motel in Insley, a suburb of Birmingham. By the time we arrived, a crowd of some one thousand Negroes had gathered at the scene of the bombing. Before we left, the number had doubled. As we approached the scene of the bombing, we were given a preview of the rage that was to fill the hours before dawn, litter the streets through its bricks, broken glass and damaged police cars and flash headlines around the world. A tire on a nearby patrol car was slashed.

[SOUND: Tire being slashed, Crowd]

DALE MINOR: Pardon me. Can you tell me what's going on?

MALE VOICE: - I think there was a bomb. Two bombs, I understand, exploded at, uh, Reverend King's -- Reverend King's house. Reverend A.D. King's house here.

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DALE MINOR: Was anyone hurt?

MALE VOICE 2: Martin Luther King's brother, that's who lives here.

MALE VOICE 1: There wasn't anyone hurt, I understand, but it damaged to the house all on the front because they made two shots to the house. (BACKGROUND NOISE, INDISCERNABLE VOICES SPEAKING) Well, you can get up in there – Come on – Go on up in here.

DALE MINOR: I entered the house by the side door. Glass and broken timbers were strewn about on the floor. Nearly every window in the building was broken. What remained at the front end was lit only by police flashlights. There was a large crater, five feet across and three feet deep, where the front porch once had been.

[SOUND: Footsteps, Voices, People going through the house]

DALE MINOR: We're inside the house now and it appears that the building has been damaged. (UNCLEAR) – forty percent of the way back.

MALE VOICE: Wait, wait. You can go out this way.

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DALE MINOR: Okay, thank you.

DALE MINOR: The living room is completely, absolutely demolished. (SINGING OUTSIDE THE HOUSE) Was anyone in the house at the time the explosion occurred? (SINGING GETS LOUDER)

MALE VOICE: The whole family.

DALE MINOR: The whole family was there.

MALE VOICE: The children – five children, a wife, and a husband. And the wife was sitting in here.

DALE MINOR: How in the world is it possible that no one was hurt?

MALE VOICE: Well, that's the reason why we are Christians. (SOUNDS OF PEOPLE GOING THROUGH THE RUBBLE) It's miraculous and I, I would just rather say that honor be to God because God is not gonna let nothing happen to his –

DALE MINOR: The entire front of the house is completely destroyed...the street...

MALE VOICE: It shook my house, like it did this house.

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DALE MINOR: What?

MALE VOICE: It shook my house just like it did this house here. I live right up the street there.

(BACKGROUND VOICE, "Reverend King, let's go.")

DALE MINOR: You heard the explosion?

MALE VOICE: Well, I was looking right at it and looking at the car when it passed by my door... [FADES UNDER OUTSIDE CROWD SOUND]

DALE MINOR: The crowd outside was large, and not a little angry. There were unruly elements in it. Slashing tires, hurling rocks at police vehicles and shouting insults at the few policemen on the scene. But, for the most part, it was controlled. Many of them sang. (SINGING IN BACKGROUND) But this was soon to change and, within minutes, Reverend King and his associates were struggling desperately to keep the angry crowd from turning into a rampaging mob. The incident that caused this change occurred just as I left the house and walked back out onto the lawn.

DALE MINOR: (CROWD SOUNDS) Another bomb has just exploded in the neighborhood. Reverend [A. D.] King called for volunteers to guard his church.

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REV. A. D. KING: "...Right now. Fifteen or twenty men. I want fifteen or twenty men to go guard First Baptist Church..."

[SOUND: Crowd, Police Whistles]

DALE MINOR: The report of the second bomb was so loud that those present thought it was only a few blocks away. Our error was soon corrected.

SPEAKER: (THROUGH MEGAPHONE) If Mr. [Artis Gibson – Sp?] is here, please go the motel immediately. Please go to the motel immediately (BACKGROUND VOICES – "It's at the motel. They got the motel. They bombed the motel...")

DALE MINOR: The crowd, by now two thousand strong, began to rage, and the local leaders of non-violence worked frantically to head off a *human* explosion. With tremendous effort, and a hairline margin, they succeeded.

SPEAKER: Everybody listen to me! Everybody listen to me! (BACKGROUND VOICES) Listen for a minute.

SPEAKER (THROUGH MEGAPHONE): Let's have it quiet, please. Let's have it quiet please. (UNCLEAR) (SIRENS) Some of you are reacting with violence. You are not a non-violent crowd. This is Reverend James Bacon [Sp?]. You are defeating everything that we have done up to this point and the...(SIRENS, CACOPHONY OF VOICES)

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(OVERLAPPING BACKGROUND VOICES: “Watch your head. Get back up here...”)

DALE MINOR: In the largely middle-class Negro suburb of Insley, violence was averted. Downtown, however, in the vicinity of the Gaston Motel, the inhabitants of Fourth Avenue bars, pool halls, and flop houses. Uneducated, usually unemployed, socially disinherited, disowned by all and responsible to none, went wild. By the time we arrived back at the motel, rioting had already littered the streets in that area and sent five policemen to the hospital, one with a serious knife wound.

DALE MINOR: (ON SCENE) Explosions shattered the window of a grocery store across the street from the motel, in front of which we are standing now. The whole plate glass window dropped. (SHOUTS IN THE BACKGROUND)

Isaac Reynolds, Field Secretary for the Congress of Racial Equality was at the motel when the bomb exploded.

