

Title: Julian Bond: Reflections from the Frontlines of the Civil Rights Movement  
Program Subjects: African American Studies; History  
Year Produced: 2012  
Directed by: Eduardo Montes-Bradley  
Produced by: Soledad Liendo  
Distributed by: Filmmakers Library  
Reviewed by: Timothy Hackman, University of Maryland  
Format: DVD  
Running Time: 32 minutes  
Color or B&W: Primarily color, some B&W  
Audience Level: Jr. High – General Adult  
Review:

This very brief “biographical sketch” of Julian Bond is composed mostly of interviews with the professor, former NAACP chairman, twenty-year veteran of the Georgia state legislature, and co-founder of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). The film, created for the 2012 Virginia Film Festival at the University of Virginia, is at its best when Bond is discussing his family history and early years as the son of a prominent educator. (His father, Horace Mann Bond, was president of historically black Fort Valley State College in Georgia and Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, and there are photos of young Julian and his father with such luminaries as W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Robeson, and Albert Einstein.) These early sections, however, are marred by poor-quality narration, clumsy voice reenactments, and some amateurish and distracting cuts.

Bond had a pivotal role in founding SNCC and contributed to the 1963 March on Washington, but the film fails to shed any new light on these events or on the history of the Civil Rights Movement as a whole. His career after these events, including four terms in the Georgia House of Representative, six terms in the Georgia Senate, eight years as the first president of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and twelve years as Chairman of the NAACP, are dealt with summarily (and, in the case of SPLC, not at all) in approximately six of the documentary’s thirty-two minutes. The viewer is left with a vague impression of Julian Bond as a person, and an even more vague impression of his cultural and historical significance. Today, Bond is Professor Emeritus in the Department of History at the University of Virginia and a Distinguished Adjunct Professor in the Department of Government at American University. (Footage of Bond lecturing at UVA shows him to be a surprisingly inert public speaker, reading directly from his notes while his students look on with the glazed expressions of bored college students everywhere.)

Recommended only for libraries with comprehensive African American studies collections, or with specialized collections in the history of the Civil Rights Movement. For other libraries, this program is non-essential.

Reviewer Rating: Recommended with Reservations