

INTRODUCTION TO NOLA RESISTANCE

Grades 6–12

LESSON 2: Young Leaders of New Orleans

Dodie Smith-Simmons Oral History Transcript

Smith-Simmons was interviewed by Mark Cave at the Williams Research Center in New Orleans on August 21, 2017, for the NOLA Resistance oral history project. Below is an excerpt from their 96-minute interview.

CAVE: Talk about the training that you went through to be a member of CORE?

SMITH-SIMMONS: Well, we had to listen to talks about non-violent direct action. We had to listen to them talk about Gandhi. We had to go to the library and get books on Gandhi. We had to do a fast at St. Aug School in the middle of the winter on their—I guess playground. We couldn't talk, we couldn't eat. This was the way of learning discipline. Then we had social dramas where some of the CORE members would be the "sit-in-ers" and the others would be the perpetrators. We were slapped, we were thrown off the chair and we were called names. And those kinds of techniques.

My mother didn't think I should join. Because when Dorothy told her what they had to do, my mom says to me, "The first time somebody look at you wrong, they got a fight on their hand," but I learned to overcome that. I'm non-violent to this day. I not only use it as a technique; I use it as a way of life.