ISAAC REYNOLDS: Well, I was laying in my bed watching television, about ten minutes to twelve. I heard a *tremendous* explosion, and all my glasses on my dresser was knocked off. I was thrown out of my *bed*, uh, it threw my door open, which was locked at the time. I got up and came out and I found that, uh, the lobby of the motel cloudy with smoke and I went in to assist the people. Now, I believe the, uh, mother of the manager was in the room asleep, and it must have been God’s help that she *lived* through

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it. There's the hole in the wall there. Her door was blown off. The wall in the room was completely destroyed, and yet she only had plaster marks and powder burns on her. And she appears to be around seventy-five, eighty years old.

DALE MINOR: Was she the only one who was injured?

ISAAC REYNOLDS: Well, she was the only one that was injured during the explosion. Uh, the uh, people here got pretty excited and several policemen have been injured by the crowd.

DALE MINOR: How many?

ISAAC REYNOLDS: I don't know. I've seen four or five carried away.

DALE MINOR: In the four-block area surrounding the Gaston Motel, the nightmare that began with the first bombing continued to rage. More policemen were injured. A White cab driver was pulled from his cab, beaten, stabbed and his cab burned. The expected *flood* of violence miraculously, never broke -- but eddies and currents of it swirled through the streets.

UNKNOWN MALE VOICE: ...They were berserk. They crazy down there. Fools they got no sense.

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UNKNOWN FEMALE VOICE: Who's gone berserk? The police officers –

DALE MINOR: And, in the middle of the terror, in a parking lot adjoining the motel, occurred one of the most memorable events of the night. A small group of Negro ministers, among them the Reverend A.D. King, in an attempt to arrest the situation, which seemed to be rapidly approaching the point of no return, held an impromptu service.

A.D. KING: God is always on the side of right.

CROWD RESPONSE: Yeah!

A.D. KING: Whoever it was who threw those bombs tonight, God knows their names. He knows their address. (CROWD RESPONSE) "He knows the side of the bed that they sleep on." (CROWD RESPONSE) One thing about it, they are mistreating *us*. (CROWD RESPONSE, "Yeah!") If we would go and throw bombs, if we would throw bricks, if we would be violent, if we would do wrong and they have done wrong, we would have to pay for our wrongdoing. (CROWD: "That's right! That's all!) But God is going to pay them (CROWD: "Oh, yeah!" "Hmm mmm.") for what they have done to us. And God said it's better for anybody to be planted in the depths of the sea with the millstone around his neck, than to harm one of these, the least of my children (CROWD RESPONSE), and whenever God pays a man for doing wrong (CROWD: "Go on, Brother!"), he will pay. (CROWD: "That's right!")

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A.D. KING: “ ...And adorn thy head” ...Those who have on hats, please put off your hats, extinguish your cigarettes, (BACKGROUND, “Oh, yeah, yeah”) and let us pray to Him who has brought us safe thus far. (CROWD: “Oh, yes.”) Almighty God, who is the Light, the Truth, the Way. We come at this hour (CROWD: “Oh, yes!”), mindful of the kind of world in which we live. Oh, God, we pray that thou wouldst give us at this hour the Spirit of Patience. (CROWD: “Yes, yes.”) Give us the Spirit of Love. (CROWD: “Yes, yes.”) Give us the Spirit of Understanding. (CROWD: “Oh, yes.”) How much have we prayed? (CROWD: “Yeah.”) Take charge of our lives and bless this city in which we live. (SIRENS IN BACKGROUND, VOICES RESPONDING, “Yes, yes.”) And bless our rulers tonight. Make them be *mindful* of the responsibility that they have *this* night. Bless our Governor and bless our nation. In Jesus’ name, we pray. Amen. Let us sing together, (BEGINS TO SING) “We shall overcome.” (CROWD BEGINS TO SING): “ We shall overcome. We shall overcome. We shall overcome someday. Oh, deep in my heart. I do believe. We shall overcome someday...”

[CROSS FADE WITH STREET SOUNDS]

DALE MINOR: One incident followed another with bewildering rapidity. A store one block from the motel owned by a White man was set afire. The fire threatened to engulf three adjoining Negro homes. Here, too, the ministers struggled to stem the spreading violence and prevent what they could. The crowds eddying in the street would not let the

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fire engines in to fight the fire. You hear the Reverend A.D. King pleading with the crowd to stay away from the fire and let the firemen in.

REV. A.D. KING: (THROUGH MEGAPHONE) “Please do not come back in this area. Please stay over in that direction. Please. Try to stay over in that direction. Please...”

(INAUDIBLE)

DALE MINOR: Their pleading finally bore fruit, and hoses began to pour water into the flaming hulks of what once had been home.

(SIRENS)

DALE MINOR: Back in the begrimed office of the Gaston Motel, while reporters and bystanders milled and talked excitedly, Perry Francois of the San Francisco Chapter of the NAACP, called Washington and spoke with Assistant Presidential Press Secretary Andrew Hatcher, suggesting immediate federal intervention as the only means of averting a bloodbath of epic proportions.

PERRY FRANCOIS: ...mad as hell. I just left a meeting with (UNCLEAR) where they asked him to praise, trust in God, and go home and we'll sing together and we'll all join hands and we go home. And they went home. Well, how do you think they're going to take this crap? The Ku Kluxes are meeting here and, look, the Administration has got to do something, Andy, and do it right away. You better call the White House and, uh, urge them to do something, *tonight*.

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DALE MINOR: (BACKGROUND CROWD NOISE – “Everybody leave.”) Just as the rage, which had flamed through this quarter of the Negro community seemed to be receding, just as the crowd slowly, reluctantly began to break up and drift off, another incident occurred which offered yet another argument for Federal intervention.

(MEGAPHONE SPEAKER ANNOUNCEMENTS INDISCERNIBLE)

Platoons of State troopers arrived on the scene with automatic carbines, bayonets and double-barrel shotguns, and the wire of fear and hatred -- slackening now, as the crisis ends, stretched again to the breaking point. For most Negroes in Birmingham are convinced that there is only *one* qualification for a job on the Alabama Highway Patrol, and that is hatred of Negroes.

