was sitting in my room, and the decision was made that—by me, by my stomach I suppose—I've got to go eat. And so I've got to go through this ordeal, and the flashback came to James Meredith's situation of the kids beating on the table in the dining hall and things being really rough. But I set out for the dining hall, which was just a few steps away from my dorm, and when I hit the door of the dining room, there stood all these people, my people, black people. I had forgotten that they serviced the university; that they provide all the domestic services, the janitorial services. They cooked all the food and had been there all along since the university was opened, I suppose, but I had forgotten that. All of us had forgotten that. People wondered how I was going to exist at this school; I was going to be taken care of. They gave me the biggest portion of meat. They gave me the best desserts, but more important than that for the first time I understood. Here was a young man seeking an education, and I said that over and over and I was serious about that, but for the first time it really hit me what this meant, because I could see their chests, their collective chest swell with pride. 'Cause now they could see their children, their uncles and their nieces, their nephews, their cousins could be in that line, too. And yes, they would serve those descendants, but it would be a different day and a different time, and I understood why I had done what I had done.

The Orangeburg Massacre

Cleveland L. Sellers Jr.

As I begin my presentation, I want to share how unexpected consequences will happen as a result of this historically significant conference at the Citadel. There will be many positive consequences for South Carolinians as a result of this Citadel conference, some more profound than others. One major contribution will be the further establishment of the fact that there was a civil rights / freedom struggle in South Carolina. Second, it will be determined that this movement was made up of ordinary citizens, local men, women, and youth; black, white, and native. Third, we will find that the movement was not sporadic or an aberration but instead a well-organized resistance to racial prejudice, violence, discrimination, and poverty. A few days before I came to this conference I received a phone call from two former South Carolina State College (SCSC) students who were very much involved as student activists there back in the mid-1950s. They wanted to make sure that when we talk about SCSC that we did not forget that there was a very rich student protest tradition in Orangeburg and at SCSC beginning even before the 1960s sit-ins and the Freedom Rides. That tradition was begun by male and female youth and students and in collaboration with students at neighboring Claflin College.

In 1956 Charles Brown and Fred Moore led SCSC students in protest against segregated businesses that had economic interests with the college. Then-president Dr. B. C. Turner forcefully ended the protest with the expulsion of nine students, including Moore, the SGA [Student Government Association] president (a senior who was one month away from graduation), Alice Pyatt, Alvin Anderson, and Barbara Brown. This legacy would stay intact as race leaders worked to find ways to implement the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision desegregating the public schools "with all deliberate speed."

More students would come and raise the banner for change. In 1959 Charles McDew, Ohio native, football player, and son of an SCSC alumnus, enrolled as a freshman. He was swept up by the actions taken by the Greensboro Four, when they launched the February 1, 1960, sit-ins in Greensboro,

N.C., suffering beatings and being arrested several times. Later, McDew withdrew from SCSC to work full time in the freedom struggle and served as the chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the largest and most effective group of young organizers in the civil rights / freedom struggle. As Fred Moore reminds us, it is within this historical context of the protest tradition that we must talk about the tragic 1968 event known as the Orangeburg Massacre.

The Orangeburg Massacre was not an aberration. The city of Orangeburg had experienced protest demonstration by both the black community and the student community before, and there had been excessive and abusive use of force such as fire hoses, beatings, and arrests, but never the use of lethal force. There was rhyme and reason to what happened in this city over the course of two decades, and the state very well could have prevented the tragedy if it had not blindly linked itself with the FBI's COINTELPRO [Counter Intelligence Program], "Law 'n' Order," disinformation, character assassination, extralegal and unconstitutional initiatives.

The tragic event which became known as the Orangeburg Massacre was so named because of its similarity to the South African Sharpeville Massacre. In the South African town of Sharpeville, black demonstrators assembled in an open field and peacefully protested apartheid, a vicious system of racial segregation in that country. The Sharpeville demonstration was in protest of black South Africans being mandated to carry national identity cards. The all-white police force opened fire, savagely slaughtering seventy-two Africans and seriously wounding two hundred more. Just as the Sharpeville tragedy was an important event in the struggle to overthrow the South African apartheid system, the Orangeburg Massacre was a significant event to South Carolinians in their efforts to overthrow America's version of apartheid that was still very real in South Carolina.

