Civil rights leader Julian Bond with a student.

Civil Rights Leader Visits QC

SALIMAH KHOJA AND TAMAR HERMAN
Staff Writers

Civil rights leader Julian Bond joined the Queens College Community in commemorating Rosenthal Library’s recent acquisition of fellow activist James Forman’s personal writings and recordings on Feb. 17, in the library’s auditorium.

The auditorium was packed with more than 200 students, faculty and members of the public waiting to hear Bond, former chairman of the NAACP and active member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), speak about the quest for equal treatment in the 1960s and its ongoing struggle.

“It’s empowering that the way they had started the event talking about the clock tower and that it’s named after a student [Andrew Goodman] that was murdered for registering African Americans to vote in the South in 1964,” said Jenn Polish, senior. “We can look at the archives and actually spend time to find out about those intimate connections we have to activism history at Queens College.”

“It was mind boggling to see him [Julian Bond] in the flesh, I felt like ‘wow, what an honor, this is so historical’ this is like one of the pinnacles in my life,” said Emily December, sophomore.

The Forman collection was donated by the Forman family, including James Forman Jr., the civil rights organizer’s son, who was also present at the event. Forman’s collection consists of roughly 2,000 books, more than 2,100 pamphlets, audio and moving images. The collection will be categorized by QC faculty and graduate students to be made available for permanent use.

“We were looking for a place that would treat the material seriously,” said Forman Jr. “Ben Alexander, [head of the civil rights archives at the library] contacted me and I asked him a bunch of questions… all of his answers made sense… he sounded like somebody who really knew about civil rights archives… that’s we were looking for… that was basically all we really cared about.”

Bond recalling Forman’s bookish nature highlighted the Forman’s mantra, “Write it down, write it down.” As a result of this maxim, Forman, Bond and other members of the SNCC took extensive notes of daily activities, the work that they did to document their role in the civil rights movement, part of which can be seen in the Forman library.

Forman Jr. also mentioned that pamphlets about the Montgomery bus boycott circulated through Egypt during its recent revolution against dictatorship.

According to Queens College President James Muyskens, this connection to the civil rights movement and new addition to the civil rights archive, will be a “a magnet for scholars all over the world.”

“It’s going to be a beneficial to our students…especially those who do not know much about the Civil Rights movement, said Professor Evelyn Julimisse. “[The civil rights era] inspired many people of different races… it’s not really a black thing… it’s claiming to have a decency, a decent life.”