

This Light of Ours

Images 116, 117, 118 (01:49)

Matt Herron: Now of course the authorities came to arrest Mrs. Quinn and her children. The little boy in the foreground is Anthony Quinn, he's five years old. He's carrying an American flag. If you carried an American flag, you were proclaiming that you would like the laws of the United States to be enforced in the South. If you carried a Confederate flag, your message was, I like segregation and things just as they are. So a flag was a potent symbol and people were stopped by patrolmen and beaten because they had an American flag decal on their license plate.

Now we'll move to the next image where the highway patrolmen are attempting to collect the flags. As they were led down the steps, and the patrolmen sees the flag from five-year old Anthony, his mother said, "Anthony! Don't let that man take your flag!" And Anthony held on to it. I'm sure that the patrolman had never met with resistance from a small black child before. And he reacted as in the next picture.

He tried to wrench the flag out of the boy's hands, lifting him off the sidewalk. [There was] another policeman carrying the sign which said, "Stop police brutality."

The final picture in the series shows Anthony Quinn being led off to jail by Dr. June Finer. Anthony was already, at five-years old, a Civil Rights veteran. He had been sleeping in the front bedroom of his mother's home in McComb, Mississippi when a fire bomb came through the window, and the ceiling collapsed on him.