The Orangeburg Massacre and the facts surrounding the tragedy were, from the outset, marked by suspicion and confusion. Much of the confusion can be attributed to several factors. First, at the time of the tragedy, accurate information was deliberately withheld by the state. Also, the initial reports were distorted, deliberately or otherwise. Third, the collective consciousness of America no longer held the moral suasion of the civil rights movement as an urgent and universal concern. By 1968 the coalition of church, labor, liberal, and civil rights groups had dissolved. On the other side, a reactionary agenda, which emphasized law and order, the new "southern strategy," and a so-called moral majority was emerging under the leadership of Richard Milhous Nixon and the Republican Party. George Wallace had become an active force for nationwide reaction against the movement by running as a third-party candidate for president in 1968. Fourth, there was never a statewide investigation, local investigation, or inquest. There was however an FBI investigation, but it was self-serving and

superficial at best. Frank Beacham, a freelance writer and cub reporter for a Columbia television station on the night of the shooting, was quoted as saying, "FBI officials friendly with the South Carolina officers did a superficial investigation obscuring the truth." When U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark attempted to investigate, the FBI compromised key evidence and the local U.S. attorneys would not cooperate. Beacham stated that he unquestionably accepted the distorted version of the tragedy.

Initially this smokescreen was an attempt to maintain South Carolina's racially moderate image. Later, it would become the state's sense of denial that kept the truth behind a haze of half-truths and lies—a veil of secrecy. The critical issue surrounding the tragedy remains: why the use of deadly force? The students were unarmed and on their campus. The officers used lethal weapons, double-ought buckshot, which is used for killing large animals like deer, not riot control. The use of deadly force was sanctioned by the FBI for use by state and local police in response to the urban disturbances, rebellions that began in the Harlem section of New York during the summer of 1964. Beacham explains that state authorities claim the deaths were the result of two-way gun battles between students and lawmen. The highway patrolmen insisted that their shooting was done in self-defense to protect themselves from an attacking mob of students. To bolster their claim and deflect responsibility from its own actions, the state hastily devised a media campaign to blame the riot on outside agitators, using a tactic of blame the victim. Henry Lake, a former highway patrolman and official spokesman for the governor, on the night of the shooting accused me of throwing a banister that struck a highway patrolman in the face. Lake insisted, "Sellers, he's the main man. He is the biggest nigger in the crowd."

One day after the shooting the Reverend I. DeQuincey Newman, the state NAACP field secretary, stated, "The fact that such a thing could happen and did happen is an indication that despite all that might be considered progress in terms of interracial cooperation beneath the surface South Carolina—is just about in the same boat as Alabama and Mississippi. The perpetrators of the tragedy and those who have covered it up for them have rendered a great disservice to sometimes heroic efforts that have been made in race relations and interracial cooperation." Many of the students were politically conscious and understood what was happening and who was responsible for the police riot. Dr. Martin Luther King, with whom I had worked on numerous other southern protest activities and campaigns (March on Washington, Selma March, Mississippi Summer Project, and Mississippi Meredith March) was horrified by the shooting. In a statement regarding the Orangeburg Massacre he stated, "The death and wounding of these students lies on the conscience of J. P. Strom, the officer in charge, in his capacity as chief of the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division, the governor of South Carolina to whom Strom is directly answerable and the conscience of all men of good will. We demand the U.S. attorney general

act now to bring justice to the perpetrators of the largest armed assault undertaken under cover of law in recent southern history. No further delay or insensitivity to this destructive use of police force is conscionable."[1]

South Carolina had touted a pretentious form of pseudo-civility, but what appeared to be a resolution of the civil rights wars came shattering down on top of the empty rhetoric when armed patrolmen were allowed to careen out of control and brutally gun down innocent young people.

The state officials believed that if they could maintain a semblance of no conflict, they could avoid the trouble of other southern states while maintaining their status quo. They miscalculated the pervasive problem by equating quiet with resolve and peace. It was assumed the problem of discrimination and racial prejudice would just go away. Time and again it has been proven that conflict is necessary if change is to occur. Problems cannot solve themselves. Social issues do not simply disappear. We must publicly and relentlessly confront racial prejudice, racism, and oppression. Peace is not merely the absence of conflict. It is the presence of truth and justice. For more than thirty years, the effort to ignore, distort, and conceal the truth about this tragedy in Orangeburg has continued because state officials have refused to discuss the case or have a review commission. The conspiracy of silence has helped to obstruct the massacre's documentation and delayed its entry into the annals of civil rights movement history.

