

Charles Mc Dew: “Why The Others Died”

“The only thing that will make our lives or our deaths meaningful is that we tell the story of why we did what we did and why the others died.”

[Charles McDew](#) describes the terror of imprisonment and threats to the lives of Civil Rights Movement activists and others during the freedom struggle in a [Moth Radio Hour](#) story, “Why The Others Died” (9/30/2014).

In the conclusion to his chilling and tragic story, he notes, “It gave me to understand that it is not a struggle of black people or white people dominating black people; it is a struggle of people without power being exploited, run over, and destroyed.”

Background on Charles McDew

Charles McDew led his first demonstration in the eighth grade, to protest violations of the religious freedom of Amish students in his hometown of Massillon, Ohio.

McDew’s career as an activist expanded in scope while he was a freshman at [South Carolina State College](#) in Orangeburg, SC. Inevitably Charles McDew involved in the newborn sit-in movement, he was elected as student leader by his fellow demonstrators.

McDew attended the founding conference of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) at Shaw in April 1960 while a student at South Carolina State and a member of the [Orangeburg Movement for Civil Improvement](#). He served as the second chairperson of SNCC, from 1961-1963.

1963 SNCC fundraiser at the home of actor and activist Theodore Bikel. (l-r) Ivanhoe Donaldson Chuck McDew, Lorraine Hansberry, Nina Simone, Theodore Bikel, and James Forman. (c) LHLT private collection.

McDew has been active in organizations for social and political change, working as a teacher and as a labor organizer, managing anti-poverty programs in Washington, D.C., serving as community organizer and catalyst for change in Boston and San Francisco, as well as other communities.

He has appeared on countless radio and television programs as a speaker against

racism. McDew recently retired from Metropolitan State University, Minneapolis, MN, where he taught classes on the history of the civil rights movement, African-American history, and in social and cultural awareness. [Bio from [SNCC 50th Anniversary website](#).]

[Listen to and share Chuck McDew's story here.](#)