GOOD MORNING --- THANKS AND ACKNOWLEDGE MLK BREAKFAST FOUNDERS —FAMILIES, FRIENDS, AND SPECIAL GUESTS (MALIK AND MOSES BUT NOT ALTON AND MARJORIE).

THE COMMENTS YOU ARE ABOUT TO HEAR ARE THE WORDS OF THE SPEAKER AND ARE NOT INTENDED TO REFLECT ON OR ESPouse THE VIEWS OF THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE ...THE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE...THE NAACP ...THE JACKSONVILLE URBAN LEAGUE...THE SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ...AND THE PRIME OSBORN CONVENTION CENTER. THOSE ARE WORDS MY ATTORNEY ASKED ME TO SAY. FIGURED I WOULD GET THAT OUT OF THE WAY.

ONCE TO EVERY MAN AND NATION COMES THE MOMENT TO DECIDE THEN IT IS THE BRAVE MAN WHO Chooses WHILE THE COWARD STAND ASIDE DOUBTING IN HIS ABJECT SPIRIT TIL HIS VERY LORD IS CRUCIFIED

THOSE WORDS TAKEN FROM THE HYMN BY JAMES LOWELL REPRESENTED THE SLOGAN OF THE JACKSONVILLE BRANCH NAACP IN THE LATE 50’S AND EARLY 60’S DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT.
THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE LATE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES IS A HISTORY OF BRAVE AND UNSELFISH BLACK LEADERS FIGHTING AGAINST RACISM AND SEGREGATION, AND FOR THE EQUALITY OF ALL PEOPLE IN THE UNITED STATES. IT IS A HISTORY OF WHITES WHO DARED SUPPORT THOSE PROTESTS AGAINST SEGREGATION.

THE MODERN CIVIL RIGHTS ERA BEGAN WITH THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT IN DECEMBER OF 1955, LED BY DR. KING AND EDGAR D. NIXON—WHEN THEY CHALLENGED THE DISCRIMINATORY SEATING PRACTICES ON MONTGOMERY'S MUNICIPAL BUSES. CHALLENGES TO THE SOUTH'S ANTIQUATED, DISCRIMINATORY AND INSULTING SEGREGATED LAWS DID NOT HAPPEN BY ACCIDENT OR BY HAPPENSTANCE OR SOME SPUR OF THE MOMENT SPONTANEOUS ACTION, AS SOME PRESS REPORTS WOULD HAVE YOU BELIEVE. THEY WERE PLANNED. MONTGOMERY'S ORDINANCE, LIKE MANY SIMILAR ORDINANCES THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH, RESERVED THE FRONT SEATS ON MUNICIPAL BUSES FOR WHITE PASSENGERS ONLY, FORCING BLACK RIDERS TO SIT IN THE BACK. IN MANY INSTANCES, BLACK BUS RIDERS HAD TO PAY THEIR FARE AT THE FRONT OF THE BUS, THEN GET OFF THE BUS AND RE-ENTER BY THE BACK DOOR.

EDGAR NIXON WAS THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL CHAPTER NAACP IN MONTGOMERY AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE LOCAL BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS. HOWEVER, BEFORE
THE NAACP AND OTHER GROUPS COULD MOUNT A COURT CHALLENGE, SOMEONE HAD TO VOLUNTARILY BREAK THE BUS SEATING LAW AND BE ARRESTED. NIXON’S CHOICE WAS ROSA PARKS, THE ELECTED SECRETARY OF THE MONTGOMERY NAACP. ON DECEMBER 1, 1955, ROSA PARKS ENTERED A MONTGOMERY BUS, REFUSED TO GIVE UP HER SEAT FOR A WHITE PASSENGER, AND WAS ARRESTED. WITH THAT, THE MONTGOMERY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION WAS BORN. NIXON’S CHOICE TO HEAD THE MIA WAS A NEW MINISTER IN TOWN NAMED MARTIN LUTHER KING ... AND AS WE SAY, THE REST IS HISTORY.

FOR 381 DAYS, FROM DECEMBER 5, 1955 TO DECEMBER 21, 1956 BLACK RIDERS STOPPED RIDING MONTGOMERY’S CITY BUSES. FINALLY, IN DECEMBER 1956, THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT HELD THAT MONTGOMERY’S SEGREGATION POLICY WAS UNLAWFUL.