Several factors influenced this treatment of the Orangeburg Massacre. One, the victims were African American students. The timing, 1968, marked for many writers what they considered the end of the civil rights era, and the indigenous student participants were not sponsored by a national civil rights organization. (The protest at the Allstar Bowling Lanes was organized by the college chapter of the NAACP—a fact most seem to forget) However, the Orangeburg movement was truly "of the people," so the idea of blocking its historical reality is as absurd as it is disheartening and pathetic. [Thomas] Carlyle was correct when he stated no lie can live forever.

Since the 1960s a few books have been published and critiqued the idea of the indigenous nature of the freedom movement. Most of the early civil rights literature used the traditional narrative to analyze the freedom struggle. That approach was flawed because it framed the movement around major leaders, national organizations, especially men's involvement and leadership. More recently scholars have moved away from the traditional narrative to recognize that any critical analysis of the civil rights / freedom movement must include the significance of not only race but also class and gender. The new literature examines local movement operations from the bottom to the top using an indigenous grassroots / local people perspective.

In the case of Orangeburg, two astute journalists, Jack Bass and Jack Nelson, became sufficiently determined to confront the silence and disinformation that they wrote the only definitive record of the events surrounding the Orangeburg

shooting, in the book *Orangeburg Massacre.* Their effort was courageous and exemplary and utilized the local organizing perspective. This book is the most definitive, scholarly, and documented book on the events of February 1968. Surely there are some S.C. officials who have still refused to read the book because it will shed some light on their complicity in the Orangeburg Massacre.

The book clears up many misconceptions. State government officials stated that there was a confrontation between the students and law enforcement officers. They claim that the patrolmen were in imminent danger and only shot the students because they said the students were charging the officers. They also stated that the troopers were trained by the FBI for riot duty. None of these statements were true. There was no confrontation and no exchange of gunfire.

As an eyewitness myself, and as was discovered by Bass and Nelson, it just did not happen that way. The students who were shot suffered wounds in the back or the bottom of their feet, which indicated clearly that the students were in retreat. National guardsmen who were adjacent to the state police were never ordered to load their weapons. No lock-and-load order meant that the National Guard did not feel or see any imminent danger. There were five police agencies on the scene the night of the tragedy, including army intelligence representatives and three hundred law enforcement officers. Of that total only nine claim that they felt threatened, and the others did not see the imminent danger. Even now, some thirty-plus years later, there has never been an unbiased or objective investigation of any of this tragedy on the part of the state of South Carolina. Ramsey Clark, U.S. attorney general at the time of the massacre, stated later that "in a generalized sense the thought at Orangeburg was the thought of the nation and the people. Our failure to right grievous wrongs permitting conditions to arise in statutory rights and of their opportunity for personal fulfillment in our society. In a specific sense, the shooting was a failure of discipline and professionalism in law enforcement and the leadership's racist attitudes. I think people in charge of law enforcement contingencies that are working in these highly volatile areas must recognize their responsibility and realize that the men will be under a lot of pressure and the risks of shooting people are real and present."[2]

The Orangeburg Massacre remains an example of how government officials, segregationists, and much of the mainstream press did on some occasions collaborate to protect their interests and cover up police brutality and the carnage that characterized the Orangeburg student movement and the student movement in general.

The South Carolina Council on Human Relations and the state chapter of the American Association of University Professors called on the governor, Robert McNair, to appoint a blue-ribbon commission to carry out a complete investigation into the case and circumstances surrounding the tragedy and disclose its finding and recommendation.

The governor stated, "A full disclosure of the facts is essential because of concerns and confusion over the tragedy and because of the pressing urgency that the facts be made public." A University of South Carolina sociologist submitted a proposal to the governor to investigate, but the governor rejected the request, and no state agency ever investigated the tragedy.

Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, called upon Governor McNair to "rise up above the usual politics and posture of South Carolina and acknowledge that the patrolmen made a mistake. That they shot without any gunfire coming from the campus. That it was a tragic error and that South Carolina wants to start over again," but all efforts by outside agencies and groups to secure an apology or admission of guilt were for naught.[3]

Without an honest and objective assessment of the cause of the police riot in Orangeburg, the perimeter of the killing grounds expanded, increasing the numbers of victims to include Kent State, in Ohio, Jeff Miller, Sandy Scheurer, Bill Schroeder, and Allison Krause; Jackson Mississippi—Jackson State, Jim Hill, Phillip Gibbs, and James Green; North Carolina A&T State—Willie Grimes and the many who were critically wounded. Some of the victims were wounded emotionally, some lost faith in law enforcement, government, democracy, and their ability to secure justice. Some were crushed by the indifference and lack of respect for human decency.

