



Dr. Charles Person dreamed of becoming a nuclear physicist and joining the space program while he was growing up. Extremely gifted in mathematics, he was accepted into MIT. Coming from a family of **seven** with a father working two jobs kept him from attending. He wanted to attend the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) but was denied admission due to segregationist policies, so he enrolled at Dr. King's alma mater Morehouse College in his hometown of Atlanta. There, Dr. Person **became involved** in the Civil Rights Movement.

Dr. Person was the youngest of the original thirteen Freedom Riders sponsored by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). He was on the Trailways bus attacked in Anniston and Birmingham. Even though he was injured, no hospitals would admit him. Dr. Person says that the emotional and physical trauma has lingered over the years. In the 1990s, he was finally able to have a large knot at the base of his skull removed from when he was hit in the head during the attack. He also finds himself unexpectedly affected sometimes by what happened when he speaks to groups. Dr. Person, amazingly, has no anger and regrets not having the chance to sit down and talk to his attackers in the many years following the violence in Birmingham. Dr. **Person** states, "There's no hatred in me, life is too precious to spend your time hating or disliking someone."

Following the Freedom Rides, Dr. Charles Person continued to fight for equality. With a desire to integrate the military, he enlisted in the Marines, which at the time was the most segregated of the four branches of the military. He served in Vietnam for nine months and was exposed to the dangerous chemical, Agent Orange. After ten years, he became an officer and retired after twenty years in the Corps. He ran a technology company in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba before returning home to Atlanta to work as an **Electronic Technician** for the Public-School system there. Today, Dr. Person is active in his community and enjoys tutoring and mentoring young people. He recently wrote a book about his experiences as the youngest CORE Freedom Rider entitled, *Buses Are a Comin': Memoir of a Freedom Rider*, published in April 2021.

Reference source: "Freedom Riders: 1961 and the Struggle for Racial Equality," author Dr. Raymond Arsenault; NY Daily News; and AARP. Image courtesy of Ink Free News.