THE RITZ THEATRE AND MUSEUM HAD AN EXCELLENT EXHIBIT ON THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOTT CALLED “381 DAYS”. IF YOU DID NOT SEE IT, CALL AND TALK WITH CAROL ALEXANDER OR LYDIA STEWART AT THE RITZ TO SEE IF IT IS SCHEDULED TO COME BACK. OF COURSE IT WILL COST, BUT I AM SURE THAT THE MAYOR AND THE CITY COUNCIL WOULD GLADLY FUND SUCH A WORTHY RETURN ENGAGEMENT.
4 YEARS LATER, FOUR NORTH CAROLINA A AND T STUDENTS—EZELL BLAIR (JIBREEL KHAZAN), JOSEPH MCNEIL, FRANKLIN MCCAIN, AND DAVID RICHMOND—WOULD EXPAND THE CIVIL RIGHTS ARENA IN FEBRUARY OF 1960 WHEN THEY SAT IN AT THE WHITE LUNCH COUNTER AT WOOLWORTH’S DEPARTMENT STORE IN DOWNTOWN GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA. MOST SIT-INNERS WERE STUDENTS FROM THE CAMPUSES OF HISTORICAL BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (HBCU). HOWEVER, IN JACKSONVILLE, MOST OF THE 1960 JACKSONVILLE YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP SIT-IN DEMONSTRATORS CAME FROM - NORTHWESTERN JUNIOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL, NEW STANTON HIGH SCHOOL, MATTHEW WILLIAM GILBERT HIGH, AND DOUGLAS ANDERSON JUNIOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL—ALL SEGREGATED BLACK HIGH SCHOOLS IN JACKSONVILLE. OTHER DEMONSTRATORS WERE COLLEGE STUDENTS HOME FOR THE SUMMER AND SOME YOUNG ADULTS

THE PEACEFUL PROTESTS OF THOSE TEENAGERS AND YOUNG ADULTS WHO DARED TO CHALLENGE SEGREGATION IN JACKSONVILLE IS NOT A MYTH OR AN URBAN LEGEND ... NOR IS THE ATTACK ON THEM BY MORE THAN 200 WHITES WITH BASEBALL BATS AND AX HANDLES ON AUGUST 27, 1960.

I HAD THE DISTINCT HONOR TO SERVE AS THE PRESIDENT OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP.

NOW YOU CAN INTRODUCE ALTON AND MARJORIE
TODAY'S GENERATION AND PAST GENERATIONS MUST UNDERSTAND THE CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE TIMES THAT LED TO THIS RACIALLY EXPLOSIVE PERIOD IN JACKSONVILLE'S HISTORY.

"IT WAS NEVER ABOUT A HOT DOG AND A COKE" IS A CHRONICLE OF THE RACIAL, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CLIMATE OF JACKSONVILLE IN THE LATE 50'S AND EARLY 60's.

IT WAS A TIME OF SEGREGATED SCHOOLS AND SEGREGATED COLLEGES AND SEGREGATED CHURCHES AND SEGREGATED NEWS AND SEGREGATED RESTAURANTS AND SEGREGATED HOTELS AND SEGREGATED MOVIE THEATRES AND SEGREGATED BUSES AND SEGREGATED DOCTOR'S OFFICES AND SEGREGATED TRAINS AND SEGREGATED SPORTING EVENTS AND SEGREGATED GOVERNMENTAL FACILITIES. IT WAS RACISM AT ITS WORSE. RACISM IS PAINFUL ... RACISM IS UNCOMFORTABLE ... RACISM IS INSULTING, INSIDIOUS AND OBSCENE. ... YET IT THRIVED THEN AND IT THRIVES TODAY BECAUSE IT ENABLES THOSE WHO WOULD AND CAN DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THOSE WHO LOOK LIKE ME BECAUSE OF THE COLOR OF MY SKIN.

I AM ASKED FROM TIME TO TIME WHY TALK ABOUT RACISM? TIMES ARE CHANGING. WHY WOULD YOU WRITE A BOOK ABOUT THOSE TIMES? RACISM IS IN THE PAST IN THIS PRESIDENT OBAMA ERA? WHY WASH OUR DIRTY LAUNDRY IN PUBLIC? WHY CAN'T WE LEAVE THINGS IN THE
PAST? WHY DO YOU WANT TO BLAME US FOR THINGS THAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST? OF COURSE, LAST I CHECKED, WE DON'T OFFER COURSES IN OUR HIGH SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES CALLED DON'T WASH DIRTY LAUNDRY IN PUBLIC...OR WHY CAN'T WE LEAVE THINGS IN THE PAST OR LET'S MOVE ON FROM HERE?