The common threads woven through these tragedies include racism, classism, sexism, and the overzealous and undertrained lawmen of the FBI's COINTELPRO and army intelligence. The real question then and now is what is happening in a society when it becomes unconscionable, sinister, and inhumane to the point that it destroys its young under the pretext of law and order. How can a nation expect young citizens to believe in justice and democracy when they observe lawmen trampling on the ideals of freedom, justice, and peace? Because the Orangeburg Massacre was state-sponsored terror and because there has not been an effort by the state to unveil the truth, the list of victims goes beyond the students wounded or killed and goes beyond their families and loved ones.

I was the *only* person arrested. The only person tried. The only person found guilty and sentenced. I did not commit a crime, and the date on the indictment was changed from the night of the shooting to two nights prior to the shooting (the change of dates created case law). The S.C. attorney did not want to proceed with a trial, because there was not any evidence, but Governor McNair insisted that the state go forward. All of the original charges were dropped, and in two of the three Riot Act charges the judge ruled a "directed verdict" because of lack of evidence. All of the people who testified against me were white law enforcement officers. In the only testimony or evidence that could be used to secure a guilty verdict against me, a white South Carolina Law Enforcement Division officer lied and testified that he saw me on top of a fire truck on the night of February 6, 1968, saying, "Burn, baby, burn." I was found guilty of a "one-man riot" and

sentenced to one year hard labor. There was no justice. It was a legal sham. I was summoned to serve the time while my wife was pregnant with our first baby daughter. My daughter was born while her father was away doing time for a crime he did not commit. We named her Nosizwe (Child of the Nation) Abedemi (Born While Father Is Away) Sellers.

Apart from those killed and wounded, who are the victims of the Orangeburg Massacre?

The first victim is justice. The second victim is truth. The third victims are many ordinary citizens who have waited for those responsible to admit their complicity in the cover-up and in the atrocities against humanities. An admission of truth and contrition would allow healing and reconciliation to take place. The denial and distortion continue to place a heavy burden on all citizens, black and white. The denial prevents closure and healing.

In my travels across the state of South Carolina, older men and women who supported the movement in their own ways, some with what little money they could spare, others with quiet dignity, and still others who attended the rallies, marches, and demonstrations, have told me how they prayed for me during my Orangeburg ordeal. I have also had young whites, Orangeburg natives who were children and/or students in 1968, still trying to reconcile the tragic set of circumstances surrounding the Orangeburg Massacre.

Each year families of the slain students, college administrators, and people of good will along with current students commemorate the tragedy, although some critics argue with the effort to continue to commemorate the death and the wounding. A memorial cross with a granite monument is located in the campus center, and a health and physical education building is named Smith, Hammond, and Middleton in memory of the three who lost their lives.

I can understand all of the tears and mourning. Lord knows, I have shed many tears for all who were killed and those whose bodies or minds, and in some cases, both, were broken in the freedom struggle. In some instances they were friends and coworkers; sometimes I asked myself if I could be responsible for their fate by my introducing them to the freedom movement, but that is a moral question that I can never answer. I am proud of the fact that I helped some people to develop a social consciousness that led to their empowerment. They could then gain control over their lives and help bring about change. I always focused on the overall goal to create a better world for all of humanity. In the case of Orangeburg I was a local boy doing exactly what I was supposed to be doing. I didn't hurt or threaten anyone. I was home. This focus, plus the responsibility of family and an understanding of the American protest tradition, forced me to deal with the ugliness, bitterness, and anger that had built up inside me, a result of numerous persecutions.

I wanted to continue to be relevant and rational. I wanted to be a good father figure, not just to my children but to all children. I maintain an abiding faith and

a deep spirituality. I also maintain hope for reconciliation. I want to grow, love, and live. Having control over my life requires me to make important adjustments, so I will continue to remember those in the freedom struggles who suffered and who were killed. The memory of being shot down like dogs, seeing students die while using segregated facilities, and grudgingly being provided medical attention remains vivid and horrific. I will constantly purge myself of the enmity while never giving up the fight for equality, truth, and justice, the overall objective of the freedom struggle and the student movement. We live in a broken world, so we must maintain a level of mutual trust just to survive. Maintaining that requisite level of mutual trust requires that I continue to struggle and resist. Struggle and resistance were the two concepts that kept me alive and able to focus on equality, justice, and truth.