DALE MINOR: (CROWD SHOUTS, CHAOTIC SOUNDS) From a large number of policemen, militiamen, or whatever, with clubs, rifles, carbines, (CROWD JEERS, CHEERS, HOLLERING) – that’s what the Bronx cheer is for. (WHISTLES, SHOUTS))

After the crowds had broken up, the troopers sealed off the Gaston Motel, turning it into a virtual prison for those inside. They formed a skirmish line in the streets in front of the motel, and then they did a strange thing. Some fifteen or twenty of them, a veritable raiding party, entered the courtyard at a run. In the courtyard were some twenty or twenty-five people, whom they drove toward the parking lot off to the side. One of those people, Mrs. Wyatt T. Walker, wife of Martin Luther King’s Chief Aid in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, headed instead, for her room.

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DALE MINOR [ON THE SCENE]: Well, what the Ku Klux Klan has not succeeded in doing, the Birmingham police are just about to succeed. The Reverend Wyatt T. Walker's wife has been struck in the head with a rifle butt and knocked to the ground because she didn't move fast enough. The Police have now formed a skirmish line outside the front of the motel -- we're inside, a squad of ten or twelve men with double-barrel shotguns.

DALE MINOR [AS ANNOUNCER]: This reporter trying to get outside and see and record what was happening was rushed by three policemen, thumped hard on the chest and told to get back in and...

MALE VOICE: Clear the door, clear the door.

MALE VOICE: It's clear.

MALE VOICE 2: Inside, close the door.

DALE MINOR [ON THE SCENE]: Again, the troopers sent a raiding party into the courtyard.

MALE VOICE: That's right, people (UNCLEAR) control.

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DALE MINOR [ON THE SCENE]: Now, the police, or whatever they are, after having sent their little combat patrol inside the court are moving back out. No, they're going back in. They're chasing somebody back behind the other building. There they go!

DALE MINOR [AS NARRATOR]: For awhile, after the clubbing of Mrs. Walker, those held inside the motel office with this reporter, shared the terrifying feeling that the state troopers had gone as berserk as the rampaging Negroes before their arrival. Dawn finally broke on the end of a nightmare. By five o'clock, all was quiet and, by six, those who wished, were allowed to leave the area.

[SOUND CROSS FADES WITH SINGING AT CHURCH MEETING]

DALE MINOR: A mass meeting held in the First Pilgrim Baptist Church Sunday afternoon.

(SINGING: "I need somebody – help me, Jesus. I want somebody help me, Jesus. Reach out... I want you to lift him higher..." -- APPLAUSE AND CHEERS)

DALE MINOR: The Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

RALPH ABERNATHY: Mister Governor Wallace has moved with his State men.

(CROWD RESPONSE), but thanks be to God, there's one Higher than he.

(APPLAUSE) En route here from the airport, I listened to the White House in

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Washington, D.C., and President Kennedy said that State troopers were on their way.

(SUSTAINED APPLAUSE, SHOUTS AND CHEERS)

ABERNATHY: And – and not only – not only did he say that, but he said that he had authorized Defense Secretary McNamara to make the necessary – to take the necessary steps, so if it became possible that the National Guard here in Alabama would be federalized. (SHOUTS AND CHEERS)

DALE MINOR: Washington, Monday, May 13, The New York Times: “President Kennedy last night dispatched federal troops to bases near Birmingham, Alabama, for use if racial violence breaks out again. His action followed three hours of rioting early this morning in which fifty persons were injured. The rioting erupted after two buildings were bombed. The President also ordered all necessary, preliminary steps to be taken to call the Alabama National Guard into federal service. The actual call can then be accomplished in minutes if the President decides it is needed.

DALE MINOR: In his Monday afternoon press conference, Mayor Hanes had some rather bitter comments to make on the President’s action.

MAYOR HANES: You got bayonet brotherhood, gentlemen. They gonna tell the people of Birmingham, ‘You’ll love this nigger at the point of a bayonet, whether you want to or not.’ They gonna say ‘You associate with him whether you want to or not,’ and they gonna put a bayonet to the people’s back and say give half of what you’ve got to the

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Negro.’ Gentlemen, this is Socialism of the rankest sort and these troops are standing by as a bludgeon and as a threat to the good decent American people of Birmingham, Alabama to tell them, “If you don’t do our will, then, gentlemen, we’re gonna come in and force you to.” Now, let me tell you something else. During the height of these things, I have seen a backing down on the part of our Police Chief and the County Sheriff. I somehow think perhaps they’ve been in concert with these appeals. I’ve seen them back down and I don’t care whose mob it is. You back down, you’re whipped and, uh, I told the Governor it was a good thing that Colonel Al Lingo [Sp?] and that fine Highway Patrol came in here, because I firmly believe that that mob of wild Negroes Saturday night would have sacked and burned Birmingham had it not been for the presence of Colonel Al Lingo [Sp?] and the State Highway Patrol. You see, the Negroes, for forty days have pushed us around. Now, when they see that the people of Birmingham determined not to take any more of this radical, mob business and we have some reinforcements in here, now they want to send the federal troops in here. Now you don’t think when these Negroes were running wild and running the White people off the streets of Birmingham, that the President [John F. Kennedy] and the Attorney General [Robert Kennedy] would have thought of sending in the troops to protect the white people. Now that they see we’ve had enough, and might gonna hold the line, then he wants to send the federal troops in here to protect the niggers.

REPORTER: Mayor Hanes, would you address yourself to these bombings?