IT IS CALLED HISTORY AND WE TEACH HISTORY. AND THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW THE MISTAKES OF THE PAST ARE DOOMED TO REPEAT THEM. OF COURSE, WHEN BLACK FOLK TALK ABOUT THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, WE ARE ALWAYS ACCUSED OF LIVING IN THE PAST.

BUT ABOVE ALL ELSE, MANY OF US IN THIS ROOM LIVED THOSE EXPERIENCES AND YOU DON'T FORGET. THEY ARE INGRAINED FOREVER AS A PART OF OUR LIVES. WHAT HAPPENED IN JACKSONVILLE ALMOST 50 YEARS AGO IS A PERMANENT DEFINING TIMELINE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE AND THIS COUNTRY.

IN FACT, 2010 IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR OF MANY SIGNAL MILESTONES IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT...IT IS ALSO THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE GREENSBORO SIT-INS IN GREENSBORO NORTH CAROLINA IN FEBRUARY... IT IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE –SNCC-AT SHAW UNIVERSITY IN RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA IN APRIL AND IT IS THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF AX HANDLE SATURDAY IN AUGUST. STAY TUNED FOR THOSE COMMEMORATIVE EVENTS.
I transferred to segregated Isaiah Blocker Junior High School from segregated James Weldon Junior High School in my 8th grade year, 1955. The public schools of Jacksonville in 1955 mirrored the segregated South: separate and unequal textbooks, separate and unequal equipment, and separate and unequal school facilities. Segregated black schools were primed to fail.

Most people today cannot begin to comprehend how black schoolteachers taught black students and developed them into future leaders of this country through an ever-enveloping veil of racism and discrimination. Without adequate supplies, equipment, and resources, but through their ingenuity, skills and dedication, they were able to take young black men and women and equip them with skills to compete in a segregated world that did not want them to compete.

My American History teacher was Rutledge Henry Pearson. Mr. Pearson did not teach American History based on views of racist white textbook authors approved by a segregated school system who only grudgingly recognized George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington as blacks who made salient contributions to American History.

HE THEN DID SOMETHING THAT WAS UNHEARD OF AT THE TIME AND PROBABLY IS TODAY. HE ENCOURAGED ME AND MY CLASSMATES TO JOIN THE YOUTH COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR
THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE AND FIGHT THE RACIST CONDITIONS THAT EXISTED IN THIS COUNTRY.

OUR FIRST SIT-IN TOOK PLACE ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 13, 1960, AT WOOLWORTH DEPARTMENT STORE. THOUGH WE FOCUSED ON WOOLWORTH BECAUSE OF ITS STRATEGIC LOCATION, WE ALSO TARGETED THE RESTAURANT IN COHEN BROTHERS IN THE ST. JAMES BUILDING (WHICH NOW HOUSES JACKSONVILLE'S CITY HALL) AND THE LUNCH COUNTERS AT W. T. GRANT DEPARTMENT STORE, KRESS DEPARTMENT STORE, AND MCCORORY'S DEPARTMENT STORE.

LET ME READ A SHORT EXCERPT FROM THE BOOK ...

IN 1960, WOOLWORTH REPRESENTED ONE OF THE MANY VESTIGES OF SEGREGATION THAT OPENLY INSULTED BLACKS DAILY. AS A RETAIL STORE THAT OPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC, WOOLWORTH, AS WELL AS W. T. GRANT, KRESS, MCCORORY'S, AND COHEN BROTHERS, WOULD ACCEPT YOUR MONEY AS A SHOPPER AT ONE COUNTER, BUT NOT ACCEPT YOUR MONEY OR ALLOW YOU TO SHOP AT ANOTHER. AND THERE WERE NO BLACK SALESPERSONS.

LOCATED AT THE CORNER OF MONROE AND HOGAN IN DOWNTOWN JACKSONVILLE, WOOLWORTH DEPARTMENT STORE WAS ONE OF SEVERAL MAJOR DOWNTOWN STORES.

WHEN YOU ENTERED WOOLWORTH FROM HOGAN STREET AND LOOKED TO THE LEFT, YOU COULD SEE A LUNCH COUNTER SPANNING THE ENTIRE MONROE STREET SIDE OF THE STORE. EIGHTY-FOUR LUNCH COUNTER SEATS WERE PUNCTUATED BY SPACIOUS CUSTOMER-SERVING BAYS AND BRIGHT WINDOWS.
YOU COULD STOP AND EAT AT WOOLWORTH'S CONVENIENT LUNCH COUNTER AFTER SPENDING TIME SHOPPING IN WOOLWORTH OR AFTER SHOPPING DOWNTOWN. YOU COULD, THAT IS, IF YOU WERE WHITE. FOR BLACKS, AN INVISIBLE SIGN READ, "LUNCH COUNTER, FOR WHITES ONLY."