I like to use this analogy. There is a man in a damaged boat. The boat has a hole in its bottom. The boat is away from the dock. If the man bales the water, he keeps the boat from sinking, but if the boat is out in the bay it serves no purpose. If he paddles the boat to the dock, it will fill up with water before it gets to the dock. What does the man do to resolve his dilemma? He must do both. He must paddle and bale. Patience and vigilance are very vital characteristics to possess, but one must struggle in order to resist; and one must resist in order to struggle.

As I close, let us not forget that more than thirty-five years after the S.C. state troopers went onto the campus of SCSC, at 10:30 P.M. at night, opened fire and used lethal force on unarmed high school and college students, killing three and wounding many more than the twenty-seven, there is no blue-ribbon review/investigation. Nor is there any sign of contrition, reconciliation, truth, or justice. The massacre remains the litmus test for race relations in South Carolina. A veil of secrecy and silence has been draped over the massacre as if it never happened. State officials from 1968 as well as many current members of the state legislature have a collective sense of denial. I often wonder if that disorder would exist if the dead and wounded had been Clemson students. Governor McNair's original distortion of the truth about what really happened, and his dogged determination to live with the sense of denial, have prevented traction by those who would like to see some investigation to find the truth, an apology, contrition, justice, and restitution.

As time passes the freedom fighters must pass the torch and the legacy of what we have learned. Hegel concluded "it is solely by risking life that freedom is obtained. The individual who has not staked his or her life may no doubt be recognized as a person, but he or she has not obtained the truth of this recognition as an independent self-consciousness." Knowledge of the freedom struggle and the role of students will create the consciousness and give force to the next generation of organizers, student activists, and field secretaries. They will pick up the torch and step onto the stages of history, bringing humanity even closer to

the ideals of freedom, justice, and peace. They will carry the banner for the Orangeburg student movement and assure that justice prevails. This group will insist that South Carolina will embrace diversity and equal opportunity for all citizens and create an environment where students, black or white, can never again get caught in the crosshairs.

Notes

1. Jack Bass and Jack Nelson, *The Orangeburg Massacre,* 2nd ed., revised (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1984), 197, 150.
2. Ibid., 190.
3. Ibid., 85

Jordon M. Simmons III

On the eighth night I remember I went to class, and that afternoon, like I normally would do almost every day, I made my way over to Claflin, where my fiancée was attending school, and I spent time with her that evening. And upon leaving, just prior to leaving, we heard the noise, and I think the students were coming in saying that, you know, there were things going on at the front of the campus, in front of State's campus. And she turned to me and she said, "Well, please don't go off campus." I said, "Well, I'm not going to go off campus." And I told her I would not go off campus. And walking through, I crossed over into State's from Claflin's campus, I ran into Dean Henry Hammond . . . and he was walking up there. He was just walking to campus, you know, patrolling, so to speak, and he was headed up there. And I said if he's going, I'm going to see what's going on also. I think we heard sirens going over. It was not long before the shooting itself, I do know that.

Immediately, instinctively, I dropped to the ground, and within a second, within two or three seconds I began to hear rounds going past my ears. I felt my coat like it was being—somebody was trying to pull it off, you know, with—what it really was, was rounds hitting my coat, and then I got hit. Prior to being hit, just before—prior to being hit I heard some people, you know, people started yelling. In fact, I remember hearing somebody laugh just before we realized we were being shot at. We thought they were shooting in the air. It entered right here and just missed my spine.

I didn't see much, really. I remember running, getting up and moving. I think the coat that I had on probably formed, functioned as a compress, maybe. I don't know; I had a large overcoat on. I remember asking him, I said, "Joe, can you see? Am I just nicked?" I was hoping that it just—that I just got grazed, you know. And he said, "No, it looked like there was a hole there, Jordon." I said, "Oh gollylee." You know, and we got on to the infirmary, and there was blood all over the place. I mean, people were lying around yelling

and screaming, and the poor nurse on duty, she was—she was a mess. She—I mean she had never seen anything—it was worse than any combat situation. Let's put it this way. It was probably . . . [similar] to a combat situation in the war. The official count was twenty-seven plus three, actually. Three died and twenty-seven injured.

