

**BRIARS IN THE COTTON PATCH  
THE STORY OF KOINONIA FARM**

**Script by  
Michael Booth & Faith Fuller**

Revised May 18, 2003  
TRT: 58:37 with credits  
TRT: 56:37 without credits

FADE UP FROM BLACK

PHOTO CLARENCE AND  
FLORENCE JORDAN

*“We knew exactly what we were getting into  
when we came.”*

KLANSMAN’S SPEECH

*“Two thousand marching Negroes invading  
your city!”*

LANG SHEFFIELD

*“This was a group that we did not know.  
They had a philosophy that was not familiar  
to the local people.”*

SUE ANGRY

*“You were expecting someone to get killed.”*

ALMA JACKSON

*“People would call them nigger lovers and  
communists.”*

*“It was an evil place.”*

BOBBY MATHIS

*“You would read things like, Rev. Jordan,  
he ain’t nothing but an agitator.”*

KOINONIA SIGN

ANDREW YOUNG VO

There is a simple farm in south Georgia  
where racism and religion once collided.

KOINONIA DANCERS

How ironic that this place that embraces  
love, tolerance and sharing could also be a  
place that has spawned fear, hatred and  
violence.

GRAPHIC TITLE  
MAIN TITLE SEEN,  
SECONDARY TITLE  
DISSOLVES ON

## **BRIARS IN THE COTTON PATCH**

THE STORY OF KOINONIA FARM

ANDREW YOUNG IN  
STUDIO  
CG TITLE:  
ANDREW YOUNG  
FORMER U.S.  
CONGRESSMAN, UN  
AMBASSADOR, AND  
MAYOR OF ATLANTA

KOINONIA SIGN

You may have never heard the name, but  
this mostly unknown place has a  
significance that stretches around the globe  
and across time.

I'm Andrew Young. When I first heard of Koinonia Farm, I was immersed in the Civil Rights movement.

Koinonia was a place where even some civil rights workers were afraid to go.

Why? Simply because it was a place where blacks and whites were living and working together as equals.

That may seem innocent in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century race integration was not only socially taboo, it was often against the law. Those who advocated integration literally placed their lives in danger.

This is the story of Koinonia Farm; a story that begins with a gentle activist named Clarence Jordan.

## Briars in the Social Fabric

CLARENCE JORDAN

HISTORIC CLARENCE  
JORDAN IMAGES

MILLARD FULLER  
INTERVIEW 1/5/02 (CUT &  
RE-ARRANGED) (19:04)

MILLARD FULLER (VO)

*“He was saying things that were unpopular. He was challenging conventional wisdom. (cut) When Clarence would stand up and say things like, should we be dropping bombs on people? How can you say you love somebody if you are going to be bombing them?”*

MILLARD FULLER (ON  
CAMERA) (20:02)

*“The thing that pricked people the most here in southwest Georgia, was the consistent way that Koinonia kept saying blacks are as good as whites. So I think Koinonia did serve as a briar, as an irritant in society.”*

HISTORIC  
PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
AMERICUS IN 1940’S

Southwest Georgia in the 1940’s. Two societies -- one white, one black – both

shackled by a system of segregation so deeply embedded in the culture that few even thought to question it.

ALAN  
ANDERSON/LOCAL  
HISTORIAN/7:36

*“In Americus in the 1940’s, if you were black, you had to pay a walking around tax.. the police would harass you if you were simply walking.”*

HISTORIC KOINONIA  
IMAGES 1940’S – 1950’S

ANDREW YOUNG VO

Into this white-dominated society a briar grew with little notice. Koinonia Farm was created in 1942 as an experiment in Christian living. Its founder was a preacher and Greek scholar named Clarence Jordan.

HISTORIC CLARENCE  
CHILDHOOD PHOTOS

Born in 1912 to the family of a prominent banker in Talbotton, Georgia, Clarence Jordan lived a privileged life. Like other white Southern boys, he attended church regularly and played a variety of sports at school.

He was shy but never backed down from a verbal fight, earning the nickname “Grump” for his serious attitude. His family thought

FLORENCE JORDAN/  
CLARENCE'S WIFE

he might use his verbal skills to become a lawyer. Clarence thought otherwise.

*“Clarence had had everything growing up. And it bothered him even as a child that some had and some had nothing. And as he grew older, he decided that he wanted to do something for the poor in The South ... “*

JORDAN COLLEGE  
PHOTOS

ANDREW YOUNG VO

Clarence went on to the University of Georgia earning a degree in agriculture. Initially, his plan was to use that knowledge to help poor black farmers improve their farming techniques.

But then he began to feel an overwhelming call to the ministry.

He enrolled at the Southern Baptist Seminary in Kentucky where he earned a doctorate degree in the Greek New Testament.

FLORENCE JORDAN

*“When he went to Seminary, he fell in love with the Greek and in his study he came across the idea of Koinonia. The actual*

HISTORIC KOINONIA  
SCENES

*meaning of the word is a commune.. or  
having things in common.”*

ANDREW YOUNG VO

What Clarence would do next would  
embroil him in controversy the rest of his  
life.

Along with his wife Florence and another  
couple, Martin and Mabel England,  
Clarence Jordan bought some neglected  
farmland near Americus, Georgia, to  
establish his experiment in Christian living.  
Koinonia Farm was to be a place where  
blacks and whites would be treated equally,  
and everyone would share their possessions.

CLARENCE COLLEGE  
SHOTS AND OLD FILM  
FOOTAGE OF FARMING  
AUDIO TAPE OF  
CLARENCE

*“... it became clear to us that God is the  
Father of all men irrespective of their race.  
We agreed we'd hold to that, regardless of  
the consequences.”*

ANDREW YOUNG VO

Gradually, other families joined the  
Koinonia experiment, including a liberal

pastor who brought his family from Green  
Lake, Wisconsin: Con Browne.

CON BROWNE  
FORMER KOINONIA  
RESIDENT/17:43

*“We wanted to demonstrate how people  
could live together ... solve their problems  
without violence.”*

ANDREW YOUNG

Koinonia Farm existed in peace nearly ten  
years before trouble started.

JOPHIE ANDERSON  
FORMER KOINONIA  
PARTNER/2:05:40

*“At first Clarence’s own personality carried  
the day. People were not suspicious.”*

JIM JORDAN  
CLARENCE JORDAN’S  
SON/19:36  
COVER WITH CLARENCE  
PHOTOS

*“I guess they thought my dad was a bit  
weird. He had some ideas that didn’t really  
fit in the south. He was -- I hate to use the  
word harmless -- that was sort of the way  
the local community saw Koinonia ... sort of  
slightly weird but nice folks ... no  
problems.”*

JOPHIE

*“But once suspicions were aroused ... for  
instance sitting down for a meal with a black*

IMAGES OF BLACK  
FARMERS

*farmer ... then it became very difficult for  
Koinonia to continue in Sumter County.”*

The first flames of hostility flickered across  
Sumter County when it became known that  
Koinonia was paying black and white  
workers equally.

CON/13:00

*“In the peak season, we would pay people  
\$4 per day. (cut) The farmers around were  
all forced to raise level of pay and that  
didn't go down very well.”*

REHEBOTH CHURCH  
SCENES (ARCHIVAL  
FOOTAGE)

The next culture shock came when members  
of Koinonia brought an Indian student to  
Sunday service at the little country Rehobeth  
Baptist church. It was the summer of 1950  
and people of color were not welcome at the  
all-white place of worship.