

Bernice Johnson Reagon Quotes

*People, Thinking, Rights, Song, School, Culture, Years, Enough, African
American, Community, Movement, Sweet, Research, May, Twenties, Coalitions,
Black, Successful, Establishing Relationships, Mean*

Life's challenges are not supposed to paralyze you, they're supposed to help you discover who you are.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

If you're in a coalition and you're comfortable, you know it's not a broad enough coalition.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I was at the Smithsonian for twenty years, and I'm still at the Smithsonian as a curator emeritus, and I still plan to figure out what that means for me at this point in my life

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I think the Civil Rights Movement changed that trajectory for me. The first thing I did was leave school. I was suspended for my participation in Movement demonstrations in my hometown, December, 1961

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

If, in moving through your life, you find yourself lost, go back to the last place where you knew who you were, and what you were doing, and start from there.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

There is nowhere you can go and only be with people who are like you. Give it up.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

If every moment is sacred and if you are amazed and in awe most of the time when you find yourself breathing and not crazy, then you are in a state of constant thankfulness, worship and humility.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

If we dwell in a community that is comfortable, then it's probably not broad enough a coalition.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Mothering/nurturing is a vital force and process establishing relationships throughout the universe.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

The voice I have now, I got the first time I sang in a movement meeting, after I got out of jail... and I'd never heard it before in my life.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

When I started graduate school I was interested in the culture of the Civil Rights Movement.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Well, the first time I ran into the term religion, people were asking whether you had any. You know, some people had religion and some people didn't have religion

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

The Civil Rights Movement also reaffirmed me as a singer. It taught me that singing was not entertainment, it was something else.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Personally I discovered that you could go through the academy as a young scholar, come out, and almost immediately have an impact on the academic environment.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

But I'm a historian. I wasn't interested in just being a producer, I was interested in doing research and presenting that research to a general public

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

The first job I had with the Smithsonian was as a field researcher

among African American communities in Southwest Louisiana and Arkansas for the festival.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Today whenever women gather together it is not necessarily nurturing. It is coalition building. And if you feel the strain, you may be doing some good work.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I came out of the Civil Rights Movement, and I had a different kind of focus than most people who have just the academic background as their primary training experience

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I went to a church where you could not sing out loud in the service until you had been saved

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I organized Sweet Honey In The Rock in 1973. The music was sanity and balance.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

At the same time all this was happening, there was a folk song revival movement going on, so the commercial music industry was actually changed by the Civil Rights Movement.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

If I had been at a University I don't think I would have been able to have the experience I had in my Smithsonian work. I don't think I have been as successful

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

So one of the things that happened with integration in the South is they found that the black teachers were much more educated than the white

teachers.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I started graduate school in 1971, I started working at the Smithsonian in the festival in 1972. I went full-time at the Smithsonian in 1974. And I got my doctorate in 1975.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Most people come out of their Ph.D. experience trying to prove themselves, trying to get ahead, trying to get published. You're scared everybody else is going to do your research and get your topic.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I just don't think one person has that much to contribute to any subject

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

Welcome to prekindergarten! You will not die if you discover that there are more lines out there than just your own. In fact, you'll discover that you will have an advantage if you know more of them!

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

I learned that if you bring black people together, you bring them together with a song. To this day, I don't understand how people think they can bring anybody together without a song.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

And I used to think that proof that I had religion was whether I knew how to sing all of the songs.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

What would you be like if you had white hair and had not given up your principles? It might be wise as you deal with coalition efforts to think about the possibilities of going for fifty years.

~Bernice Johnson Reagon

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