

The Honorable William Lacy Clay Sr.
U.S. Representative of Missouri (1969–2001)

Special Exhibit: Rainey Sesquicentennial

“We Want Our Rights, and We Want Them Now”

Representative Clay Sr. talks about the sense of urgency building in the civil rights movement during the 1960s.

Interview recorded September 10, 2019

I wasn't alone. I mean that was happening across the country in the '60s. The Blacks were sitting in on the buses, and the Black students and all they were, they weren't going along with this theory of gradualism. They said, "We want our rights, and we want them now." And that's what that 300,000 people who marched on Washington was about. "We, no, we're not going to wait. Wait for what?" And so I knew that I was going to win that election.