

LEGACY TODAY

INTERVIEW THREAD ONE

Directions: Underline key phrases and new details as you watch and listen to the interviews. When finished, select one or more historical details to investigate further.

CLIFFORD ALEXANDER, Chairman, U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission, 1965-1968

"To me it was how he stood on race, and he was unflinching. He didn't say there ain't no Booker T. in him, to be street about it. This is a man, you know, not [Frederick] Douglass either. Nobody is anybody but Martin if it's Martin. But you didn't get a sense that 'Well, what you ought to do is get trained to work out in the tobacco fields because you won't have the other opportunities. You're better off taking the little that they give you.'

"I don't think he wanted us to take anything other than all that we deserve, and I think I've never seen anything that he wrote or heard anything that he said that was less than that. He was gentle about it, he worked the Lord into it a fair amount, but he didn't say, 'Now, if things don't work out this way, do a little bit of what the devil tells you to do,' or 'accept your place in society.' Never that, and that's what radicalism in the best sense is about, that you're willing to take on the society, that you're willing to use the power that you've made. I think that in many ways as I say that, that radicalism is using the power that you have, which he accumulated a lot of, but not for his material self. But use that to help transform the society for the better. And he did use it to transform the society for the better."

JOSEPH CALIFANO, Special Assistant to President Lyndon Johnson, 1965-1968

"...People forget, you know, I say -- I always say, we're living in Lyndon Johnson's America. In some respects, you could say we're living in Lyndon Johnson's and Martin Luther King's America, because the one thing they both knew, the one thing Lyndon Johnson and Martin Luther King knew was that he couldn't have gotten the Voting Rights Act passed without King, that he couldn't have gotten the Civil Rights [Act] of '64 passed without King, and we never would have fair housing.

"Unfortunately, it was King's life that gave the opportunity for Johnson to finally get it passed. But think about that, what a partnership. Can you imagine two guys saying, 'Well, what did we do? We, we passed a law ending discrimination for anybody that uses federal funds, we passed a law to give everybody in this country the right to vote, especially including these Negroes who have been denied it for so many years, and we passed a law saying you can live wherever you got enough money to buy a house.' Pretty good tribute for those two guys."