I recall being awakened by my mother, probably at about two or three o'clock in the morning. She was told that I had about a fifty-fifty chance of making it, you know, based on, I don't know how they came up with those statistics, but they did tell her that. And her driving goal at that point was to get up there and to talk to me and to make certain that if I was to die that I did not harbor any hatred or anger towards the people—towards the people. And she said that she talked to me about that, and she told me that while I was going and passing in and out subconsciously that probably burned into my mind. I've never, you know, if those guys, any—the guy that shot me was to walk into here today, I would not harbor any hard feelings towards him. In all probability he felt that he was doing what he felt was right, but he was scared. But she was fearful, she did not want me to stay here. She did not want me to be operated on. She didn't want them to touch me. So she got me out as soon as she could, and I was taken to a hospital in Charleston. And I was operated on a day or two, within the next day or so.

Jack Bass

I'm Jack Bass, and I'm from North. For those of you who do not know where North is in South Carolina, North is ninety miles southeast of Due West. By geography.

I first really want to thank Vernon Burton and Bo Moore for putting this whole conference together and providing this much larger context to discuss this extremely important episode in South Carolina history, in South Carolina civil rights history. And it's especially timely now, because what is really happening today is we're having a situation in which history is colliding with the present. And it is timely because of the events on the campus of S.C. State, its oral history, and Governor Hodges's apology and presentation, and Governor Sanford this year made a formal apology. And which then resulted in Senator Robert Ford calling for reparations and Senator Darrell Jackson of Richland County and Senator Ford in separate pieces of legislation calling for an official state investigation, and so that is now in play, I guess we can say. I'm going to come back at the end to why the screen is up.

But first let me just give you the facts of what actually happened that week, and I'll try and summarize it quickly. Students protested the segregationist policy of the only bowling alley in Orangeburg. This is in 1968, four years after

passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which outlawed discrimination in public accommodations. And . . . there were some questions [about whether] a bowling alley [was] covered, and in the end the courts said, yes, this bowling alley was covered because it had a snack bar in which a substantial amount of food moved in interstate commerce, and I won't get into the legal history, but maybe I should with legal historians here. But—well, maybe I should. It was covered under the Interstate Commerce Clause of the Constitution because the U.S. Supreme Court in 1883 ruled unconstitutional the Civil Rights Act that had passed earlier under the Fourteenth Amendment, and that was the reason.

And so, when students protested and came back the second night there was a confrontation at the bowling alley, and students were arrested in order that they might have the legal challenge made. And then the police chief, who was new to Orangeburg, he was a good police chief. He had closed the bowling alley the first night, but for reasons not very clear he called in a fire truck for precautionary reasons. When the fire truck comes in with—you know, with red lights and so forth, just after students had been released from jail and when—after the arrest that night some of the students who weren't arrested went back to the campus as a movie was letting out, and several hundred students came down five blocks to see what was going on. They were beginning to head back toward the campus when the fire truck came. The police chief did not realize that several years earlier in Orangeburg, a fire truck was used in 1960 to hose down students who were protesting at South Carolina State. So the appearance of the fire truck changed the dynamics of the situation. And let me just say bowling never stopped that night, inside the bowling alley. But as students there was a surge toward the bowling alley and someone broke a side panel to the front door, cracked it, you know, fairly severely, and a police officer grabbed the student and others said he didn't do it. And then someone reportedly threw some liquid in a highway patrolman's face. Now, highway patrol had been brought in because of the events the night before and the bowling owner said he wanted protection and called the governor's mansion.

When the patrolman then supposedly swung his riot baton and hit someone and violence just erupted. By the end of the evening you had one police officer and ten students hospitalized with injuries. Other students treated at the infirmary. At least two instances, and there were faculty and staff of the college there observing, at least two instances in which a highway patrolman held a female student while another clubbed her.

So not surprisingly, when students returned toward the campus they were angry. They passed by a construction site, some picked up rocks, bricks, broke some windshields on automobiles, some windows in buildings along the way, broke four windows at a automobile dealer showcase, and the state of South Carolina response was as though this were the Detroit riot. In fact, the total

insurance claims for all the damages that night amounted to less than five thousand dollars.

So National Guard was called in the next day. More highway patrolmen were called in. I had been on the campus earlier and covered some things. I had met Cleveland Sellers the previous fall and done a story on him. He was organizing what were then black awareness groups. It was the beginning of African American studies programs really around the country. He was the quiet member of the trio that then was leading SNCC and thoughtful. He did have a large afro at the time, which to some people in Orangeburg looked like a fright wig. And I met members of the Black Awareness Coordinating Committee, and they had a meeting on the campus Wednesday morning. I got a call from a faculty member at home on Tuesday night, and the shooting occurs on Thursday.