If black shoppers wanted to eat in Woolworth after shopping, the process worked differently. Woolworth wanted you to spend your money, but only where they wanted you to spend your money.

OK SO GET THE PICTURE...

Enter Woolworth again. The white lunch counter is on your left. If you started walking to the rear of the store, you'd walk past the cosmetics counter; then walk past the costume jewelry counter; then walk past the popcorn popper; then walk past the candy counter; then walk past the women's clothes counter; then walk past the men's clothes counter; then walk past the children clothes counter; then walk past the "white" and "colored" water fountains; then walk past the work shoes counter; then walk past the dress shoes counter; then walk past the bedroom shoes counter; then walk past the picture frames and mirrors counter; then walk past the aquarium supplies counter;
THEN WALK PAST THE STAIRS LEADING UPSTAIRS TO RESTROOMS MARKED “WHITE WOMEN,” “WHITE MEN,” “COLORED WOMEN,” “COLORED MEN”;
THEN WALK PAST THE PET FOOD AND PET SUPPLIES COUNTER;
THEN WALK PAST THE HOUSE PLANTS;

THEN WALK PAST THE GARDENING SUPPLIES COUNTER;
AND THEN, AND ONLY THEN, WOULD YOU SEE THE COLORED LUNCH COUNTER, WITH ITS FIFTEEN SEATS AND NO WINDOWS.

BY COMPARISON TODAY, YOU WOULD CONSIDER BLACKS SITTING AT A SEGREGATED WHITE LUNCH COUNTER AS TAME STUFF. BUT IN THE FIFTIES AND THE SIXTIES, BLACKS SITTING AT A SEGREGATED WHITE LUNCH COUNTER WAS DEEMED A VIOLENT CONFRONTATION TO THE RACIAL COMFORT SYSTEM IN THE SOUTH. FOR WHITE AMERICANS, AS A FRIEND WOULD SAY, “IT WAS SOMETHING THAT WAS SO NOT GOING TO HAPPEN.” AFTER ALL, THERE WERE APPROPRIATELY STATIONED LUNCH COUNTERS EXPRESSLY FOR COLORED PEOPLE AND IN THIS CASE, AT THE BACK OF THE STORE.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT WOULD NOT HAVE SURVIVED WITHOUT THE BLACK CHURCH AND THE BLACK PRESS. THE BLACK CHURCH NOT ONLY PROVIDED THE OBVIOUS SPIRITUAL SUPPORT BUT WAS THE COMMUNICATIONS CONDUIT IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY.
YET AS RICH AS THIS PERIOD OF TIME WAS HISTORICALLY, IT REMAINS ONE OF THE MOST UNDERREPORTED AND MISREPORTED AND PURPOSEFULLY NOT REPORTED NEWS ERA OF OUR HISTORY. OF COURSE, JUST AS SEGREGATION IMPACTED OUR DAILY LIVES, IT ALSO IMPACTED HOW WE SAW, READ AND HEARD THE NEWS, AND THE BLACK REPORTERS.


THE CROWD OF ONLOOKERS SHOWERED HIM AND US WITH THE USUAL "RACIAL EUPHEMISTS" AND FEW OTHERS THAT SOME OF US HAD NOT HEARD BEFORE.

THEM EMPHATICALLY VOICED THEIR ANGER AGAINST US FOR DISRUPTING THEIR LUNCH SCHEDULES WHEN WOOLWORTH'S CHOSE TO CLOSE THE LUNCH COUNTER.

AT NO TIME DURING ANY OF THE WOOLWORTH'S SIT-IN DEMONSTRATIONS DID WE SEE POLICE FROM THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE'S POLICE DEPARTMENT OR PATROL OFFICERS FROM
THE DUVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT. DESPITE THE CONSTANT POTENTIAL FOR RACIAL CONFRONTATION, AND WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS' PENCHANT FOR UNDERCOVER INTELLIGENCE DURING THAT ERA, THE JACKSONVILLE'S POLICE DEPARTMENT AND THE DUVAL COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE WERE INVISIBLE. AND THOUGH THERE WERE BLACK POLICEMEN, THEY COULD NOT ARREST WHITES.

I DETAIL IN THE BOOK WHAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO PARKER AND WHY IT DID NOT HAPPENED.