(UNCLEAR)

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MAYOR HANES: I'll address myself to the bombings. Of course, we have no idea who has done it. We've got strong reason to believe (and I think the FBI would bear this out), these are not just bombings in the past that's been occurring in Birmingham. We know it was done, we feel reasonably sure, was done by King and his crowd and the Communists, uh, to stir up trouble. You see, King and that mob, uh, can't, uh, stay in business if everything is peace – peaceful and calm and there is tranquility. If there are no incidents for them to attach themselves to, to appeal to the people of the country to donate and hold rallies in Madison Square Garden and here, there, and everywhere to raise funds, then they have to create something, you see. Now, you know I've sent the Attorney General a telegram asking him to investigate this Martin Luther King, this revolutionary, his associations and his associates in the past. I've sent a copy of that telegram to, uh, uh, Francis Walter, the Honorable Francis Walter, Chairman of the House Committee on Un-American Activity and to, uh, - I sent it to Senator McClellan, but it should have gone to Senator Eastland of the Senate Sub-Committee, that's investigated these things, and called for a full and thorough investigation and, uh, let's find out and reveal the facts. Now, uh, why should a person of this caliber be allowed to come into a city and tear it up. But, I assure you, that this Committee, this Legislative Committee, we investigate this thing and they will make their reports known, just as the Committee has in Mississippi.

MAYOR HANES: I'm gonna tell you, gentlemen, right here, as far as I'm concerned, in Alabama – Birmingham, Alabama can be a firm stand for the rights of people locally to determine their affairs. Now, your federal government is coming to Birmingham and told us how to run our parks, gonna tell us how to run our schools, how to run our transit

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system, what qualifications to place on (UNCLEAR) and, under due arrest and pressure, told (UNCLEAR) who to hire and who not to hire. All of this time, tread on constitutionality, contrary to precedent, contrary to tradition. Now, we've only got one thing left right here in Birmingham now. People will stop and think about it, that they can do and determine and that's to go to church of their choice. But let me tell you, that's being worked on right now, with all your kneel-ins, lie-ins, uh, join-ins, and all this, uh, silly hokum. That's about all, if you stop to think about it. Now, they can come in and say, "You've all got to move to the same church," and I think I know which church that'd be. And then, after that, they're gonna assign everybody a job and they might as well divide this country into six or eight federal districts with a federally-appointed Administrator over 'em and be done with it.

ANNOUNCER: Four hours before Mayor Hanes' press conference, the Reverends King and Abernathy began a walk intended to make the rounds of the local Negro pool halls.

DALE MINOR: The procession is now proceeding up Seventeenth Street. Dr. King and Dr. Abernathy in the lead and we're now entering – (BACKGROUND VOICES) a pool hall.

FEMALE VOICE: No, I think we're just going in the Pool Room. I'm not really sure where we're going. I think it's a poolroom. (BACKGROUND NOISES)

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DALE MINOR: We are descending a flight of stairs into the basement and we're now in a colored pool hall.

BERNARD LEE: May I have your attention, please. Could I ask you to turn your radio down back there. (MUSIC PLAYS IN THE BACKGROUND) All right, uh, I'm Bernard Lee, one of Dr. King's aides and, of course, all of you know what happened Saturday night and we were very much concerned. You saw some of us out in the street trying to keep the crowd down and, uh, stop the *confusion* that was going on. So, uh, Dr. King and Reverend Abernathy felt it very necessary to talk to you. Some of you were out there and, uh, this is the reason *why* he is here. Now, Reverend Abernathy, whom many of you know, uh, who has lived in Montgomery, Alabama, and is now, uh, living in Atlanta, Georgia, will speak to you. He is an official of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and, uh, he has been *here* in Birmingham working with Dr. King on this situation, and he will speak to you at this time. Reverend Ralph Abernathy.

RALPH ABERNATHY: Thank you very kindly, Mr. Lee. The first thing I want to say, uh, to you, uh, is that we are involved in a struggle for *freedom*, and we don't want *anybody* to get the impression that we are cowards because we don't need any cowards in our band. In fact, we do not *want* any cowards in our band. We intend to march on, and to struggle on until freedom is won. [Bystander: "Amen."] We are not going to New York City to find freedom. We are not going to Los Angeles, California, to find freedom, but we are *determined* to find freedom right *here* in Birmingham, Alabama. Now, we

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know that the time has come for that freedom. A few days ago, all of us paid our income taxes. Isn't that right?

CROWD RESPONSE: That's right!

RALPH ABERNATHY: And nobody told us to *wait*, that the time has not come for Negroes to pay their taxes. We pay automobile taxes. We pay taxes on food, sales taxes, and other commodities that we pay the *same* taxes that our White brothers pay. So we are determined to gain our freedom, but Governor Wallace is not our leader. Isn't that right?

CROWD RESPONSE: That's right. Right.

REV. ABERNATHY: Bull Connor is not our leader.

ENTHUSIASTIC LOUDER CROWD RESPONSE: That's right!

REV. ABERNATHY: Governor Wallace says that he was elected to be the Governor of *all* the people of the State of Alabama, but we know that this is a lie.

CROWD: Right, right, right!

REV. ABERNATHY: Because he practices segregation and discrimination.

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CROWD: That's right!

REV. ABERNATHY: In *every* Movement, you must have a leader. Isn't that right?

CROWD: Yeah, right!

REV. ABERNATHY: And the people must be willing to *follow* the leader.

CROWD: Right!

REV. ABERNATHY: Now, do you know who our leader is?

CROWD: Yeah!

REV. ABERNATHY: God sent Martin Luther King...

CROWD: That's right!

REV. ABERNATHY: ...to lead *us*.

CROWD: Yeah, that's right.

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REV. ABERNATHY: Now, we will have to *follow* the leader. Whatever he tells us to do, we must be willing to do it. Are you willing to do *whatever* the leader tells you?

CROWD: Yes!

REV. ABERNATHY: Then let us now hear the leader, Martin Luther King. Give him a big hand. (APPLAUSE)

REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. (MLK): Thank you very kindly, my dear friends and co-workers in this struggle for freedom here in Birmingham, Alabama. We want to thank you for taking time out of your pool games to allow us to say these few words to you. Now, as has been said, we are engaged in a *great* struggle, a *mighty* struggle for freedom and human dignity. And, as you know, after several days of demonstrations, in a non-violent, *peaceful* manner, we came to an agreement with the business and industrial leaders of this community. They've made certain specific agreements in employment, and in integrating the facilities in *all* of these stores, as well as some other things. And then came Saturday night, when the people who *bombed* the motel, and the parsonage of my brother, Reverend A.D. King, *revealed* that they are trying to sabotage all that we are trying to do. These bombings were carried out by people who don't believe in freedom; who don't believe in democracy, and who don't believe in integration. And they feel that they can sabotage this whole thing by bombing homes and businesses, and by keeping terror alive in this community.

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MLK: But we must make two things clear. First, we're not gonna stop in our righteous struggle to gain freedom here in Birmingham, Alabama.

VOICES: That's right. Yes.

MLK: We must also make it clear that we don't like it about these bombings and that something should be done about it. In the last five years, *twenty* unsolved bombings have taken place at Negro churches and homes in Birmingham, more than any city in the United States. Now, we've got to say that we don't like this and we want something done about it.

VOICE: That's right.

MLK: And I've made that very clear to the Attorney General – Attorney General Kennedy, yesterday, and to other officials who have the machinery to do something about it. Now, *we* must do something in order to make it clear to this nation that we are gonna win our freedom in a peaceful, non-violent manner. Now, as you know, on Saturday night, after the bombings, we did have a temporary reign of terror. Now, I can well understand how impatient we are. I can well understand how these dread and deep-seated resentments well up in our souls. I can well understand how we are often driven to the brink of bitterness, and even despair, because of the way we are treated by policemen and highway patrolmen, and the way we are bombed and our children are exploited and we are exploited. I can understand how we feel, but *we* must make it clear that it is

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possible to stand up against *all* of these evils and injustices without fighting back with violence. Now, *I* believe in non-violence as a *creed*. In other words, I believe that violence is immoral, but I go beyond that, and I hope *you* will see this. That not only is violence immoral in our struggle, but it is *impractical*. We can't *win* with violence. We make a *much* greater moral impact when we are the recipients of violence, rather than the inflictors. That is, when we are willing to *receive* violence, if necessary, but we do not inflict it on anybody else. Now, we must not beat up any policemen, as *brutal* as they may be. We must not burn down any stores. We must not stab anybody. For we have a greater weapon than all of this. We have the power of our souls, the power of our standing up together, and this *amazing* unity and this soul force is the thing...are the things that will free us in this day. Now, non-violence has power. We saw it work in Montgomery, Alabama, where we struggled for three hundred and eighty-one days and I am glad to report that we didn't have a *single* Negro retaliating with violence. We had a much worse night than Saturday night. When our busses were integrated, they bombed in one night, four churches and two homes because the busses were integrated. We didn't fight back. But I'm here to tell you that the busses are still integrated in Montgomery, Alabama and the bombs didn't stop it. And I'm saying to you that the bombings of the violent ones can't stop us, but if *we* will follow non-violence, we will be able not only to win freedom in Birmingham, but to give to the nation, and the world, a beautiful example of individuals being *true* to non-violence. For we are Christians, and we believe with our Christ that turning the other cheek can be a powerful force. We believe with our Christ, that it is often necessary, as he said to Peter, to put up the sword. We believe with our Christ that *love* is the most durable power in all the world. Now, Mr. Connor, is happy

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when we use violence. They know how to handle violence, but they can't quite handle nonviolent people, they don't know what to do. If they try to beat you, you learn how to accept it without retaliating. If they don't beat you fine, if they don't put you in jail, wonderful. If they put you in jail, we go into these jails, and transform them from dungeons of shame to havens of freedom and human dignity, even if they try to kill us. We've developed a quiet courage of *dying*, if necessary, without killing and they just don't know how to handle this. It leaves them frustrated. It *disarms* them. It weakens their, their morale. It exposes their moral defenses and, at the same time, it works on their conscience. So tell everybody – your friends and your neighbors and your relatives – that this is a *non-violent* movement and that, even if they bomb some more houses or businesses, that we are going to *still* stand up for our freedom and yet we're not going to use violence. Let us not become so angry that we lose our heads. Let *nobody* put us so low as to make us hate them, or as to make us use violence. Let us go out on the *wings* of non-violence and, through this way, we will be able to land in this great City of Freedom. God bless you and thank you for this wonderful opportunity. (APPLAUSE)

REV. ABERNATHY: Those of you who are going to be non-violent and follow the advice of our leader, we will not fight back, who will not throw any bombs, who will not throw any bricks, who will not use any knives, cut any tires or do anything in the form of retaliatory violence, let me hear you say, "Aye." (CROWD: "Aye") Let's sing our great song,"We Shall Overcome." (THEY SING: "We shall overcome, we shall overcome. We shall overcome someday...Oh, deep in my heart, I do believe...")

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DALE MINOR: The second poolroom meeting mirrored the first. (SINGING CONTINUES IN BACKGROUND) (CROSS FADES WITH STREET SOUNDS)

DALE MINOR: We are now proceeding down Fourth Avenue, the Tenderloin area of the Negro section of Birmingham, and we are now entering another pool hall. (STREET SOUNDS, BACKGROUND VOICES AND FOOTSTEPS OF GROUP MARCHING)

This one seems to appeal to an older group of people than the last one we went into. (SOUNDS OF POOL HALL INTERIOR)

SPEAKER: May I have your attention for just one minute. Could you fellows hold it up there at the front table for just a minute?

REV. ABERNATHY: ...”do nothing in any kind of way that will mar the beauty of our nonviolent Movement. I want you to say it from the bottom of your stomach, “Aye!”

CROWD RESPONSE: Aye!

REV. ABERNATHY: Now let us sing, “We Shall Overcome Someday,” for this is the theme song of our Movement and it must be sung in every poolroom and every tavern, in every church – whether it’s Episcopal, Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian – throughout the South. We sing it in the jails, wherever we go, and we must let them know all over the *world* that the Negro is gonna overcome. Come on! (THEY SING, “We Shall Overcome,”) Let’s lock hands! Lock hands with the Reporter. (THEY CONTINUE TO

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SING)

DALE MINOR: Following that meeting, however, as Reverend King and his group attempted to proceed down Sixteenth Street to visit more pool halls; police turned them back.

DALE MINOR: (SOUNDS OF CROWD, STREET NOISES IN BACKGROUND) We are leaving the pool hall at 1718 Fourth Avenue now. The crowd that once was rather small has grown to quite a sizeable one. The group has now been stopped at the corner of Fourth Avenue and ...teenth Street by policemen who insist that the group go back in the direction that it came. There are a group of policemen who have collected at the corner now, and are marching up the street behind the group. Some of them are crossing to the other side, others are continuing up this side, pushing the crowds ahead. You hear the police radios in the street on police motorcycles.

POLICE VOICES: Keep your camera going, I want to get pictures of them... We were going to get into the main the ones that, uh, are larger and that's one of the organizer...(INDISCERNIBLE TALK)

DALE MINOR: What did the Captain tell you? I didn't hear all of it.

MARCHER: Well, he, uh, I, I explained to him that we were not, uh, trying to have a march or demonstration of this type and that, uh, we were merely trying to explain to the

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people that we could, you know, in a very nice way, that we could get along without the rocks and the bottles and that they would help us a great deal. And he said that he understood this and that he had called into headquarters already and told them to disregard it – that, uh, he had thought we were turning back for the motel, which we were. We decided that, since there was such a *large* gathering, we'd be better to come back to the motel.

DALE MINOR: Do you think, uh, perhaps the fact that, uh, the ... police turning the group back, might, uh, anger some of those people down there?

MALE VOICE (MARCHER): Yes, uh, you see – Yes, you see, the State troopers they, you know – well, you saw them run in their car, and they'd pull out a club, you know. It's, like, they told us to go back.

DALE MINOR: Those were State troopers?

MALE VOICE (MARCHER): Oh, yes.

MALE VOICE2 (MARCHER): Who stopped us on the corner were State troopers.

MALE VOICE (MARCHER): See? So, uh, if we had pressed forward, well, you see, that would have possibly been a holocaust right there on the corner, which would have been absolutely unnecessary, and all uncalled for.

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DALE MINOR: Violence, poverty, bloodshed, and oppression have long been the daily bread of Black Birmingham and brutality today has deep and well-entangled roots in that Alabama steel town. However, it is probably not insignificant that, in the present range of opinion, Mayor Hanes is the pessimist, and attorney Charles Morgan, the man who envisions a decent future. [CHARLES MORGAN, ACLU ATTORNEY INTERVIEWED IN NEW YORK CITY]

DALE MINOR: What do you – What do you think the near future’s going to bring for Birmingham, in particular, and other places in the South, in general?

CHARLES MORGAN: Well, the near future for Birmingham could be tomorrow and I never predict tomorrow in Birmingham because things happen rather fast there – rapidly there. But, I think the South, and this – I think the South will solve its problem. I hope that people here do, and in Washington do. I think that there’s a – and I’ve said this before and I’m gonna say it again – When Gregory Peck played the role of Atticus in “To Kill A Mockingbird,” – I think this is a – “To Kill A Mockingbird,” is a good example of the South. Peck said on radio, and I heard him – This is before he got the Academy Award, and I know he enjoyed the role after he got it, but this was even before – and he said that he enjoyed playing the role of Atticus more than any other role. He said the reason he did was because he felt like he was playing the role of somebody who really existed. And then he said this. He says, “You know,” he says, “I’m quite certain that all across the South, there are millions upon millions of White people who, like Atticus,

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have a sense of fairness and a sense of justice. They're never called on to do anything. They live lives just everyone else, but when they are, they can, and they will produce." I, I think that – It would be very difficult, for instance, for a person like me – why, you see, from the time you're a child, you, uh, you grow up with a Negro in the house.

DALE MINOR: Uh huh.

CHARLES MORGAN: It's, uh, it's been a paternalistic sort of relationship, but it's still a relationship.

DALE MINOR: Uh huh.

CHARLES MORGAN: It is *a* relationship, even if paternalistic. Now, those days are dead. Those things are gone. They ought to be gone, but, at the same time, the relationship's still there. Nobody, uh, nobody hates their own maid. Nobody hates their own yardman. Nobody really hates anybody they know. White people in the South don't know Negro lawyers. The Negro doctors, during the, uh, demonstrations, run an advertisement in the paper and there were forty or fifty doctors and dentists. And the important thing of the advertisement was not that they backed the demonstrations. That was important as far as the Negro community was concerned, but for the White community, it let them know that there were forty or fifty doctors in town. They don't know this. But, you see, as long as people don't know people, then they can't get along.

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CHARLES MORGAN: All across the South, all across the world, if people do know each other, and from the frame of reference of their own life, they can put themselves in the other man's shoes *just* a little bit – you can't do that unless you know somebody. I think that once the South's – Once Negroes are registered to vote, the barriers will break down much more rapidly because that's *power*. And we can demonstrate about a lunch counter all the time. Now Jeremiah X, who is a Muslim, had a pretty good quote in The New York Times, that he made in Birmingham.

(STREET SOUND)

JEREMIAH X: It's something that doesn't amount to anything to be able to sit down at a lunch counter and eat a hot dog with a white man. What we want is, is the lunch counter and, uh, the store that the counter is in and the *land* that the store is on. This is what we advocate. We, we're tired of being for *handouts*, you know, and a chance to use the White man's facilities. We want something of our *own*. We want the, the back pay that the White man owes to the Black man. This is what we want today.

INTERVIEWER: How are you going to collect that pay? In what terms?

JEREMIAH X: Well, that's a good question. Whenever President Kennedy and his little brother [Robert F. Kennedy, U.S. Attorney General] decide to give us something, then we'll accept.

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CHARLES MORGAN: He's not gonna get it that way. He'll get it by voting. He'll get that thing by equality of opportunity that he hasn't had.

DALE MINOR: Hmm mmm.

CHARLES MORGAN: But the way he's gonna get this is through Court cases; of course, through demonstrations, which bolster the community. The principal thing Negro demonstrations do is not for the White people. It's the Negroes. There's a poem by a fellow named Oppenheim – I can't repeat it, but it's very short and it's called, *The Slave*. [HE PARAPHRASES] “They struck the chains from the slave and he remained a slave to sloth and indolence and ignorance. He was chained to servility. When they strike the chains from a free man. He's free, but then, that's never necessary, for the free man strikes the chains from himself.”

DALE MINOR: Hmm mmm.

CHARLES MORGAN: *That's* the importance of the demonstrations.

(SOUNDS OF MEETING)

REV. MARTIN LUTHER KING: It's tragic, indeed, that these haters of democracy will bomb the Gaston Motel and... (FADES UNDER) –

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DALE MINOR: Dr. Martin Luther King...

MLK: ...Room 30, where Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King were residing.

(CROWD RESPONSE). These persons were seeking to *assassinate* us. They feel that they can block this *Movement* and this on-going struggle for freedom, with bombs. But it can't be done that way, for we are on the move. (CROWD RESPONSE: "Amen!")

Dogs can't stop us. (CROWD: "No, sir!") State troopers can't stop us. (CROWD: "No!") Tanks can't stop us. (CROWD RESPONSE) Powerful water hoses can't stop us and bombs can't stop us. (CROWD: "Amen!") For we are on the *way* to the Land of Freedom. And so we have a legitimate right to be *disturbed* and to be *resentful* and to have righteous indignation concerning what happened on Saturday night in these bombings. And they've got to *stop*. And I'm gonna tell you this. They can be found, the people who did it. (APPLAUSE)

MLK: I remember a few years ago, a young man who wanted to make some money, put a *bomb* in a suitcase on an airplane. You remember that? (CROWD "I remember that") It was a complicated, intricate situation, but do you know that our government through the FBI, had the *machinery* to go through the intricate details and find out – found – they found out who bombed that plane. Now, if they can find *that* out, they can find out who's bombing these places out in Birmingham, Alabama. (APPLAUSE AND CHEERS)

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MLK: But now, let me give you the *other* side. We've got to be calm. (VOICE IN THE

CROWD: "Amen!") We've got to maintain our *commitment* to non-violence.

(CROWD: "Yes.") I'm giving you some difficult advice now. It's difficult to stand up

amidst the things that you faced here in Birmingham, across the years, and be true to

creative non-violence. Let *nobody* pull you so low as to make you hate them. Let

nobody pull you so low as to make you use *violence* against them. It may be necessary

for the streets of Birmingham to *flow* a little more, with a little blood before we achieve

our freedom. But I give you this difficult advice. Let it be *our* blood and not the blood of

our White brothers. (CROWD RESPONDS WITH CHEERS AND APPLAUSE, "Right

on!")

MLK: We can do this. We, like Jesus Christ, will *redeem* this social situation. By

bearing this cross, we will transform a dark Good Friday into a bright Easter morning.

Let me tell you another thing. All of the White people in Birmingham are not bad

people. All of the White people in Birmingham are not against what we are fighting for.

(APPLAUSE) And I'm sorry, but I will never teach any of you to *hate* White people.

This is not the meaning of our Movement. I'm teaching you to love those who *hate* us,

and love those who *love* us. Love *everybody*, because God said, "love them!!"

(APPLAUSE)

MLK: Now, to show you that all White people are not against us, and that some of them

are ashamed about what's happening. One of the wealthy White men of this community

called us this morning, and said, "I don't know the cost, but whatever it will cost to

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rebuild the home of Rev. A.D. King, I want to pay every penny of it.” (APPLAUSE AND CHEERS)

UNKNOWN MAN (OFF-MIC / TO: DALE MINOR): “ ... I just confirmed this, with this man, I confirmed this...was shot by a group of unidentified White men, and was now taken to the hospital” (DALE MINOR: “uh huh”)

MLK: The only thing that I can say to you tonight is keep your head high and keep on moving for freedom. We aren't going to stop. These shootings aren't going to stop us; these bombings aren't going to stop us; these bombings aren't going to stop us; and let us go on. But I can say to you tonight, not long – Go back with me, if you will, to the sands of Egypt. See God's children *struggling* to get out of the *hands* of an oppressive Pharaoh. Not long after that, watch the Red Seas, as they began to roll back; watch God's children as they walk safely to the other side --How long? Not long! Go back with me to the scene on Calvary. (CROWD: “Oh, yeah!”) There you will see Christ on a cross and Caesar in a palace. But not long after that, that same Christ rises up to split history into A.D. and B.C. So that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name -- How long? Not long! I can say to you tonight, as we sing in our song, “We Shall Overcome.” (RESPONSE: Yeah!) “ We shall overcome. Deep in my heart, I do believe. We shall overcome.” Before the victory is won, some may have to get scarred up a bit, but we shall overcome. Before the victory is won, some may lose a job, but we shall overcome. (CROWD RESPONSE: Yeah!) Before the victory is won, some will be

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misunderstood and called bad names, but we shall overcome! Before we get to the City of Brotherhood, somebody's home will be bombed, and somebody will be shot.

But we shall overcome. I'll tell you why. We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice. We shall overcome because Carlyle is right: "No lie can live forever." We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right: "Truth crushed to earth, will rise again."

We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right:

"Truth forever on the scaffold,

Wrong forever on the throne.

Yet, that scaffold sways the future.

And behind the dim unknown stands God,

Within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."

We shall overcome, because the *Bible* is right: "You shall *reap* what you sow."

This is what we live by. (CROWDS CHEERS AND RESPONSES) This is my faith.

With this faith, *we* will be able to go out and carve a *tunnel* of hope through the *mountain* of despair. With this faith, *we* will go out and adjourn the Councils of Hopelessness.

With this faith, *we* will be able to make a better Birmingham, and this will be the day when God's kingdom will be a reality right here in this city and so I say, Don't stop.

Don't get weary. Walk together children, don't you get weary. There's a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom. (APPLAUSE) (MUSIC)

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ANNOUNCER: You have been listening to “Freedom Now!” a Pacifica Radio documentary on the struggle for integration in Birmingham, Alabama. The program was produced from tape recordings made in Birmingham in May of 1963, by Dale Minor. Production and editing by Dale Minor and Chris Koch. Technical Production by Bob Kramer. The Narrator was Dale Minor. [PIANO MUSIC, SINGING, “A great day for me! A great day for me! I am so happy I’m going to be free, I (Jesud) came to Birmingham, I’m happy as can be, Ohhh great day for me...”]

End of Transcript of “Freedom Now! – Part Two”

NOTES:

1. “Freedom Now!” was produced from tape recordings made in Birmingham Alabama, and New York City by Pacifica Reporter Dale Minor. Field recordings were made between May 11 and May 14, 1963. ACLU attorney Charles Morgan was recorded in WBAI studios in New York City. The program was produced and edited by Dale Minor and Chris Koch. Technical production was by Bob Kramer.

An edited excerpt of this radio “Freedom Now!” (Parts I & II) was published in “The Exacting Ear: The Story of Listener Sponsored Radio,” Eleanor McKinney, Ed. (Pantheon, 1966). The excerpt is available on the excellent Civil Rights Movement Veterans website. <http://www.crmvet.org>

2. Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., [1929 – 1968], President of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). His work in the American Civil Rights Movement was honored by the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1964. He was assassinated in Memphis, Tennessee, while supporting striking sanitation workers. King’s papers are archived at Stanford University. SEE: “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” (April 16, 1963). http://www.stanford.edu/group/King//popular_requests/frequentdocs/birmingham.pdf
Also See: <http://www.thekingcenter.org>

3. NAACP. National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. (Founded in 1909 to promote social and legal equality and justice) <http://www.naACP.org>

4. SCLC. Southern Christian Leadership Conference. (First met in 1957 to organize nonviolent actions in support of race integration) <http://sclcnational.org>

5. Reverend Ralph Abernathy, [1926-1990], Baptist minister, Secretary-Treasurer of the SCLC, who, along with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., organized seminal protests against segregation, including the Montgomery, Alabama bus boycott in 1955.

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6. George Corley Wallace, [1919-1998]. Governor of Alabama 1963-1967, 1971-1979, 1983-1987. Democrat. Segregationist. Presidential candidate.

7. Arthur J. Hanes, Mayor of Birmingham, Alabama 1961-1963.

8. Francis Walter [1894-1963]. D., Pennsylvania. Chairman, House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) 1955-1963.

9. John McClellan [1896-1977]. D., Arkansas. United States Senator 1943-1977.

10. John Eastland [1904-1986]. D., Mississippi. United States Senator 1941, 1943-1978.

11. Eugene “Bull” Connor [1897-1973]. Public Safety Commissioner, Birmingham, Alabama.

12. Charles Morgan, attorney for the American Civil Liberties Union. Later became ACLU Southern Regional Officer, and National Legislative Director of the ACLU.

13. “The Slave” by James Oppenheim
[This version from Louis Untermeyer, ed. Modern American Poetry. 1919.]

They set the slave free, striking off his chains...
Then he was as much of a slave as ever.

He was still chained to servility,
He was still manacled to indolence and sloth,
He was still bound by fear and superstition,
By ignorance, suspicion, and savagery ...
His slavery was not in the chains,
But in himself ...

They can only set free men free ...
And there is no need of that:
Free men set themselves free.

14. “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee. 1960, Harper & Row.
Gregory Peck [1916-2003] starred as Atticus Finch in the 1962 Academy Award winning film, based on the novel.

15. SEARCH: Pacifica Radio Archives Public Access Catalog for related recordings.
“Dale Minor” “Chris Koch” “Martin Luther King” “Ralph Abernathy” “Civil Rights”

16. SEE: “Freedom Now!” Part I. Pacifica Radio Archives Number BB0385a

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