

A Poem for two Voices

When I was a slave

Voices of Freedom

Julia Brown

Both

Diane Nash

You can't imagine what a hard time I had

I was 13 years old at surrender

I was really feeling stifled that fall

I never went nowhere else

Here I am shut in

I had such a hard time

I worked hard always

I felt very vulnerable

from sunup to sundown

We knew the civil rights movement had brought out this kind of hostility

When you are that age, you don't feel powerful

We was 'fraid to go any place

Who's trying to change these things

Run, nigger, run. De patty rollers'll get you

We decided to be respectful of the opposition

Run, nigger, run. You'd better get away

we thought that laughing would be insulting

we didn't want to create that kind of atmosphere

We started feeling the power of the idea whose time had come

The sit-ins were really high charged, emotionally

Slaves was treated in most cases like cattle

We would practice how to protect your head from a beating

Mr. Jim was very mean to the slaves.

and how to protect each other

He'd go round and beat 'em
and do all sorts of cruel things

If one person was taking a severe beating

we would put our bodies in between that person and violence

he was whipped, give fifty or more lashes.

so that the violence could be more distributed

We didn't have all the pain-easin medicines then

and hopefully no one would get seriously injured.

We were scared to death

Sometimes the slaves would run away

We promised ourselves and each other that if it took twenty years,

Sometimes they would live in caves

or as long as it took

My uncle was married

we weren't going to stop working on it and trying,

his wife had been bought by the speculator and he never did know where she was

until Alabama blacks had the right to vote

Some of the white folks was very kind to their slaves.

We heard these newscasts that other cities had demonstrations

it really helped

Because there were more of us

And it was very important

We wasn't allowed to go around and have pleasure as the folks does today

We cried when we heard about the bombing

Oh! It was pitiful to see chillen taken from their mother's breasts

we felt like our own children had been killed