The mayor came and the city manager and the chairman of Black Awareness Coordinating Committee had the microphone. He had an afro himself, a young man from New Jersey, and the city manager insisted that was Cleveland Sellers, who was present, and he was among the people who were rather laughing in response to the inadequate answers they were getting from city officials. And frustration was just sort of building on the campus, and the governor went on television and talked about the outside agitator, meaning Cleveland, who grew up twenty miles away and his mother is a graduate of South Carolina State.

You could—the tension kept building up, and some rocks were thrown at passing automobiles. The highway was blocked in front of the campus. The next day it was more of the same. The acting president, Maceo Nance, who was a tower of strength that week, in my opinion, sent word out students to remain on campus. I went by Cleveland Sellers's house that afternoon and interviewed him, and he said, "Everybody is looking for a scapegoat," which was sort of the headline on my story in the *Charlotte Observer* the next morning. That afternoon—that evening again—highway 601 in front of the campus was closed because of the rocks and so forth thrown. Also on Wednesday night, two white teenagers, who happened to be from North, came on the campus firing a pistol and got—went down a dead-end road, and finally the campus police chased them off campus and shot out a tire. They were never prosecuted.

There was a bonfire built, this was February 8. It was a cold night on a street just in front of the campus. Some boards were taken from a vacant house, a house that had been unoccupied for ten months, and about nine o'clock there were a few gunshots, .22 caliber pistol shots, fired from the Claflin campus over the head of some patrolmen. Another reporter and I went to look at that, and then we heard what sounded like an explosion. And asked the patrolman—the patrolman fired a riot gun in the air, and everything got quiet. Meantime, all of downtown Orangeburg was cordoned off.

Let me give you an example of how tense the situation was, because the other reporter and I went by the National Guard Armory and they were putting out a

news release. It took a half hour, you know, I mean the sergeant typing and the corporal correcting and the lieutenant editing and the captain looking at it, and finally the major releases it. And it was about one sentence each of the two—myself and another reporter—could add to our story, and we had a foot race to a pay telephone booth a block away, and I won. And as soon as I picked up the phone, you know this city police car comes roaring up, slams on brakes, and officers jump out on both sides with guns drawn. And I wasn't trying to be cute, I mean, I was just sort of spontaneous. I said, "Do you want to use the phone?" But that's how tense things were, and by the time we got back to what had been Check Point Charlie the shooting had occurred.

And here's what happened. You had five, as Cleveland said, you had five different law enforcement agencies, SLED, the Highway Patrol, National Guard, city police, and the sheriff's department, operating on five different radio frequencies. All the crowd control, riot control manuals at that time, I'm talking about the National Guard, the Army, the FBI, 'cause Jack Nelson and I looked at all of them, had a couple of provisions. One is, nobody fires a weapon unless a senior officer gives an order. Now the National Guard that night was operating that way, and they never loaded weapons. Highway patrolmen were instructed, each officer to decide for himself whether or not his life or a fellow officer's life might be in danger. Direct violation of procedures. They were armed with riot guns, short-barrel shotguns, which by dictionary definition are weapons used to disburse a crowd or mob and not intended to maim or kill. Now for those of you who are hunters will understand the distinction easily between bird shot and buckshot. But a shotgun shell, they all look alike on the outside. On the base of them there is a number, it goes anywhere from zero-zero, a double-ought, to nine, and number nine is what you use for clay pigeons, very tiny pellets. Number eight is slightly larger, for small birds, you know. Number four might for duck hunters. Double-ought, as Cleveland said, is for deer hunting. Each shell contains nine to twelve pellets each the size of a .32 caliber pistol slug, and when it is shot they disburse out. They're lethal, and that's what was issued to the patrolmen.

And when the bonfire reached a certain height, chief of SLED thought, you know, it might endanger some overhead wires, so they called in a fire truck, and then policemen moved to protect the firemen. They moved—you had sixty-six patrolmen moved to the edge of the campus, there were also a few city policemen in there. And as one of the policemen came to the edge, someone, the students then retreated to the interior, someone threw into the air a banister rail about this big taken off the house. As a patrolman looked up, it hit him right in the face, had teeth marks on it. It knocked him down with a bloody face, some people thought he'd been shot. The ambulance was called in. Now the official reaction the next morning, the explanation was, that's what caused the shooting.