AX HANDLE SATURDAY AND WHAT HAPPENED

DON'T EXPECT TO GO TO THE LOCAL NEWS MEDIA LIBRARY AND READ ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES LEADING UP TO AX HANDLE SATURDAY...AND DON'T EXPECT TO READ ANY COMPREHENSIVE INTERVIEWS WITH YOUTH COUNCIL AND NACP OFFICIALS AFTER AX HANDLE SATURDAY IN THE LOCAL MEDIA-PRINT, RADIO OR TV. THE LOCAL MEDIA MADE A CONSCIOUS DECISION TO BLACK OUT ALL NEWS ABOUT THE SIT-INS AND THE VIOLENCE ON AUGUST 27, 1960. SOME LOCAL NEWS REPORTS EVEN INTIMATED THAT THE YOUTH COUNCIL WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VIOLENCE.

RICHARD CHARLES PARKER PART II

FRED, WHO REPRESENTED THE CHAMBER AND HIMSELF, SAID IN ONE OF OUR LATER MEETINGS, WE NEED TO GET THIS THING DONE. IT WAS SOMETHING FRED FELT THIS COMMUNITY NEEDED TO DO, AND HE STEPPED UP.

FINALLY AFTER SEVERAL MONTHS, IN THE EARLY PART OF 1961 MARJORIE AND I ...WE WERE BOTH STUDENTS AT EDWARD WATERS COLLEGE...LEFT THE CAMPUS AND WENT DOWNTOWN TO EAT AT
WOOLWORTH FOR A WEEK SO THAT WHITES WOULD GET ACCUSTOMED TO SEEING BLACK FOLK EATING AT THE HERETOFORE WHITE LUNCH COUNTER. AND AFTER THAT WEEK, ALL OF THE DOWNTOWN LUNCH COUNTERS WERE INTEGRATED. NOT THE RESTAURANTS...THAT WAS A HARDER NUT TO CRACK...BUT THE LUNCH COUNTERS. AND WE THANKED GOD FOR THAT VICTORY...SOME 3 YEARS BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS BILL.

ONE OF THE ONGOING PROBLEMS IN OUR COMMUNITY TODAY IN ADDITION TO OUR LACK OF HISTORY GENERALLY AND BLACK HISTORY SPECIFICALLY...IS BLACKS AND WHITES DO NOT HONESTLY COMMUNICATE. IN THIS DAY OF INTEGRATION, IT IS INTIMIDATING TALKING ABOUT RACE RELATIONS AND RACISM WITH MOST BLACK FOLK AND WHITE FOLK. WE ARE ACCUSTOMED TO SAYING THINGS THAT OUR WHITE FRIENDS AND OUR BLACK FRIENDS WANT TO HEAR. SO WE DRESS UP OUR HONEST FEELINGS SO WE WON’T HURT ANYONE’S FEELINGS. WHETHER WE AGREE TO AGREE OR AGREE TO DISAGREE RESPECTFULLY, WE CANNOT ALLOW THOSE FEELINGS TO JUST SIMMER BELOW THE SURFACE.

I GAVE A PRESENTATION SEVERAL WEEKS AGO AND DURING THE QUESTION AND ANSWER PERIOD, ONE OF THE FIRST QUESTION WAS ... IS IT TRUE THAT A HIGH SCHOOL IN JACKSONVILLE IS NAMED FOR THE FOUNDER OF THE KU KLUX KLAN. I SAID YES AND ADDED HE WAS ALSO THE FIRST IMPERIAL WIZARD OF THE KU KLUX KLAN AND THE FORT PILLOW BUTCHER. IT WAS QUITE INTERESTING THAT
JACKSONVILLE WAS KNOWN FOR NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST HIGH SCHOOL WHICH WAS NAMED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD IN THE SIXTIES...AND NOT FOR OTHER OUTSTANDING PERSONS WHO COULD DEFINE THIS GREAT CITY.

I CAN IMAGINE THE CONVERSATION WHEN THE DUVAL SCHOOL BOARD DURING THOSE SEGREGATED 60's DECIDED TO NAME A NEW HIGH SCHOOL, NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST. LET'S SEE GIVE ME HIS ACCOMPLISHMENTS AGAIN...HE WAS A CONFEDERATE GENERAL DURING THE CIVIL WAR...HE FOUNDED THE KU KLUX KLAN...UH HUH - HE WAS THE FIRST IMPERIAL WIZARD OF THE KU KLUX KLAN... UH HUH, THAT'S GOOD- HE WAS A RACIAL TERRORIST... OK - HE WAS THE FORT PILLOW BUTCHER. WELL THAT'S ENOUGH. ALL IN FAVOR OF NAMING A HIGH SCHOOL AFTER RACIAL TERRORIST/KU KLUX KLAN FOUNDER/FIRST KLAN IMPERIAL WIZARD/FORT PILLOW BUTCHER /AND CONFEDERATE GENERAL NATHAN BEDFORD FORREST, SAY AYE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THAT IS ALSO A PART OF THE HISTORY OF JACKSONVILLE DURING SEGREGATION. YET IT WAS AN INSULT TO THE BLACK COMMUNITY. YEAH I KNOW THAT WHEN WE TALK ABOUT THE CONFEDERACY...THE CIVIL WAR AND SLAVERY, THERE ARE THOSE WHO ARGUE THAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT HERITAGE NOT HATE.

