



# Transcript

## Cecil Williams - Civil Rights Part 1

**Williams:** A lot of people may have heard of me through the civil rights photography that I've done over the years. You can imagine that a young person growing up and the civil rights movement is exploding all around them. And so it was my good fortune to, beginning at eleven years old, taking photographs of what became the civil rights movement.

At eleven years old, with a twin-lens camera that my mother bought from Sears Roebuck, which it was at that time, I took this picture of Thurgood Marshall getting off of a train in Charleston, South Carolina. And he had come to argue the...one of the...the Briggs case, which was the first case connected to the Briggs v. Elliott and then the Brown v. Board of Education case.

But to the mind of an eleven-year-old, at that time, I really...I really didn't understand quite...really what his purpose was there or, for that matter, what was really going on. But all I knew was that this big lawyer was coming from New York. And a person took me to Charleston and I photographed him.

Incidentally, this photograph was used as the inspiration for outfitting Sidney Poitier when they came to South Carolina to do the motion picture called *Separate but Equal*. They outfitted Sidney Poitier exactly as you see here...he portrayed Thurgood Marshall in the film...down to the Samsonite suitcase.

Here's a photograph I have combined so that it tells a story through a series of collages. A lot of people have heard about the Orangeburg massacre. Here, what I attempted to do was to merge together several of the pictures connected to that incident. This street is the actual street where the students were killed. The young lady with the teardrop, which, by the way, we made with Vaseline—by putting Vaseline on her cheeks—is to simulate the hurt and hopelessness of, of those times of rigid segregation and the tragedy involved with the Orangeburg....

End.