What actually happened is the officer was placed in a patrol car and taken to the hospital. By the time the ambulance driver got there he'd already been

moved. The ambulance driver had gotten out and had walked around several minutes before the shooting began, so at least five minutes had lapsed.

Here's what actually happened. The students retreated. They came back toward the patrolmen, who were behind the embankment, and as they got about twenty feet away, now a couple were throwing a few small things. And people in front were saying, "Don't throw things." One officer fired what he thought were warning shots, bang, bang, bang, and as soon as those shots were fired, eight- to ten-second fusillade of shotguns, pistols, followed. Now this is eight seconds. Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. That's what eight seconds of gunfire would sound like. The sky lit up, and of course as soon as, you know, when the first shot went out people thought they were firing blanks or in the air and immediately realized they weren't. Now the—when it was all over, and you'll see this on the video, but what Cleveland I don't think fully explained was he ended up being convicted of riot. He was shot that night and served seven months of a one-year sentence in state prison. And I think what I've described is a level of confusion that existed. They had a bullhorn. They had tear gas. None of that was used.

The video that you're about to see is based on—before I get to that just a couple other things. In terms of—when Cleveland Sellers got pardoned ten years ago by the state Pardon, Probation, and Parole Board. Seven-member board unanimously voted for a pardon after an investigation, and then this video you're about to see a couple of weeks ago, I thought, you know, we should have some excerpts from this oral history just to demonstrate. And I went down to my office eight o'clock one night and had gotten from Marvin Dulaney the transcripts of eight of the people who had returned who had been shot. And after reading them all, I realized that within those transcripts you could pull out excerpts in which they would tell the story of what happened that night. And this what you're going to see is a rough cut. It's not really a documentary. It has a similar format, but it's very much a rough cut in terms of what video people would call production there as it has its flaws. In terms of content, I think it's very powerful.

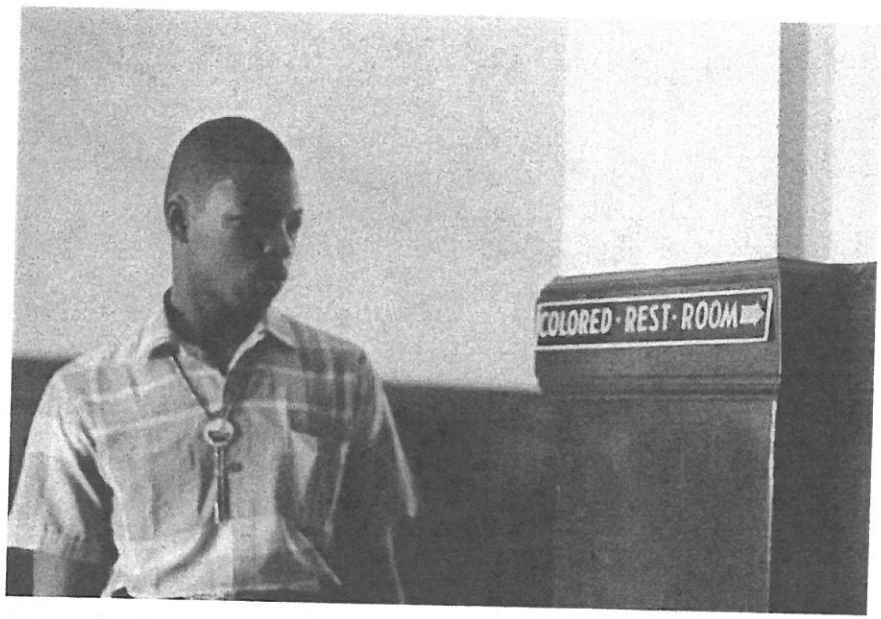
"We're Not There Yet"

Orangeburg, 1968–2003

William C. Hine

Forty years ago, on January 23, 1963, Harvey Gantt enrolled as the first black student at Clemson College, an episode characterized by the *Saturday Evening Post* as "integration with dignity." Thirty-five years ago, on February 8, 1968, three students were killed and twenty-seven young men were injured in the Orangeburg Massacre, an event no one associates with dignity—not to mention nonviolence or peaceful change.

Though—and unlike Kent State—the Orangeburg Massacre has been all but ignored by American historians, it has endured in South Carolina's past as one



29. Waiting for "equal justice under law": Orangeburg County courthouse, 1959. Photograph by Cecil J. Williams