YET THE HERITAGE REPRESENTS HATE. A HATE THAT PUT A YOKE OF BONDAGE ON MILLIONS OF AMERICANS. I DON'T HAVE TIME TO
GET INTO THIS TODAY, BUT GO TO YOUR HISTORICAL RESEARCH ARCHIVES OR THE CHICORA FOUNDATION OR THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER AND FIND OUT WHY FORREST WAS NAMED THE FORT PILLOW BUTCHER ... OR BETTER YET, HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS, ASK YOUR HISTORY TEACHERS.

SO I TALK ABOUT JACKSONVILLE CITY LEADERS DURING THAT TIME WHO WERE SO RACIALLY INSENSITIVE THAT THEY WOULD NAME A HIGH SCHOOL FOR ARGUABLY THE PERSON WHO MOST PERSONIFIED RACIST VIOLENCE IN AMERICAN HISTORY... AND A JACKSONVILLE MAYOR WHOSE SEGREGATION PHILOSOPHY WAS SO INGRAINED THAT HE REFUSED TO APPOINT A BI-RACIAL COMMITTEE TO ALLOW WHITE FOLK AND BLACK FOLK COULD SIT AND TALK AND AGREE TO AGREE OR AGREE TO DISAGREE AND MAYBE IN THE PROCESS OFFER RECOMMENDATIONS TO SOLVE SOME OF JACKSONVILLE'S PROBLEMS...AND A POLICE DEPARTMENT AND A SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT THAT COULD NOT OR WOULD NOT PROTECT ITS CITIZENS...AND A CITY THAT RESPONDED VIOLENTLY WITH AX HANDLES AND BASE BALL BATS TO

YOUNG HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE STUDENTS PEACEFULLY PROTESTING SEGREGATION. IT IS WHAT IT IS. RACE RELATIONS OR A LACK THEREOF, IS WHAT IT IS. UNFORTUNATELY, IT IS ONE OF THE VERY FEW ARENAS THAT YOU CANNOT NEGOTIATE. PASSIVE RESISTANCE WAS REALLY A SPIRITUAL FIGHTING TOOL DURING THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, AND FOR MANY RACISTS, IT WAS DIFFICULT FOR THEM TO FIGHT AND WIN. NOT DIFFICULT TO FIGHT...AND THEY WON MANY BATTLES...BOMBINGS AND
LYNCHINGS AND KILLINGS ATTEST TO THAT...BUT DIFFICULT TO FIGHT AND WIN AS EVIDENCED BY THE MANY VICTORIES WHICH THE MOVEMENT REALIZED. VICTORIES WHICH SOME SAY WOULD NEVER HAVE OCCURRED WITHOUT THE VIOLENCE EXACTED BY WHITES DETERMINED NOT TO LET "ANYTHING HAPPEN TO OUR GOOD SOUTHERN HERITAGE". IT IS HISTORY.

NELSON MANDELA SAID "THERE IS NO EASY WALK TO FREEDOM ANYWHERE, AND MANY OF US WILL HAVE TO PASS THROUGH THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH REPEATEDLY BEFORE WE REACH THE MOUNTAINTOP OF OUR DESIRES."

• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO EFFECT POSITIVE RACE RELATIONS AND NOT JUST DIALOGUE? IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE UNDERSTAND HOW NECESSARY IT IS TO LEAVE HERE TODAY COMMITTED TO MAKING AN HONEST EFFORT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN BLACK FOLK AND WHITE FOLK. TALK WITH CHARLENE TAYLOR-HILL AT THE CITY’S HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION...AND BOBBIE O’CONNOR AT ONEJAX...AND...RICHARD DANFORD AT THE JACKSONVILLE URBAN LEAGUE...AND ISAIAH RUMLIN AT THE NAACP...AND REGINAL TAYLOR-MURPHY AND BILL DAVID AT THE JACKSONVILLE DIVERSITY NETWORK.

• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO REMOVE SOME OF THE INDIFFERENCE THAT WE SIT AROUND AND COMPLAIN ABOUT TO EACH OTHER?
• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO MAKE SURE JACKSONVILLE TAKES ITS BLINDERS OFF SO WE NO LONGER USE THE ST. JOHN’S RIVER AS THE DEFINING LINE BETWEEN THE HAVES AND THE HAVE NOTS?

• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO HELP THE DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD ACHIEVE THE EDUCATIONAL GOALS IT ENVISIONS FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE WHILE BURDENED WITH A STATE AND FEDERAL POLITICAL SYSTEM THAT REFUSES TO GIVE IT THE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO HELP TEACHERS AND STUDENTS ACCOMPLISH THEIR MISSION?

• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO HELP JACKSONVILLE BECOME THE CITY IT WANTS TO BE...NEEDS TO BE...SHOULD BE...BUT STILL HAS TO REACH A LITTLE HIGHER?

• MAKE A COMMITMENT TO MAKE SURE THAT AMERICAN HISTORY IS INCLUSIVE OF RELEVANT CONTRIBUTIONS BY ALL AMERICANS AND ESPECIALLY AFRICAN AMERICANS?

SO FOR HISTORY’S SAKE, LET’S OPEN THE JACKSONVILLE HISTORICAL FACTBOOK, AND LET ME AGAIN INVOKE THE NAME OF MY 8TH GRADE AMERICAN HISTORY TEACHER...YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP ADVISOR, AND MY MENTOR, MR. RUTLEDGE HENRY PEARSON AND DETAIL A FEW POSITIVE HISTORICAL FACTS WHILE INVOKING THE NAMES OF THE FOLLOWING JACKSONVILLIANS AND THEIR NOTEWORTHY ACCOMPLISHMENTS. MAYBE ONE DAY WE WILL
ERECT A JACKSONVILLE HALL OF FAME THAT WILL INCLUDE THESE NAMES AND THEIR NATIONAL PROMINENCE:

- BOB HAYES-GRADUATE OF MATTHEW WILLIAM GILBERT HIGH SCHOOL, 2009 MEMBER OF THE NFL HALL OF FAME AND THE ONLY PERSON TO HAVE WON A GOLD MEDAL IN THE OLYMPICS AND WON A SUPER BOWL RING WITH THE DALLAS COWBOYS.
- ARNETT GIRARDEAU- GRADUATE OF OLD STANTON HIGH SCHOOL AND THE FIRST BLACK PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE IN THE HISTORY OF THE FLORIDA SENATE
- MARY SINGLETON AND SALLYE MATHIS AS THE FIRST BLACKS ON THE JACKSONVILLE CITY COUNCIL.
- MARJORIE MEEKS BROWN –GRADUATE OF NORTHWESTERN JUNIOR SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL AND THE FIRST FEMALE POSTMASTER OF ATLANTA.
- ALTON YATES -GRADUATE OF NEW STANTON HIGH SCHOOL AND ONE OF THE FIRST SUCCESSFUL HIGH SPEED SLED JOCKEYS DURING THE EARLY FIFTIES AND A FORERUNNER TO OUR MODERN DAY SPACE ASTRONAUTS.
- NORMA WHITE-GRADUATE OF NEW STANTON HIGH SCHOOL AND THE FORMER SUPREME BASILEUS OF THE ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA SORORITY INC. CONSISTING 200,000 NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL AKA MEMBERS ...AND IN THAT CAPACITY DR. WHITE WAS LISTED BY EBONY MAGAZINE AS ONE THE 100 MOST INFLUENTIAL BLACKS IN AMERICA.

• HOW MANY KNOW THAT LIFT EVERY VOICE AND SING WAS WRITTEN IN JACKSONVILLE AND THAT PORTIONS OF THE SONG WERE WRITTEN AT BETHEL BAPTIST INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH ...WHICH HOUSED THE FLORIDA BAPTIST ACADEMY AND THAT FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH DOWNTOWN, AND A NUMBER OF BLACK CHURCHES IN JACKSONVILLE BEGAN AT BETHEL BAPTIST INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH WHICH WAS FOUNDED IN 1838 BETHEL WAS ALSO THE CAMPUS FOR FLORIDA BAPTIST ACADEMY...WHICH WAS LATER CHANGED TO FLORIDA NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL INSTITUTE ...THEN TO FLORIDA MEMORIAL COLLEGE...AND NOW FLORIDA MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY.

• JACKSONVILLE IS THE ADOPTED HOME OF A. PHILIP RANDOLPH. BORN IN CRESCENT CITY, ASA PHILIP RANDOLPH'S
FAMILY MOVED TO JACKSONVILLE WHEN HE WAS 2 YEARS OLD. HE GRADUATED FROM COOKMAN INSTITUTE IN JACKSONVILLE AS HIS CLASS VALEDICTORIAN. HIS ENTIRE LIFE IS PANORAMA OF COURAGE AND BRAVERY. FROM FIGHTING AND WINNING A CONTRACT FOR THE BROTHERHOOD OF SLEEPING CAR PORTERS WITH THE PULLMAN COMPANY... HIS CHALLENGING SEVERAL PRESIDENTS ON DISCRIMINATION IN THE FEDERAL WORKPLACE...SEGREGATION IN THE MILITARY AND SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION GENERALLY IN THIS COUNTRY ... AND HIS CALLING FOR AND COORDINATING THE ORGANIZING OF THE MARCH ON WASHINGTON IN 1963 IS THE FIBER OF WHICH ICONIC LEGENDS ARE MADE. AND WHO E. D. NIXON ASKED FOR HELP DURING THE MONTGOMERY BUS BOYCOT. AFTER MR. RANDOLPH SENT A SIZEABLE SUM OF MONEY TO ASSIST WITH RESOURCES TO HELP THE BOYCOTT, NIXON WOULD ALTER REMARK THAT WITHOUT A. PHILIP RANDOLPH WE COULD NOT HAVE WON AND THERE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN A DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE LATE FIFTIES AND THE EARLY SIXTIES IN JACKSONVILLE FLORIDA IS A HISTORY PAINTED ON THE HUMAN CANVAS OF COURAGE. AS RETAIL STORES THAT OPENED ITS DOORS TO THE PUBLIC, WOOLWORTH, W. T. GRANT, KRESS, MCCRO Dys, AND COHEN BROTHERS, AND OTHER DOWNTOWN RETAIL STORES IN JACKSONVILLE AND THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, WOULD ACCEPT YOUR MONEY AT ONE COUNTER, BUT
WOULD DENY YOUR MONEY AT ANOTHER. THEIR WHITE LUNCH COUNTERS WERE VISIBLE VESTIGES OF SEGREGATION AND WERE AN OPEN DAILY INSULTS TO BLACKS. THEY WERE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE OBSCENE AND INSULTING TREATMENT OF BLACKS IN THE COUNTRY AND IN JACKSONVILLE DURING THE LATE 50'S AND EARLY 60'S. DISREGARDING THEIR PERSONAL PHYSICAL PERIL, MEMBERS OF THE JACKSONVILLE YOUTH COUNCIL NAACP MADE THE DECISION TO CONFRONT JACKSONVILLE'S SEGREGATED POLICIES AND ITS ACCOMPANYING JIM CROW LAWS. THEY SIMPLY SAID, "ENOUGH IS ENOUGH." THESE YOUNG PEOPLE ENDEavored TO LEAVE A LEGACY OF WHICH WE ALL CAN BE PROUD.

BLACKS IN THE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES WERE NOT FREE. THEY ENDURED RACISM, DISCRIMINATION, PAIN, AND SUFFERING, IN THE FIGHT FOR CIVIL RIGHTS. YET, THEY Fought ON THE COURAGE OF THEIR CONVICTIONS, KNOWING GOD WAS ON THEIR SIDE.

IN THE SONG "I THEN SHALL LIVE" GLORIA GAITHER WROTE...

SO, GREATLY PARDONED, I'LL FORGIVE MY BROTHER;
THE LAW OF LOVE I GLADLY WILL OBEY.
I THEN SHALL LIVE AS ONE WHO'S LEARNED COMPASSION.
I'VE BEEN SO LOVED, THAT I'LL RISK LOVING TOO.
I KNOW HOW FEAR BUILDS WALLS INSTEAD OF BRIDGES;
I'LL DARE TO SEE ANOTHER'S POINT OF VIEW.
AND WHEN RELATIONSHIPS DEMAND COMMITMENT,
THEN I'LL BE THERE TO CARE AND FOLLOW THROUGH.
HISTORY HAS NOT BEEN KIND TO THOSE WHO FORGET OR IGNORE THEIR OWN HISTORY. WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO TODAY’S GENERATION TO TELL OUR STORY.

REGARDLESS OF WHAT YOU HAVE HEARD OR WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN ABOUT SIT-IN DEMONSTRATIONS, IT WAS NEVER ABOUT EATING A HOT DOG AND DRINKING A COKE. IT WAS ABOUT DRAMATIZING MAN’S INHUMANITY TO MAN... AND ABOUT HUMAN DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES.