

Dallas County

9 COUNTIES TO GET VOTE AIDES TODAY

Katzenbach Lists Areas in South Considered as the Most Discriminatory

“Selma Alabama, seat of government for Dallas County, will have a federal examiner. Police resistance to street demonstrations in Selma, organized by Dr. King, attracted the attention of the nation to the voting discrimination problem, and set the stage for passage of the act.

“The Justice Department said that of the 14,400 whites of voting age in Dallas Co., 10,155 or 70.5 percent, were registered as of July 19, 1965. Of the 15,115 Negroes of voting age 1,470 – or 9.7 percent – were registered.

“Although most of the Negroes registered were added under court order since Dr. King opened demonstrations in Selma on Jan. 3, the department said the Dallas Co. Board of Registrars had rejected 1,416 of 2,693 Negro applicants since Feb. 4.

“These include at least 24 applicants with college educations and 97 with high school educations,” Mr. Katzenbach said. “Based on requirements of court decisions, more than half of those rejected in July should have been registered.” (*New York Times*, August 10, 1965, p. 1)

Dallas County was among the first nine Southern counties to get federal examiners. It was in the 23 counties of Group A, which were supposed to get federal examiners within three days of the signing of the VRA. In a July 9 “justification” memo to the Attorney General, AAG John Doar provided the facts that made their way into the news stories. Indeed, more than other counties Dallas County illustrated the difficulty of using the courts to achieve fundamental change. Doar wrote that “in spite of the fact that the litigation method of correction has been tried harder here than anywhere else in the South Negroes have not yet gained the most fundamental of their constitutional rights – the right to vote.” He identified some of the small errors made by applicants that led the Board of Registrars to reject their applications. What he didn’t say was that a major reason for the futility was that Dallas County was in the Southern District of Alabama, whose sole federal judge, Daniel H. Thomas, was a firm believer in preserving the status quo. (Belknap, 1991, 15:165, 197-99; Garrow, 1978, 23)

Doar first came to Dallas County in February of 1961, when he was the attorney in charge of voting rights in the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department. Four years later, when he became the Assistant Attorney General in charge of that division, he was still litigating in Dallas County. He found his initial local contacts by reviewing testimony given at a hearing held by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission in Montgomery in 1958-9. That led him to Amelia and Sam Boynton in Selma, who gave him their list of Negroes who had tried to register but had been rejected. After interviewing many potential witnesses Doar filed the first of several voting rights suits against the Dallas County Board of Registrars on April 13. When the case came to trial on May 2, 1962, only 242 Negroes – 1.6 percent of the NVAP – could vote in Dallas County. In November, Judge Daniel H. Thomas found that the Board of Registrars “has not engaged in racially discriminatory acts and practices” though he did say that those who had

failed the examination could reapply later. He was reversed a year later by the Fifth Circuit and told to enter an injunction against the very practices he had said did not exist. Doar later wrote that for “the next four years Civil Rights Division attorneys spent more time in Dallas County than in any other county in the South.” By the Spring of 1965 the DoJ had filed six separate suits in Dallas County. (Robinson, 1991, 217; Chestnut, 1990, 74; Branch, 1988, 410; *U.S. v. Atkins*, 1962, 442; Lawson, 1976, 278; Doar, 1978, 107-8; Landsberg, 1997, 185n17; Katzenbach testimony, House *Hearings*, 3-18-65, 2-8)

A very long history led up that day. Long before the civil rights movement or the DoJ’s Civil Rights Division existed, Negroes had been organizing in Dallas County. The first NAACP chapter formed in December of 1918. (Autrey, 1997, 1) Like most Alabama NAACP chapters, the Selma branch did not survive the hostile atmosphere of the 1920s; it revived decades later. The Dallas County Voters League (DCVL) was founded in the 1920s by Charles J. Adams, who had a safe federal job working for the post office. It too became dormant, until revived in the 1930s by Sam and Amelia Boynton. Graduates of Tuskegee Institute, they worked for the USDA in the 1930s. He was the agricultural extension agent for Dallas County’s 41,000 Negroes and she was the home demonstration agent. After they married in 1936, she started an insurance agency, which he joined when he retired two decades later. After Adams was pushed out of Selma in 1947 as punishment for his years of activism, Sam Boynton became the head of the DCVL, often acting as voucher at the registration office for those few Negroes permitted to register to vote. The fact that their incomes were not under the control of local whites gave them some independence. During their years serving Negroes in the rurals, they organized voter registration classes in the rural churches, working with the NAACP as well as several ad hoc organizations. (Robinson, 1991, 52, 110-111, 136-37; Chestnut, 1990, 53)

As the home of two Negro colleges, Dallas County had more well educated Negroes than was typical of black belt counties. The Alabama Baptist Normal and Theological School was founded in 1878 to train Negroes as ministers and teachers; it was renamed Selma University in 1908. The Alabama Lutheran Academy and College (renamed Concordia College in 1981) held its first classes in 1922. Both were two-year schools. These schools brought more Negro professionals to Selma than was usual outside of the major cities. One of Alabama’s few Negro lawyers – J. L. Chestnut Jr. – lived in Selma. These professionals were in many ways the most resistant to getting involved, at least publicly. They had the money and prestige that came from the best Negro jobs in the county. Since many of these jobs (especially those of teachers) were in the control of whites, they also had the most to lose. But as the natural leaders of the Negro community, they could indicate their approval or disapproval of civil rights activity in subtle ways, and did. When they did speak out publicly in favor of fighting for civil rights it made a big impression.

“Preachers and teachers” were often the same. Small rural churches couldn’t afford a full-time minister, so the pastors of many of these doubled as school teachers in the segregated schools. Frederick Douglas Reese, a local movement leader, was one of these. A graduate of Selma University, Reese taught in Wilcox County for nine years before returning home in 1960 to teach at Selma’s Negro high school. As president of the Selma City Teachers’ Association he exhorted his fellow teachers to register to vote, despite all of the obstacles, including the risk of losing their job. He said that they could not teach citizenship if they were not first-class citizens

themselves. (Reese NPS interview, 1)

The local white folk did not like Boynton's "disturbing ... our people" and tried to get him fired from the extension service. (Robinson NPS interview, 1991, 3) Boynton persevered, but it was slow going. Starting from a base of 55 registered Negro men in 1908 (out of a 1910 male NVAP of 9,997), the number of Negroes registered to vote peaked at 275 in 1956 then dropped to only 156 by the time Doar filed suit in 1961. The 1960 Census counted 15,115 Negroes of voting age living in Dallas County. (Lewinson, 1932, 216; Gomillion, 1957, 282; Katzenbach testimony, *Hearings on S. 1564*, 3-23-65, 10)

One reason for the lack of momentum was that Dallas County was a center of white resistance. Between 1889 and 1921, 17 people had been lynched – more than any other county in Alabama. The KKK had been a normal part of county life for decades. (Feldman, 1995, 126; 1999, 220, 267-68, 322). Dallas was the first county in Alabama to organize a white Citizens' Council in the wake of the 1954 *Brown* decision. With 3,000 members it was also the largest chapter in the state. Meeting in Selma's white junior high school on November 29, 1954 the white elite and middle class – merchants, bankers, plantation owners, professionals and elected officials – talked about how to use economic pressure rather than violence to keep Negroes out of white schools, and any other place they weren't wanted. These were effective. In the fall of 1955, 29 Negro parents applied to send their children to white schools. Sixteen lost their jobs within a month. Others lost clients and couldn't get credit. Some left town. All but a handful withdrew their names before school started. (Chestnut, 1990, 84-85; *NYT* 10-13-63, 77) In 1963, the DoJ sued the Dallas County Citizens' Council for intimidation.

The Negroes who didn't succumb to pressure were those whose income wasn't entirely dependent on local whites. Sam Boynton had helped to create this small class. While teaching Negro farmers better agricultural methods, he encouraged them to buy their own land and helped them find the financing to do so. He used his familiarity with government programs to channel resources their way. While these farmers were vulnerable to economic pressure, they weren't as vulnerable as those who were tenants, sharecroppers or employees. The Boyntons constantly pushed the envelope of what was possible on civil rights without going so far as to be killed or run out of town. Their son was the plaintiff in the 1960 Supreme Court decision which established that it was illegal for interstate carriers to maintain segregated way stations. Bruce Boynton was a student in Howard Law School in Washington, D.C. when he bought a bus ticket to Montgomery to visit his parents. When the bus stopped in Richmond he sat down in the white section of the diner and ordered a sandwich. Asked to move to the colored section, he insisted on being served first. He was arrested for trespassing. His conviction was upheld on appeal. The NAACP took over the case and persuaded the Supreme Court to reverse in 1960. *Boynton v. Virginia* led to the 1961 freedom rides, which showed that many bus stations were ignoring the law. Amelia Boynton's business as an insurance agent regularly took her to the surrounding counties where she talked with many Negroes about the importance of registering to vote. She provided many contacts to the DoJ when they were looking for potential plaintiffs and witnesses for law suits. (Robinson, 1991, 111-112, 183-4)

In mid-April of 1962, Sam Boynton joined 250 people at a two-day conference on integration held in Birmingham which was organized by the Southern Conference Educational

Fund (SCEF). After talking to representatives of several civil rights organizations as well as other grass roots activists, he asked SNCC for help in Dallas County. Jim Forman, executive director of SNCC, sent SNCCers to check out what was regarded as a very tough place. They reported back that “The white folks are too mean and the black folks are too afraid.” Foreman removed Dallas County from the list of possible projects until Bernard Lafayette begged for a project to run. Foreman said he could have Selma if he wanted it. (*SP* May’62, 1; Feb’65, 1; Lafayette interview V, 2002,13; Lafayette, 2013, quote on 5, 6)

Lafayette did his homework on Dallas County and SNCC obtained funds from the SRC’s Voter Education Project to support his work. By the time he and his new wife, Colia Liddell, both 22, arrived in Selma in January of 1963 Sam Boynton was in a nursing home incapacitated by strokes. Working out of Amelia Boynton’s office at 41 Franklin St., they held small meetings in people’s houses to talk up voter registration, trying to stay under the radar of white officials. They taught workshops in nonviolence at the local Catholic Church. They organized students from Hudson High School and Selma University to canvas almost all of Selma. Their efforts were supplemented by those of Marie Foster, who was running citizenship classes at Boynton’s insurance agency to teach Negroes how to pass the complicated registration test. Trained in SCLC’s CEP, she was a dental hygienist employed by her brother, Selma’s only Negro dentist, so her income was safe. Having spent years trying to get registered herself, she wanted to help others do the same. (Lafayette, 2013, 25, 28, 32, 35, 39; Lafayette interview, 2002, V:23-24, VI:14; <http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis63.htm#1963selma1>; Foster NPS interview, 1991; SNCC survey, 1963, 1276)

After Sam Boynton died on May 13, Lafayette announced that there would be a memorial service at Tabernacle Baptist Church the next day. Inspired by the Birmingham demonstrations which had just ended, 350 people walked a gauntlet of white sheriff’s deputies wielding clubs and cameras to hear SNCC leaders preach about freedom. This gathering was the first large civil rights meeting in Selma, but not the last. As the meetings increased in size, Dallas County Sheriff Jim Clark so harassed and arrested those who met and marched that the DoJ asked the federal court to issue an injunction against county officials. Displaying his hostility to the civil rights movement, Judge Thomas denied the injunction, but waited until March of 1964 to do so. (Lafayette, 2013, 50-57; <http://www.crmvet.org/tim/timhis63.htm#1963selma1>; Chestnut, 1990, 151-3, 161-5; *U. S. v. Dallas County*, 1964)

Bernard Lafayette returned to Fisk University in September. John Lewis, Worth Long, Prathia Hall and others came to lead a series of marches to the registrars. Very few Negroes succeeded in registering, but over 300 were arrested. SNCC called for a mass turn-out on October 7, declaring it to be “Freedom Day.” At that time, only about 250 Negroes were registered. Although the Fifth Circuit had overruled Judge Thomas on October 3 and enjoined the Dallas County board of registrars from using “discriminatory practices,” less than 40 of the 350 people who stood on line to register to vote were even examined. Four people were knocked about by police when two SNCC workers tried to bring food and drink to those waiting in line. Registration efforts peaked in October with 215 attempts and 204 rejections. Subsequently, the lines on registration days dwindled due to firings, evictions and lack of success. By the end of the year, not much progress had been made. Despite the concerted efforts of SNCC and the DoJ, only 48 Negro applicants out of 522 were allowed to register in all of 1963, while 785 whites

came to register and 573 left as voters. (<http://www.crmvet.org/tim/tim63b.htm#1963fdselma>; *SV* 11-11-63, 1,3; *NYT*: 9-18-63, 24; 9-25-63, 32; 9-26-63, 29; 9-27-63, 30; 10-8-63, 37; 10-13-63, 77; *CD* 10-10-63, 6; *WP* 10-9-63, 7; Lafayette, 2013, 101-3; *U.S. v. Atkins*, 1963; registration statistics in *Williams v. Wallace*, Appendix A) The year ended on a sour note. On December 16, Sheriff Clark raided the SNCC office and trashed the “freedom house” where staff slept. Nine people were arrested. All of SNCC’s literature was confiscated. (*SV* 12-30-63, 1; 1-20-64, 2)

Throughout the Spring of 1964 the movement made very little progress. The DCVL, now headed by Rev. Reese, held weekly mass meetings under the watchful eyes of sheriff’s deputies, but in the first six months of the year only 25 more Negroes registered to vote. Despite the fact that only one percent of voting age Negroes could vote, Rev Reese filed to run for the Selma City Council and Amelia Boynton decided to run for Congress. (registration statistics in *Williams v. Wallace*, Appendix A; 22:3 *SP* March ’64, 1; 5:6 *SV* 2-18-64, 3; 5:9 *SV* 4-28-64, 2)

Activity resumed when President Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act into law on July 2. Since Title II outlawed discrimination in public accommodations, Selma youth immediately tried to integrate white eateries and movie theaters. They were beaten by white mobs; over 60 were arrested by white cops in what SNCC called a “reign of terror.” Rev. Reese was put in jail for contributing to the delinquency of a minor. On July 9, county Judge James Hare enjoined all meetings. The *New York Times* wrote that “In Selma, Ala, a local judge has about 70 persons and organizations under injunction prohibiting any kind of racial demonstration and meetings of three or more persons. Sheriff James Clark and a posse of 400 white men have crushed the civil rights movement there.” Small meetings continued to be held in the rurals and the DCVL steering committee met in secret,¹ but public civil rights activity ceased for six months. (<http://www.crmvet.org/tim/tim64c.htm#1964selmainj>; Reese NPS interview, 1991, 3; Foster NPS interview, 1991, 11; *SP* 22:8, 1; *SV* 7-15-64, 1,3; 7-22-64, 2; *NYT* 7-6-64, 19; 7-7-64, 20; 7-8-64, 19; 9-3-64, 18; 7-26-64, E3)

The DoJ once again asked the federal District Court for an injunction ordering Sheriff Clark and other Dallas County officials to stop harassing people trying to register to vote. It also asked that Judge Hare’s injunction against meetings be dissolved. However, this time it did so under a provision in the 1964 Civil Rights Act which permitted it to ask for a three-judge court. Judge Thomas was only one of three judges who heard testimony from over 125 witnesses between December 8 and 22 of 1964. The other two were Rives and Johnson. The trial took

¹ The eight members of the DCVL who met informally called themselves the CCC – Clandestine Community Committee. (Foster NPS interview, 1991) They were: Marie Foster; Mrs. Amelia Boynton; Rev. J. D. Hunter, an insurance agent and a minister without a church; the Rev. Henry Shannon, Jr., a barber and minister without a church; Earnest L. Doyle, interior decorator; Ulysses Blackmon, a teacher at the Lutheran Church School; James Gildersleeve, principal at the Lutheran Church School; the Rev. F. D. Reese, who taught at Hudson High and pastored two churches. Only Reese was economically vulnerable to the wishes of whites and only for his teaching job. (“Living legends becoming our new memories” by Hank Sanders, *Demopolis Times*, August 5, 2004)

place in the federal courthouse in Selma with John Doar representing the DoJ. Local coverage of the parade of witnesses reminded Dallas county Negroes of all the grievances they had suffered while trying to register to vote. This time the federal court granted a federal injunction against local officials and dissolved the county injunction, but not until April of 1965, by when it was almost moot. (*Sun* 12-11-64, 19; *CD* 12-14-64, 9; 12-19-64, 1; *BAA* 12-19-64, 13; *United States v. Clark*, 1965)

Throughout the fall of 1964, Amelia Boynton, F.D. Reese and other representatives of the DCVL importuned SCLC and Dr. King to come to Selma. SNCC, they told him, had done all it could. In December, the SCLC Board finally agreed, after sending staff members C. T. Vivien (Negro) and Harry Boyte (white) in to assess the situation. On December 31, SCLC field staff distributed flyers around Selma announcing that Dr. King would speak at Brown Chapel AME church on January 2, 1965. (Boyte report of 12-14-64, SCLC IV 146:8; Chestnut, 1990, 188-189; Vivian NPS interview, 1991, 8; Reese NPS interview, 1991, 4; Garrow, 1986, 359, 369; *NYT* 12-29-64, 14; *WP* 12-30-64, A6)

“Selma”

Hundreds of people greeted Dr. King at Brown Chapel AME church on January 2, where he announced that “Today marks the beginning of a determined, organized, mobilized campaign to get the right to vote everywhere in Alabama.” City officials told the press that they would not enforce Judge Hare’s injunction against meetings now that it was in the hands of a federal court. (quote in Kotz, 2005, 254; *LAT* 1-2-65, 3; *WP* 1-2-65, A2; *NYT* 1-3-65, 1) In his January 5 State of the Union address, President Johnson declared that voting rights for all citizens was a priority of his administration.

Under Jim Bevel’s direction, SCLC and SNCC staff spent the next few weeks organizing meetings in Negro churches throughout the county to choose ward and block captains and hold classes in non-violence. The Rev. James Bevel and his wife, Diane Nash, had earned their spurs in the Nashville student movement, where many had learned non-violent direct action at workshops led by Rev. James Lawson of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. They put beliefs into action as organizers of the 1960 Nashville sit-ins and one of the 1961 Freedom Rides. Although they were founders of SNCC in 1960, Dr. King brought them onto the SCLC staff in 1962 in an effort to bridge the gap between SCLC and SNCC. SCLC sent Bevel into Selma because SNCC still accepted him as one of their own. He had been friends with Lafayette since their student days in Nashville. Bevel was in and out of Selma in 1963 and 1964 where he sometimes spoke at meetings organized by Lafayette. (Bevel report of 1-12-65, SCLC IV 146:10; Garrow, 1986, 197; Gaillard, 2004, 221, 227; Lafayette, 2013, 64) Bevel was the creative genius of SCLC; he saw possibilities where others only saw problems. Easy to spot in a crowd with his trademark overalls, shaved head and skull cap, he was also a little crazy.

In the first few weeks SCLC and SNCC worked together even though SNCC wasn’t happy about SCLC’s presence. SNCC felt that SCLC had invaded its territory and taken over its project after SNCC field secretaries did all the hard work. Even though Bevel and Lafayette worked together, SNCC was still smarting from the 1961 Albany movement where, as in Selma, the local movement had invited Dr. King and SCLC to come in after local people thought SNCC had done all it could do. Dr. King attracted worldwide press and major money, making SNCC feel eclipsed. (Williams NPS interview, 1991, 13; Lewis NPS interview, 1991, 4; Lewis, 1999, 303-4, 308; Morris, 1984, 243-46)

When Dr. King returned to Selma on January 14, he announced that there would be a new Freedom Day march on Monday, an official voter registration day. That day, Dr. King and SNCC Chairman John Lewis led 400 Negroes to the courthouse to demand that they be allowed to register to vote. In the afternoon staff and locals demanded service at over a dozen segregated eating places, now required by Title II of the 1964 Civil Rights Act to serve all without regard to race. Most establishments complied; a couple didn’t; one closed. Mass arrests, indiscriminate beatings and racist remarks by Sheriff Clark soon brought national press attention. (Lewis, 1999, 308-09; Selma Report of 1-28-65, SCLC IV 148:6)

Dr. King also announced publicly that integration drives would begin in ten blackbelt counties, without specifying which ones. (*NYT* 1-15-65, 14) That was a little optimistic. A month

later, Andy Young said SCLC would mount voter registration drives in Marengo, Perry, Wilcox, and Lowndes,¹ all of which bordered on Dallas County. (*NYT* 2-20-65, 12) SCLC was particularly interested in moving into Lowndes because it was in Judge Johnson's Middle District. He was much more willing to issue orders compelling registration than Judge Thomas, in whose Southern District the other counties were located. (Garrow, 1986, 389)

Between those two announcements, SCLC sent James Orange into Perry, Hale and Greene counties to get something going. (Orange FBI file) Born in 1942 and raised in Birmingham, he had joined the movement during the 1963 demonstrations in that city. He was a big man, in all senses of the word – 6'2, 275 pounds and committed to non-violence. SCLC soon brought him onto its field staff and made him a roving agitator. (*NYT* 2-22-08 obit)

Perry County

Perry County, immediately northwest of Dallas County, was created in 1819, on land formerly occupied by the Choctaws. It was named for a hero of the War of 1812, Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry of Rhode Island. The 1960 population of Perry County was 65.8 percent nonwhite, with 5,200 Negroes of voting age. Only 365 were registered to vote. The county seat of Marion was named for Francis Marion, otherwise called the "swamp fox." He was a Revolutionary War hero from South Carolina who promoted irregular attacks of a type now known as guerilla warfare. Marion was the home of two white colleges and had been the location of Lincoln Normal School, the predecessor to Alabama State University, which moved to Montgomery in 1887. Its 1960 population was 48.2 percent nonwhite.

During the 19th Century Perry County had a reputation for being one of the better counties for Negroes; none were lynched during the lynching era and 90 Negro men were registered to vote in 1908. (English, 2009; Feldman 1995, 126; Lewinson, 1932, 217) A white Citizens' Council was formed late in 1954, but in 1965 there was no KKK klavern. Nonetheless, Perry Co. was the scene of an international incident in 1957, when a Negro handyman was sentenced to death for stealing \$1.95 from the elderly white woman he worked for. The white jury was no doubt swayed by her testimony that he also tried to rape her, even though the defendant was not charged with that crime. The negative response to the excessive sentence was so great that Gov. Folsom received a thousand letters a day from all over the world and a telegram from Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. The Governor quickly granted clemency; in 1965 the memory was still fresh in the minds of local townspeople. (McMillen, 1971, 43; Dudziak, 2000, 3-8)

Although Marion Negroes hadn't marched before James Orange arrived, Perry County wasn't virgin territory. The SCLC Executive Committee had a lot of personal connections. Dr. King's wife, Coretta Scott, and Rev. Young's wife, Jean Childs, were born and raised in Perry County; both attended high school in Marion. Rev. Young had pastored a church there in the

¹ In the 1930s, all of these counties except Marengo had active chapters of the Share Croppers Union. Among the older generation, the collective memory of these organizing efforts was still alive. (Kelley, 1990, 38, 48, 54, 230)

1950s. Rev. Abernathy's wife, Juanita, was born in Uniontown, in the southwestern part of Perry County, though she went to school in Selma. More important, Albert Turner had been working on voter registration as president of the Perry County Civic League (PCCL) since 1962. A bricklayer with a college degree from Alabama A&M in Huntsville, Turner was born in 1936 from a long line of civic activists. He had tried to register after getting his B.S. in the 1950s but the Perry Co. registrars hadn't registered a Negro since 1954 and they weren't going to register him. Starting from 257 registered Negro voters in November of 1962, the number going to the courthouse to register really took off in June of 1963, after the big Birmingham demonstrations. Turner himself registered in July of 1963 with help from a federal court injunction. By the time SNCC came into Perry County in July of 1964 – when Judge Hare's injunction made it impossible to meet in Dallas County – 364 Negroes were registered to vote, or seven percent of the NVAP. (Turner NPS interview, 1991; Turner interview in Slaughter, 1992, 65-66; Landsberg, 2007, 110, 114; *NYT* 3-26-65, 23; Turner obit *NYT* 4-15-00; registration statistics in *Williams v. Wallace*, Appendix A)

Turner and the Civic League had worked closely with DoJ lawyers since 1962. When the registration records were photographed in December of 1961, they disclosed that no Negroes had been registered since 1954. Even after the DoJ persuaded federal Judge Thomas to enjoin the Perry County Board of Registrars from rejecting qualified applicants, little progress was made. Known for decisions which allowed for maximum delay, his injunction was interpreted by the Board as permitting it to reject 70 to 100 percent of all Negro applicants while accepting virtually all white ones. In the three registration days after Judge Thomas' Nov. 15, 1962 order, the Civic League brought 324 Negroes to the Board of Registrars; 17 were processed but only one became a fully registered voter. DoJ lawyers then told the Civic League about a provision in the 1960 Civil Rights Act which allowed the federal court to order registration of qualified individuals if local officials had a "pattern and practice" of failing to register. They encouraged it to file voter applications directly with Judge Thomas. The PCCL made three trips to his chambers in Mobile to deliver 271 letters describing experiences before the Board and asking to be registered. Judge Thomas only ordered the Board to re-evaluate these applications; they were 39 of the 42 Negroes the Board registered in June. The DoJ next asked the 5th Circuit to order Judge Thomas to review the applications or assign them to a referee. This was done, but the referee took his time before rejecting most of the applications, so the DoJ went back to court. It took an order from the Fifth Circuit to get everyone registered. By the time that happened in June of 1965 the Senate had passed the VRA, and the House was expected to do so shortly. (CRD 1964: I:65-68, II:88 in Senate *Hearings*, 1965, 1240-3, 1408; Landsberg, 2007, 122-141; registration statistics in *Williams v. Wallace*, Appendix A; *U.S. v. Mayton*, 1962, 1963, 1964; *U.S. v. Scarborough*, 1965) It was cases like this that persuaded Congress that a strong VRA was necessary; local Boards would never do the job and too many of the Southern federal district judges wouldn't make them.

Perry County Negroes were ready for action when James Orange came to Marion. On February 1, about 300 people marched to the courthouse demanding to be registered. That was an official registration day; 239 applications were processed. Two days later over 700 marched. This time demonstrators were arrested and sent to a work camp 60 miles away until they could make \$100 bail. (*NYT* 2-4-65, 1; *WP* 2-4-65, A1; SCLC IV 146:8) For the next couple weeks, Negroes in Marion marched "day and night," integrated eateries and boycotted stores that

refused to integrate. Students stayed out of school. All of SCLC's major leaders and more spoke at Marion churches. (<http://www.crmvet.org/mem/orangej.htm>; Turner interview in Raines, 1977, 188) If Marion didn't get the amount of publicity that made Selma a household name, it was only because the forces of law and order were not as brutal as the Sheriff of Dallas County. That would soon change.

Wilcox and Lowndes Counties

Wilcox and Lowndes County had a lot in common. Located in the heart of Alabama's blackbelt, they shared a short border, and some common historical themes. Once occupied by the Creeks, whites moved in and established plantations with large numbers of slaves. As a result, they were two of the most heavily black counties in Alabama. At the time of the 1960 Census the Wilcox county population was 77.9 percent nonwhite with 6,085 Negroes of voting age. The Lowndes County population was 80.7 percent nonwhite, of whom 5,122 were old enough to vote. By 1965 Wilcox and Lowndes were the only two Alabama counties in which no Negroes were registered to vote. Plenty of whites were registered. In Wilcox, 112.4 percent of the 1960 WVAP were registered. In Lowndes, it was 117.9 percent of WVAP. (USCCR, *Voting* 1961, 252-55)

It seemed that blacks had just given up. In 1908, 41 Negro men were registered to vote in Wilcox and 57 in Lowndes County. When Alabama Attorney General MacDonald Gallion testified before the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings on Literacy Tests and Voter Requirements in 1962 he said that no Negro in Wilcox county had even filled out an application to register to vote in 50 years. (Lewinson, 1932, 217; Gallion testimony, Senate Hearings, 1962, 329) The last Negro anyone could remember trying to register in Wilcox was a Presbyterian minister in 1958; he spent eighteen months trying to find the official Board of Registrars, and when he did they refused to give him an application. When word got to Wilcox whites that he had spoken to the US Civil Rights Commission, the hostility was so great that he packed up his family and moved out of the state. The last known Negro voter in Lowndes had died in 1948.² Two Negroes tried to register in January 1964 but were turned away. The DoJ had photographed the Lowndes County registration records in 1961 but never collected the affidavits necessary to file a case against the county registrars. It took two years of litigation before it could inspect the records in Wilcox and then the DoJ only got a court order to see some of them. The difference was in the judges: Lowndes County was in Judge Johnson's Middle District whereas Wilcox County was in Judge Thomas' Southern District. (Fleming, 2004, 112, 129-133; CRD 1964, I:172, II:94 in 1965 Senate *Hearings*, 1330, 1411)

SCLC had sent Daniel Harrell to Wilcox County in 1964 to organize voter registration drives. He and his wife Juanita were in their early thirties and soon had a son. At some point they decided to put down roots and make their lives in Wilcox County. As SNCC and SCLC had done in Dallas County, Harrell was able to build on the previous work of others. Wilcox County had

² In an interview for the National Park Service, Timothy Mays said that the last Negro to vote in Lowndes County before the civil rights movement was his grandfather, Ed Mays, who died in 1948. (NPS interview, 7) He didn't say which was the last year his grandfather voted.

an NAACP chapter in the late 1940s. The Wilcox County Civic and Progressive League (WCCPL) was organized early in 1961 by Lonnie Brown. An insurance agent whose father had tried to register to vote in 1947, he found himself no longer able to tolerate Wilcox' repressive atmosphere when he returned from serving in the military. (Fleming, 2004, 111-12, 136-141)

Early in 1963, Bernard Lafayette made a trip into Wilcox to talk to people and linked up with the WCCPL. He encouraged a group of farmers who lived at Gees Bend, an all Negro community in an isolated part of the county, to register to vote. On Monday, March 18, a normal registration day, SNCCers Bernard Lafayette and Frank Holloway escorted Lonnie Brown and his wife plus three men and one woman to Camden, the county seat, to apply to vote. Bernard phoned the FBI and the press in the hope that outside witnesses would prevent violence. At the courthouse, they found the doors to the registrars' office closed. Brown asked the Sheriff, the Probate Judge and several courthouse employees where they could register to vote, only to be told that no one knew. They looked for the Board for over an hour before they left. When they returned on the next official registration day, April 1, two of the three members of the Board were waiting for them. Each prospective voter was allowed to enter individually and fill out an application, only to be told that they needed a registered voter residing in the county to vouch for them. None of the white voters hanging around the courthouse would sign their applications. A few days after his visit to the courthouse, night riders fired shotgun blasts into Lonnie Brown's home. A few weeks later 28 white landowners told him that he could not enter their land, which the sheriff enforced. That effectively kept him from collecting the monthly premium his insurance clients paid in order to keep their policies current. When Brown got his rejection notice on June 3, no reason was given. All 29 Negroes who applied to register to vote in 1963 were rejected. None would succeed until 1965. (McCarty, 1999, 135, 140-41; Fleming, 2004, 156-7; Lafayette, 2013, 83-88; registration statistics in *Williams v. Wallace*, Appendix A; *U.S. v. Logue*, 1965; *U.S. v. Bruce*, 1965; SNCC survey, 1963, 1276; Katzenbach testimony in 1965 Senate *Hearings* on March 23, 8)³

Registration in Wilcox was stymied not just by a recalcitrant Board of Registrars, but by the Board's requirement that each applicant be vouched for by another registered voter who lived in the county. Just passing the complicated registration test was not enough. No Negroes were

³ There are some discrepancies between various accounts of what happened. Stories in black newspapers say that Lafayette and SNCC field secretary Frank Holloway escorted six Negroes to the courthouse on March 16 and that all left without filling out any applications. (March 16 was a Saturday. March 18 was the registration day.) This is consistent with Brown's affidavit filed with the DoJ case and excerpted in McCarty, 1999, at 140-41. The SNCC report on "Current Field Work" prepared in May of 1963, says that Lafayette and Holloway "took six applicants ... in late March" to the Camden courthouse. Later newspapers report Lafayette as saying that Lonnie Brown brought a dozen Negroes to be registered in April, but doesn't say what happened. (CD 4-1-63, 1; 4-20-63, 19; 4-23-63, 11; 4-29-63, 13; ADW 4-14-64, A3; SNCC report, 1963, 1276) Interviews given by Lafayette forty years later only mention one trip to the registrars and imply that it was successful. (Lafayette interview 6, 2002, 14-18) Lafayette's 2013 memoir says everyone got voter registration cards and doesn't mention vouchers. (2013, 88) The 1964 CRD *Status Report* at 156 (1965 *Hearings* 1316) says that Lonnie Brown "and his wife were the first Negroes to attempt to register in over 60 years," but doesn't say when they tried.

registered to vote in Wilcox County and no whites would vouch for any Negro who wanted to vote. The DoJ had to go to court in 1960 just to get copies of the registration records from Wilcox County and didn't get the necessary court order until the Fifth Circuit ruled on February 5, 1962. (*Kennedy v. Bruce*, 1962) Armed with the records showing who applied and what the results were, the DoJ filed another complaint on July 19, 1963. On March 31, 1964, Judge Thomas ruled that discrimination had not been proven because the registrars applied the requirement for a voucher uniformly to both races. He ignored the fact brought out by DoJ attorneys at the hearing that a county official or employee would vouch for whites, but not for Negroes. (CRD, 1964, I:83-84 in 1965 Senate *Hearings*, 1256-7) Once more the DoJ appealed to the Fifth Circuit, which ruled on April 21, 1965 that the district court should issue an injunction against the use of a voucher. On remand, Judge Thomas held another hearing and did just that on June 10, but limited the injunction to one year. He also ordered the Board to process at least 100 applications each registration day, if there were that many applicants. (*U. S. v. Logue*, 1965)

On February 15, 1965 the second registration day of the month, Dr. King came to Camden. He found 70 Negroes lined up at the old jail, a dilapidated brick building across from the courthouse. Whites registered in the courthouse, but Negroes were told that they could fill out the application only at the old jail. Those standing in line told Dr. King that no matter how many times they filled out the form, no registered voter in Wilcox County would vouch for them. Dr. King asked Sheriff P.C. "Lummie" Jenkins, who was closely observing the scene, if he would vouch for Negroes who wanted to vote. He certainly knew all of those standing in line. The Sheriff, who had held that office for 26 years, said he could not do so because he was a public official and "that wouldn't look right." (*NYT* 2-16-65, 18) He conveniently overlooked the fact that county officials and employees filled out and signed the "supporting witness" portion of the application for 90 percent of the whites who applied to register to vote. (*United States v. Logue*)

Marching

Throughout the winter months Negroes marched in the county seats of Dallas (Selma), Perry (Marion) and Wilcox (Camden) counties, sometimes under local leadership and sometimes at the direction of SCLC staffers. They also tried to get service in local eateries, usually without success. (*NYT* 2-16-65, 18; 3-3-65, 24; 3-6-65, 10) In these efforts high school students were particularly prominent. They turned out in large numbers; sometimes their parents followed. (Robinson NPS interview, 1991, 5)

On March 1, a registration day, Negroes lined up in the county seats of six blackbelt counties to register to vote: Dallas, Perry, Wilcox, Hale, Marengo and Lowndes. Dr. King spoke to those waiting in the rain in Dallas and Wilcox but those who had come to register in Lowndes were gone by the time he got there. The lone member of the Board present when the entourage arrived in Hayneville said that it was the first time in anyone's memory that Negroes had applied to vote and he couldn't take official action by himself. The full Board was present when dozens came back to register two weeks later; 17 were processed and two were eventually told that they had passed. (*NYT* 3-2-65, 1; *WP* 3-2-65, A4; Jeffries, 2009, 44; *Reading Eagle*, 3-24-65, 7)

On February 4, 1965, Judge Thomas finally enjoined the Dallas County Board of

Registrars from rejecting Negro applicants for technical errors, required use of a simple literacy test in place of the complicated one mandated by the state and told the Board to process at least 100 persons on every registration day. On March 1, 266 persons completed the application but were not told if they had passed. The many other people standing in line to register were allowed to sign an appearance book and told they would be called later. (*NYT* 2-5-65, 1; 3-2-65, 1; *WP* 3-2-65, A4; Doar memo 8-9-54 in Belknap, 1991, 15: 197-98)

In Marion, Negroes had marched almost every day without incident other than arrests. On February 18, James Orange was arrested and charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors by encouraging them to march. A rumor floated that he was to be lynched. (*NYT* 2-22-65, 12) After meeting that night in Zion's Chapel Methodist Church, about 500 Negroes marched to the jail in support. They were met by a line of Alabama state troopers who beat them with billy clubs. Jimmie Lee Jackson, his mother and grandfather ducked into Mack's Café near the church, followed by the troopers. When Jackson, 26, attempted to protect his mother and grandfather from being hit, trooper James Bonard Fowler shot him in the stomach. He died a week later in a Selma hospital. The day Jackson died, Bevel told a mass meeting in Selma that Negroes should carry his body to Montgomery and place it at the feet of Governor Wallace. He formally announced the march at Jackson's burial on March 3. (*NYT* 2-19-65, 1; 2-20-65, 1; 2-27-65, 1; 3-4-65, 23; <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-2011>) Gov. Wallace's reaction to Jackson's death was to announce that "mass demonstrations in the nighttime led by career and professional agitators with pro-communist affiliations and associates is not in the interest of any citizen of this state, white or black." He ordered the state troopers to stop nighttime marches. (Statement of 2-20-65, 10 RRLR 217)

Led by Hosea, several hundred people made their first attempt to march to Montgomery on March 7. By then SNCC had grown so critical of what SCLC was doing in Selma that its executive committee voted not to endorse the march. However, SNCC chairman John Lewis and other SNCCers participated as individuals. Lewis' skull was cracked that day when those who marched across the Edmund Pettus bridge were beaten and teargassed by Alabama state troopers in what came to be known as "Bloody Sunday." This prompted a couple dozen SNCCers to descend on Selma. They didn't think there should be a march, but neither did they want to be left out. (Carson, 1981, 159) On March 8, NAACP Inc. Fund attorneys representing Hosea Williams, John Lewis and Amelia Boynton asked Judge Frank Johnson to enjoin the state of Alabama from interfering with their effort to walk to Montgomery. The Alabama river which separated Dallas from Lowndes County was also the border between Judge Johnson's Middle District and Judge Thomas's Southern District. Since most of the march would take place in Lowndes County, it was the sympathetic Johnson rather than the unsympathetic Thomas before whom lawyers for the plaintiffs pled their case. DoJ attorneys were also present as interveners on behalf of the plaintiffs. After insisting on a delay until a full hearing could be held, Johnson issued the requested restraining order. (Garrow, 1968, 70-77; Forman, 1986, 75; Lewis, 1999, 318-20; *Williams v. Wallace*, 1965)

Outrage at the beatings on Bloody Sunday spread across the nation, followed by hundreds of sympathy demonstrations in big cities and small, university towns and places not yet on the civil rights map. On March 10 around a thousand people, mostly students from the Tuskegee Institute, marched six blocks from a church to the state capital in Montgomery where they sat in

the street for 12 hours. The city gave them a permit to march, but Governor Wallace refused to accept their petition. Over the weekend of March 13-14, demonstrations took place in 125 cities throughout the country, mostly at government buildings of all kinds, many led by prominent public officials. Estimates of the number of participants totaled over a hundred thousand. There were some disruptions of normal business, but remarkably few arrests. About 50 people sitting-in outside the office of the U.S. Attorney in San Francisco were bodily removed, but not arrested. The largest number of arrests was in Los Angeles, where 101 were detained. At Berkeley, our support rallies in the plaza between the administration building and the student union building attracted at least three thousand students and staff. A few dozen students raised the money to go to Alabama to protest directly and our student Senate passed resolutions urging President Johnson to intervene. (*NYT* 3-11-65, 20; 3-12-65, 18; 3-13-65, 11; 3-14-65, 64; 3-15-65, 23; *LAT* 3-10-65, 6; 3-13-65, 12; Freeman, 2004, 229, 231, 245)

Inside Selma, whites solidified behind Sheriff Clark. A group of businessmen had met regularly to talk about avoiding the bad publicity that would come with violence. However, Jim Clark told them to “go to hell.” They were afraid to express themselves publicly because they felt they would lose their friends and customers would cease doing business with them. One exception was a rich auto dealer and his wife. They were Jewish Yankees who had moved to Selma in the 1940s and become even richer. After “bloody Sunday” she sent a letter to *Time* and also to local friends. The WCC read it from the courthouse steps, as well as sending it around. The couple was flooded with hate mail, their friends avoided them and business at the car dealership plummeted. (Chestnut, 1990, 220-23)

As Judge Johnson deliberated, things were moving rapidly on many fronts. On March 13 George Wallace sat in the Oval Office disgruntledly listening to President Johnson tell him to protect the marchers while they walked to Montgomery. He said the State of Alabama couldn’t afford the cost, so LBJ federalized the Alabama National Guard in order to pick up the bill. On March 14, the DoJ completed its draft of the voting rights bill and President Johnson discussed it with Congressional leaders of both parties. On March 15, LBJ spoke to a joint session of Congress urging new legislation protecting the right to vote. (Johnson, 1971, 163-4) On March 16, Gov. Wallace announced that voter registration boards in six counties – Dallas, Lowndes, Marengo, Perry, Autauga and Wilcox – would get ten extra days to process applications. He claimed that the Boards had asked him for more days. (*NYT* 3-15-65, 1; 3-17-65, 27) On March 17, Judge Johnson ordered Gov. Wallace to permit the march to Montgomery, and President Johnson sent his voting proposals to Congress. And on March 18, the House Judiciary Committee began hearings on “proposals to enforce the 15th Amendment.” Attorney General Katzenbach used Dallas County as his prime example of why the VRA was needed. (1965 House *Hearings* 5-9)

On March 21, around 8,000 civil rights supporters crossed the Edmund Pettus bridge, named for a Confederate General, into Lowndes County, where the first Negroes in decades had just registered to vote, on their way to Montgomery, the first capitol of the Confederacy. Many historic photos were snapped that day. Most of the people in those photos did not make the march. Since Judge Johnson had restricted to 300 the number who could walk when the highway narrowed to two lanes, those who wanted to be part of the arrival in Montgomery on March 24, or the final rally at the state capitol, arrived by other means.

After “Selma”

After the Selma march ended with the rally in Montgomery on March 25, there was a storm of responses in Alabama, as well as flurries of activity all over the country.

The murder of Viola Liuzzo that night led President Johnson to “declare war on the Ku Klux Klan.” The next day he announced the arrest of four Klansmen for her slaying. It would later come out that one of the men in the car, Gary Rowe, was an informant for the FBI, as well as the Birmingham police. LBJ asked for legislation to “bring the activities of the Klan under effective control of the law.” (first quote in Kotz, 2006, 326; second quote in *NYT* 3-27-65, 11; *WP* 3-27-65, A15; 3-31-65, A7) The Klan barked back. It had already staged a 50-car motorcade in Montgomery on March 21 to protest the civil rights march leaving that day from Selma. Led by Imperial Wizard Robert Shelton, it had a permit and a police escort. (*Sun* 3-22-65, 4) Shelton later called the President a “damned liar” for claiming the Klan was responsible for Liuzzo’s murder and racial violence in South. (quote in *WP* 3-27-65, A15) A few days later, Shelton and Georgia Grand Dragon Calvin Craig sent a telegram to President Johnson asking to meet with him. (*NYT* 3-29-65, 28) The request was turned over to the DoJ, which asked the CRD to get in touch. (*WP* 3-30-65, A4) The Klan leaders rejected a meeting with the DoJ. (*NYT* 3-31-65, 19)

On March 30, the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) voted to hold an official investigation into the KKK – the first Congressional Hearing since 1921 – and on April 14 the House voted it an extra \$50,000 to do so.¹ (*NYT* 3-31-65, 46; *NYT* 4-15-65, 18) Civil rights organizations did not favor this investigation. They thought HUAC shouldn’t exist at all. They were also concerned that this might turn into another examination of Communism in the civil rights movement, since that was what Committee chair Edwin Willis of Louisiana was primarily interested in. No one thought HUAC would find Communist infiltration in the Klan. However, these fears were not realized. Instead, HUAC held 36 days of hearings between October 19, 1965 and February 24, 1966, questioning 187 witnesses. Its *Report* was released on December 11, 1967.

The Klan did not meet with anyone in the federal government, but Gov. George Wallace had an 80 minute meeting with 15 Negroes and one white from the civil rights movement, including Revs. James Bevel and Joseph Lowery of SCLC. Wallace’s press secretary described it as a “friendly frank discussion” but nothing concrete came of it. (*CD* 3-31-65, 3) Wallace continued to denounce the movement, as well as the media for its poor portrayal of his state.

¹ The Committee was already engaged in a “preliminary inquiry” of Klan activities, prompted by Cong. Charles L. Weltner (D. GA) who had won his first term in 1962 with the help of Atlanta’s newly registered Negro voters. (Goodman, 1968, 465-66) HUAC had resisted prior efforts to get it to investigate the Klan and would probably have gone no further had it not been for the Liuzzo killing and President Johnson’s call for a crack-down. Its March 30 resolution authorizing a full investigation cites LBJ’s “recent public appeal” in a WHEREAS clause (HUAC, 1966, I:1524).

Dr. King called for a boycott of the State of Alabama, including all of its products, until it registered at least fifty percent of all Negroes eligible to vote. Nothing substantive came from this, but it did generate a lot of publicity, most of it negative. (*NYT* 3-29-65, 1; 3-30-65, 1; 4-3-65, 14; 4-20-65, 25; 4-30-65, 21) The major business associations – e.g. the Chamber of Commerce, Alabama Bankers Assn. etc. – responded by putting ads in all of Alabama’s 22 daily newspapers which supported “the basic human dignity of all people of all races.” (*NYT* 4-15-65, 18; 6-6-65, 84) College students picketed the Hammermill Paper Company in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Washington state to protest company plans to build a plant near Selma. The protest ended after negotiations when Hammermill issued a statement saying that it would work for civil rights in Dallas County. (FBI-LBJ 5-14-65, 3; *NYT* 2-4-65, 20; 2-7-65, 45; 5-12-65 33; 5-13-65, 11; 5-18-65, 20; *CD* 3-30-65, 9; 4-17-65, 19; 4-19-65, 6; 5-29-65; 7) Six months later, Gov. Wallace proudly told the 1,200 persons attending the annual meeting of the Dallas County White Citizens’ Council that the plant Hammermill was building would become the base for its entire Southern operation. (*BN* 11-30-65, 10; *BAA* 12-11-65, 14)

Negroes in the Alabama counties where movements had been mobilized during the winter were emboldened to do things in the spring previously deemed off limits in the segregated South. On the first and third Monday of each month, they lined up wherever the Board of Registrars claimed to be meeting (not always at the courthouse). Those too young to register sat-in at white eateries and theaters, or picketed white stores who would not agree to hire Negro workers. Students were particularly eager to boycott the schools. While white responses varied from hostile to accommodative there was a “Selma effect” on neighboring counties. Some local white elected officials, afraid that they might be next, tried to improve relations with local Negroes by paving some of the streets in Negro neighborhoods and making other concessions.

The Perry County movement continued to boycott white stores which wouldn’t hire Negroes (*SC* 9-4/5-65, 6) as well as to press for voter registration. The PCCL brought 396 Negroes to the courthouse to register on the two days that they could do so in April, but only 221 were eventually registered to vote. (Landsberg, 2007, 144-45) Five white volunteers from the SCOPE project canvassed all summer. By the time the Voting Rights Act became law, 20 percent of voting age Negroes in the county were registered. At that time 133% of the WVAP were on the voting rolls. (*NYT* 8-19-65, 17; *BN* 8-19-65, 4; Cary Stone KZSU interview)

In Wilcox County, Harrell kept the students marching, though they never quite made it downtown. Starting from the Antioch Baptist Church just south of Camden, they marched to the city limits where Mayor Allbritton told them to go home. Seeing that most were teenagers he said that they could not go to the courthouse but that anyone over 21 could go to the registration office in the old jail on the two monthly registration days. When the marchers refused to disperse, smoke bombs were tossed into their midst. They continued to march almost every day. On April 5, the first registration day of the month, the police tossed tear gas into the crowd and took several marchers into “protective custody.” Nonetheless, 43 Negroes were able to fill out voter applications. Press reports about the teargas brought supporters from outside the county to the next demonstration, including several white clergy who were still in the South after the Selma march. When they too were teargassed, hundreds more showed up to march. Ten days after the marches began, the 600 people who came to Camden were given a parade permit and a police escort to the courthouse. There was no teargas and no incidents. Things quieted down –

for a while. (*NYT* 4-1-65, 4; 4-2-65, 24; 4-3-65, 15; 4-5-65, 35; 4-6-65, 17; 4-8-65, 31; 4-10-65, 14)

Dr. King returned to the blackbelt on April 19, the second registration day of the month, to speak in Selma and greet people waiting in line to register in Wilcox and Lowndes Counties. In Camden he was served with a state court injunction citing him and other civil rights leaders for taking students out of school to demonstrate. SCLC's Daniel Harrell had been organizing a school boycott, believing that this would put pressure on the county government by denying the school board state and federal education funds which were based on attendance. This caused the equivalent of 25,000 absences in three months. The SNCC workers in Wilcox opposed this plan, creating still another bone of contention between the two organizations. (*NYT* 4-20-65, 25; Oliveri report, 5-18-65, SCLC IV 146:9)

In Greene County the local movement started a boycott of local white businesses, demanding voting rights, an end to police brutality, and desegregation. On May 1, a Saturday, three Negro men integrated several restaurants without incident. That Monday, a regular registration day, several hundred mostly young people marched from the St. Paul Methodist Church to the courthouse. That night Negroes took seats in the formerly white section at Eutaw's only theater. The "integration" was peaceful in part because no whites were present. On Tuesday more eateries had their first Negroes sit down to eat. The following Monday, Dr. King filled two churches in Eutaw and spoke to an overflow crowd in Greensboro, as part of a five county tour. Negro youths continued to march and picket the business district. They finished the month with a march from the First Baptist Church to the courthouse square on May 29. Sheriff Lee later said that the boycott was effective, leading to the closing of three stores. (*Tuscaloosa News* 5-4-65, 1; 5-5-65, 1; 5-11-65, 2; FBI-LBJ 5-14-65, 3; 6-3-65, 3; *CT* 11-11-65, C1)

By the middle of April bad feelings between SNCC and SCLC had reached the breaking point. SNCC thought that "SCLC was hoggin' all the publicity and all the money and doing very little to deserve it." (Bond quote in Raines, 1977, 214) In an effort to reduce tensions, some leaders of the two organizations met in Atlanta on April 20 and 30 with Harry Belafonte present as an "objective observer." While the existence of the meetings was admitted to the press, the understanding that they reached was not. (*CD* 5-1-65, 1; 5-5-65, 4; 5-8-65, 3; *NYT* 4-21-65, 29; 5-1-65, 9) Dr. King and Jim Forman, Executive Director of SNCC, issued a press release which said the two groups would work closer together in the future. (2:10 *SCLC Newsletter* April-May 1965, 16) This was just a cover story. Essentially they agreed to stay out of each other's way. They divided up the counties.² In Alabama, SNCC went full force into Lowndes County and SCLC stayed out. A Lowndes County stop was removed from the itinerary of Dr. King's May 10 Alabama tour. He never again spoke in Lowndes County.

² Although counties tended to be known as "SNCC counties" or "SCLC counties" there were a few SCLC counties in which SNCC had field workers and a couple SNCC counties to which SCLC sent staff when demonstrations were brewing. Staff in both organizations went where they felt they were needed; few were permanently placed in any county. In 1965-66, the two organizations were barely on speaking terms. Their staff rarely worked together; sometimes they undermined each other's projects. Complaints about the other organization's workers made their way into field reports and letters which are scattered throughout the SCLC and SNCC files.

SNCC sent five field secretaries into Lowndes County to get a movement going the day after Viola Luizzo was shot and killed. It saw an opportunity to apply what it had learned working in Mississippi to one of the most brutal counties in Alabama. SCLC had met with local Negroes during the Selma demonstrations and encouraged them to form the Lowndes County Christian Movement for Human Rights. Officially founded on March 19, its prime mover and shaker was John Hulett, a Lowndes County native who had worked in Birmingham from 1948 to 1959. He had joined the NAACP and, after it was banned, Shuttlesworth's Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights. Hulett had been looking to start something in Lowndes ever since he returned in 1959. Selma was the spark. Most of the march to Montgomery was *through* Lowndes County, where the marchers caught the attention if not the participation of local Negroes. Those that came to watch had a lot of conversations with SNCCers, even though SNCC was officially not participating in the march. When SNCC field secretaries returned to Lowndes at the end of March, they brought an injection of new energy and hope. (*NYT* 3-28-65, 1; *SC* 4-2/3-66, 3; Jeffries, 2009, 29, 45, 49, 60, 69)

The LCCMHR believed that Lowndes was not the right place for marches and demonstrations. Whites were too likely to retaliate and Negroes were too vulnerable. They preferred to quietly bring people to the Board of Registrars. Hulett had first done this on March 1st and 15th. He had registered to vote in Birmingham so was familiar with the complicated test. On the second attempt, he and an elderly man succeeded in becoming the first Negroes to register to vote in Lowndes County in decades. The numbers crept up every registration day. Not until May 29 did the Board hear from the DoJ that its practices violated federal law. The Board changed its practices slightly, but still continued to reject most Negro applicants. As of July 9, only 196 Negroes, or 3.8 percent of NVAP, were registered to vote. A month later Lowndes would find itself one of the first nine counties to get federal examiners. (Jeffries, 2009, 39, 44, 94; *NYT* 5-4-65, 58; Doar memo of 8-9-65 in Belknap, 1991, 15:210)

One result of "Selma" was that donations poured in. In June of 1965, Rev. Abernathy said that the "emotional climate" produced by the Selma demonstrations would make this SCLC's first million-dollar year. (*NYT* 6-6-65, 52) The FBI later wrote that "During the height of the Selma campaign... the backlog became so great that boxes of money were sitting around the finance office because the safe would hold no more. The build-up became so great that boxes of money were taken to employees' homes for safe-keeping." (Memo of 6-10-65 in FBI file # 157-933-73)

Labor unions were particularly generous; the Teamsters alone sent \$25,000. (*NYT* 3-27-65, 10) SCLC used the money to increase its staff from 75 to 200. (King, Annual Report, 1965) Similar expansions had happened after the Albany and Birmingham demonstrations. Over Hosea's objection, SCLC sent a lot of its seasoned staff to Chicago to start a movement there and brought on a lot of new people to direct SCOPE projects in the South. Some of the new additions were locals who had demonstrated potential when SCLC moved into blackbelt counties, and some were northerners who came South for the Selma march and stayed.³

^{3 3} Among the northerners who came to march and stayed were Stoney Cooks, Shirley Mesher, Paul Bokulich, Mark Harrington, Richard Stephenson, R.B. Cottonreader, Harcourt Klinefelter

Beginning in early February SCLC paid Albert Turner \$50 a month to be the chief organizer of Perry County. (*NYT* 3-26-65, 23; Turner interview in Raines, 1977, 195) He was promoted to Alabama state director after the march ended. Thomas E. Gilmore went on staff as the project director for Greene County. SCLC also made some internal promotions and started several new programs. Andy Young was promoted from Director of Education to Executive Director of SCLC. His place heading the CEP program was taken by Dr. Robert Green, a psychology professor on leave from Michigan State University. Dorothy Cotton and Septima Clark continued to do the work they had been doing under the new Director. (II:12 *SCLC Newsletter* Oct.-Nov. 1965, 1)

Alabama responded to the bad publicity generated by the Selma movement with its own public relations campaign. The Dallas County Chamber of Commerce published a 24-page booklet on *The Story of Selma or "The Other Side of The Coin."* Governor Wallace invited editors of the nation's daily newspapers to take an all-expense paid tour of his state the second week in June. He wanted them to see the *real* Alabama. The country's 1,700 English language dailies sent 48 people, most from small-town dailies, 27 of whom turned out to be reporters, not editors, including a Negro woman from the *Chicago Daily Defender*. Their itinerary was full of press conferences with the Governor and social events. In Selma, the DCVL welcomed the press with a picket line. The tour ended on a sour note in Huntsville when several reporters questioned Wallace's repeated claim that the press had distorted news about Alabama. After Wallace's press conference they went to a press conference called by the NAACP. (*NYT* 6-6-65, 84; 6-7-65, 23; 6-8-65, 29; 6-9-65, 31; 6-10-65, 70; 6-13-65, 76; *WP* 6-13-65, E1; *CD* 6-9-65, 1; 6-12-65, 2; *BN* 6-20-65, A-12)

The Alabama legislature passed several bills to punish protestors and proscribe protests. One act prohibited picketing or parading near court buildings. Another provided for teacher salary increases, but not for any "teachers who participate in, encourage or condone any mass truancy for a single day, or any extra-curricular demonstration which is not approved by the city, county or state board of education." Teachers rarely participated in demonstrations because they could so easily be fired, but Selma teachers had marched in February. Resolutions expressed the lawmakers' righteous indignation. One specifically sent to President Johnson called attention to some "so-called preachers [who] have been seen drinking strong drink promiscuously" as well as the "evidence of much fornication and young women ... returning to their respective states apparently as unwed expectant mothers..." (10 RRLR 1359, 1364-5, 1367)

During the march the local newspapers, radio and TV stations had been full of reports of lurid behavior and crude activity by the marchers, though photographs of such activity had been notably absent from the coverage. (*BN* 3-28-65; *B'ham Post-Herald*, 4-1-65) Afterwards, public officials and governmental bodies tried to smear the civil rights movement by associating it with the twin evils of Communism and sex. Rep. William E. Dickinson, a recently-elected Republican from Montgomery, made several speeches before the House of Representatives full of

III, Shari Thurber, Bob Block and Bruce Hartford. Among the locals were Leroy Moton, a 19-year-old from Selma who had organized car pools during the march. He had been in the car with Viola Liuzzo when she was shot.

derogatory accusations about the march and civil rights forces in general. He said sex orgies took place on the march. (Harris, 2004, 169; 111:57 *Cong. Rec.* March 30, 1965, p. 6113)

The Alabama Legislative Commission to Preserve the Peace (ALCPP) issued a report charging that SNCC was “extensively Communist-dominated” and that Dr. King has “been closely advised by Communists if not actually controlled by them.” It also tried to link them with “Black Muslim groups” and GROW (Get Rid of Wallace). Predicting more “problems on the racial front” it said SNCC in particular “wanted violence, preferably to get some of its demonstrators killed in Alabama.” (*BN* 6-30-65, 67)

The Alabama State Sovereignty Commission paid a private film company to produce a film of the Selma to Montgomery March from the Alabama point of view. Initially funded for \$33,034.18, by the time the 58-minute movie was released it had cost Alabama taxpayers \$49,459. Several state agencies and the Governor’s office had “cooperated ... to film the event and to identify, whenever possible, those participating.” Presented as a documentary, its purpose was to show the “Communist infiltration and the large number of weird characters involved in the march... [and] ... that voting rights was never an issue.” The ASSC tried to persuade the major TV networks to show it as a public service, and when that failed settled for shipping it to any organization which would arrange a showing.⁴ Most of the film was of the Selma march. The voice overlay talked about how the “red hand of Communism” was taking over the country. It identified people on the march who had at times been accused of Communist affiliation. In particular it pointed out those who were part of SCEF, which had been accused of being a Communist Front organization.

Sheriff Jim Clark phoned a Michigan police commissioner he knew through a national police association and persuaded him to do a confidential background investigation on Viola Liuzzo. Derogatory information from this file was used to defame the dead woman, then turned over to the chief counsel of the Ku Klux Klan, who was defending her killers. The FBI also leaked derogatory information about her. (<http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/face/Article.jsp?id=h-1377>) Sheriff Clark and Highway Patrol head Al Lingo arranged for an unpublished novelist to write a book on *Selma* emphasizing the “civil rights debauchery” of the march. The author was given full access to official files, including the information collected on Liuzzo. (Carter, 1995, 259; see Mikell, 1965, 136-142; Stanton, 1998, 94-102) A 32 page, privately published, multi-colored, booklet with the lurid title

^{4 4} The production company was Keitz and Herndon of Dallas, Texas. There are multiple documents about this film in the papers of the ASSC at SG 13842. 47 - SG 13843.4, including a barely legible copy of the film transcript. The cost (as of 12-31-65) was in the annual report of the ASSC as reported by *BN* 1-23-66, 33. The second quote is from a letter dated April 19, 1965 in the ASSC papers, but it is just one of many. An August 30, 1965 letter from the Dean of Women of Howard College in Birmingham to Governor Wallace says that “this film is extremely worthwhile and that it can straighten out lots of people if they will be straightened out.” The first quote is from ALCPP, 1965, 9. I’d like to thank Michelle Kamalich of the Woodrow Wilson Center’s library for getting a copy of the film for me from ADAH, as well as a copy of the ALCPP “Biennial Report.” She was able to persuade ADAH to loan a microfilm copy of the ASSC papers for me to read, but not the ALCPP papers.

of *The true Selma story: sex and civil rights* sold widely for \$1 a copy. I saw it at the Freedom House sometime that summer. It had many photos, most taken by the booklet's author, who posed as a member of the press while in fact on "special assignment" for Cong. William L. Dickinson (R. AL).⁵ The only one fitting its "sex" theme was a screen shot from the ASSC movie. The camera had dwelt long and lovingly on a black man stroking the hair and neck of a white woman who had her arms around him. As love scenes go, it was rather chaste, but it was the only "sex" shot the producers could find out of all the film taken of the march by photographers working for the State of Alabama. Instead the booklet contained ten pages of affidavits, mostly from people involved with law enforcement, attesting to some of the lurid activities they had seen. It also included Bayard Rustin's police record from his 1953 arrest for "sex perversion" in California.

As they had done before, Alabama whites became defensive, proclaiming that the only guilty parties were the outside agitators who had invaded their state. Three killings had come from the Selma demonstrations, in Perry, Dallas and Lowndes Counties. A Perry County grand jury refused to indict the trooper who had shot Jimmie Lee Jackson. (CD 10-12-65, 7) Trial juries in Dallas and Lowndes Counties acquitted those accused of killing Rev. Reeb and Viola Liuzzo. A federal grand jury in the Southern District refused to indict any of the seven state troopers charged by the DoJ with brutality for bloody Sunday, after questioning 49 witnesses in six days. (BAA 10-2-65, 14)

Among the many people inspired by the Selma march were some of the staff of the *Harvard Crimson*, the student newspaper at Harvard and Radcliff. They conceived the idea of publishing a newspaper in the South which would report on race generally as well as the civil rights movement specifically. They wanted to put out weekly editions in each of the five Deep South states, but only got sufficient funding for one. They intended to pay their staff the same subsistence that civil rights workers got and pay local writers per story. On July 16, 1965 the *Southern Courier* published its first issue. Initially based in Atlanta, it soon moved to Montgomery so it could be an *Alabama* newspaper. It recruited and maintained a bi-racial staff who gave on-the-job training to a constant flow of aspiring journalists. It usually printed 30,000 copies of each weekly edition. Some of the \$50,000 a year it needed to break even came from advertising and paper sales, but most came from the Ford Foundation and other private donations. (NYT 5-2-65, 54; 7-26-65, 41; WP 7-24-65, A4; <http://www.southerncourier.org>) It ceased to publish in 1968 when the Ford Foundation stopped funding it. Its papers are posted at www.southerncourier.org.

National publicity about the Selma demonstrations and the march to Montgomery is credited with passage of the Voting Rights Act. Given the amount of evidence on the barriers Southern states erected to Negro registration, as documented by the DoJ and presented in the Hearings, it would have passed at some point before the 1968 elections. But probably not in 1965. "Selma" speeded up passage. Dallas, Lowndes, Perry and Wilcox counties all got federal examiners within a week of its becoming law. Greene County got them on October 29. The

⁵ *Sex and Civil Rights* by Albert Persons is in the Rare Books reading room of the Library of Congress.

USCCR counted the number of registrations and rejections as of October 30. In Dallas County, 7,747 Negroes and 9 whites were listed as eligible by the federal examiners. In Lowndes County, it was 1,658, and 3; in Perry it was 2,527 and 5; in Wilcox it was 3,396 and 6. Local registrars also registered quite a few Negroes on the regular registration days and not just in the counties with examiners. Although there were still many eligible Negroes who were not yet voters, it was clear that the political world had changed. If Southern whites wanted to stay in control of their county governments, they would have to find another way. (USCCR, 1965, Nov. 1965, 71)

Marengo County

The lessons of Selma were not lost on the surrounding communities. They wanted to avoid the economic losses and fractured relationships left in the wake of the movement. After the Selma march, SCLC sent a whole crew into Marengo County, just west of Dallas, where they made Demopolis their headquarters. With 7,377 inhabitants, half of whom were non-white, it was the largest city in the county. Linden, 18 miles away, was the county seat, but only 28 percent of its 6,126 people were non-white. Ralph Abernathy was born and raised in Linden. Even more Negroes lived in the rural areas. When the 1960 census was taken, they were 62 percent of Marengo's 27,098 residents.

The area now known as Marengo County was occupied by the Choctaws when it was explored by the French coming up from Mobile. In 1817 exiled French supporters of Napoleon established the first white settlement. Acknowledging these French origins, the Alabama territorial legislature named the county in honor of a battlefield near Turin, Italy, where Napoleon defeated the Austrians in 1800, and the county seat for the location of another Napoleonic battle in Germany. (Smith, 1965) Like the other blackbelt counties, Marengo was dominated by plantations with large numbers of slaves.

Although the Klan had been active in Marengo County in the 1920s, and a white Citizens' Council formed in December 1954, there were always some Negro voters. Between 1908 and 1961 the number of Negroes registered to vote dropped from 304 to 139. That didn't mean they voted. When Ralph Bunche was traveling the South in 1939 doing research for V.O. Key's book on *Southern Politics* he quoted the Marengo County registrar as saying "There ain't a fuckin' nigger in this end of the country who'd so much as go near a ballot box." By the time SCLC arrived in 1965, the Justice Department counted 383 Negro voters in Marengo. The DoJ had been inspecting the registration records since 1962 but had not yet filed a lawsuit. (Feldman, 1999, 164, 199; McMillen, 1971, 43; Lewinson, 1932, 217; USCCR, *Voting*, 1961; Bunche, 1973, 389; *Williams v. Wallace* Appendix A) In a November 1962 meeting with the Board of Registrars DoJ lawyers showed them specifically how they were violating the 15th Amendment by applying different standards to white and Negro applicants. The Board promised to do better, but in fact, continued to reject Negroes for technical errors on their application forms as well as to use the difficult literacy and understanding tests provided to them by the State of Alabama. (Doar memo of 8-9-65 in Belknap, 1991, 15:200)

Three years later James Orange started SCLC's work in Marengo County, but Rev. Samuel B. Wells was soon put in charge of the long-term project. Wells had made his reputation leading marches in Albany, Georgia, where he'd been working to register Negroes to vote since he got out of the Army in 1946. He had already been arrested at least ten times. (Chalfen, 1994; *SV* 2-18-64, 1,2; Beardslee, 1983, 110-111; *WP* 7-17-96, A13)

Under his leadership SCLC workers quickly formed a Demopolis Civic Club, headed by Maloyd E. Jones, Jr. The real local leader was the Rev. Henry Haskins, Jr., a part-time preacher and graduate of Selma University who worked on construction sites as a mason for money. He had served in the army during the Korean war. His house became the movement's headquarters and mailing address. (Wells report of May 21- June 10, SCLC IV 146:3; <http://obits.al.com/obituaries/birmingham/obituary.aspx?n=henry-haskins&pid=142960837>)

Meeting in the Morning Star Baptist Church at 614 E. Jackson St., conveniently located across the street from Haskins' house and down the street from the Negro high school, SCLC staff soon got people marching. The white power structure of Demopolis did not want their town to be another "Selma." When the Civic Club presented it with a list of eight demands on April 12, it looked for what it could do. (*LAT* 4-28-65, 7) Negotiations and demonstrations proceeded simultaneously, almost as though the right and left hands weren't talking to each other. On Friday, April 16, two staffers were arrested and charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors when they pulled 130 students out of school. But over that weekend, the city's only theater, several restaurants and lunch counters started serving Negroes, though there were complaints that Negroes were served on paper and charged higher prices than whites. In most places the "white" and "colored" signs were removed. Nonetheless, high school students marched twice on Monday, without incident, even as a biracial committee was being formed. Another 200 marched in Linden. (*Tuscaloosa News* 4-18-65, 8; 4-19-65, 2; 4-20-65, 3, 14; *NYT* 4-28-65, 22)

The following Thursday about 350 Negroes tried to march in Demopolis without a permit. The police used tear gas and smoke bombs to break them up. Five were arrested. Later that day, a second march proceeded through town after getting a permit. This pattern continued for several days. Marches without permits were stopped; marches with permits were allowed. A state court issued an injunction forbidding adults from encouraging students to stay out of school, but as many as 70 percent stayed out on any given day. Under the court order SCLC's staff could not talk to them before the school day ended at 3:00 p.m., so the students mostly organized themselves. The biracial committee continued to meet. The mayor continued to talk with the local merchants about desegregating and also about hiring local blacks. The marchers' demands kept shifting. One day Negro high school students demanded that the high school principal be fired. The next day adults demanded more voter registration days each month. On other days the demand was for jobs. Always the demand was for Freedom. (*LAT* 4-23-65, 5; 4-27-65, 5; *NYT* 4-23-65, 17; 4-24-65, 12; 4-27-65, 22; 4-28-65, 22; 4-29-65, 17; *WP* 4-23-65, A2; 4-29-65, A16; *CT* 4-27-65, A7; 4-28-65, 12; 4-29-65, N14; *CD* 4-29-65, 3)

The gym at US Jones High School was full on Thursday, April 29, when Demopolis Mayor Edward Bailey made a progress report that was carried live on the local radio station. With him were members of the city council, and the Civic Club, and about 150 local Negroes. Another 200 heard the broadcast in the Morning Star Church. Haskins was generally pleased with the meeting. (*LAT* 4-30-65, 20) A few days later Rev. Wells was arrested for violating the injunction. After his arrest led to still more demonstrations the Mayor said the meetings would stop if the demonstrations didn't. (*NYT* 5-4-65, 52; *BAA* 4-8-65, 14) The irony was that Rev. Wells was the only adult the students would listen to. He was the SCLC project leader, and in their eyes the direct representative of Dr. King.

Dr. King had already scheduled a speaking tour of several blackbelt counties on May 10 and 11. Addressing some 1,200 persons in and around the Morning Star Church, he said that Gov. Wallace had done more to bring Negroes together to fight segregation than anybody else in Alabama. When Negroes marched after he left, about 50 were arrested. More were arrested the next day, and every day that week until 128 were in jail. Most were charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors and violating the injunction. Some parents were charged with letting their children stay out of school. The Mayor increased the size of the biracial committee so that subcommittees could be formed to deal with employment, schools and voter registration. (*NYT*

5-11-65, 25; 5-12-65, 16; 5-13-65, 24; 5-14-65, 20; *CD* 5-10-65, 5; 5-15-65, 2; *LAT* 5-11-54, 5; 5-12-65, 6; 5-14-65, 4; *CT* 5-13-65, 20; 5-14-65, B24; *WP* 5-13-65, A3)

In fact the demonstrations did peter out, not so much from the jailings and threats as the fact that the school year ended and the high school students no longer had to go to school; they had summer jobs instead. But the movement continued. Mass meetings were held in different communities every Wednesday and Sunday night. The Civic Club organized a boycott of white-owned businesses. Preparations were made to house a SCOPE project and to bring VISION teachers to the county. The movement expanded its outreach to white elected officials. On May 11, the day after his Demopolis speech, Dr. King announced that Negroes from every blackbelt county would travel to Montgomery to talk with their elected representatives. (*NYT* 5-12-65, 27) At the capitol on May 25, several Negroes met with House speaker Albert Brewer before going to meet with the elected state representatives who were willing to meet with them. Rev. Wells later wrote that at their meeting the Marengo delegates “were able to express themselves as to the grievances as we had outlined.” (Wells report of May 21- June 10, SCLC IV 146:3)

SCLC’s primary objective was still voter registration so on the first and third Monday of each month staff mobilized Negroes to go to the courthouse in Linden. The three members of the Board of Registrars took their time with every applicant. While Negroes young and old stood in the hot sun for up to six hours waiting their turn, Board members took long breaks, an extended lunch, and closed early. On April 19, 126 Negroes waited all day but only 60 were allowed to fill out the form. On June 7, only 70 out of 170 Negroes were processed. That night the Civic Club sent a telegram to the Justice Department describing the stalling tactics. Two days later a DoJ representative appeared in Marengo to investigate. On July 1, the CRD filed its first lawsuit in Marengo County, charging the Board of Registrars with racial discrimination. It was the 75th such action filed since the Civil Rights Act of 1957 made such suits possible, and the 18th in Alabama. (Shirley Branch testimony to ASAC meeting on July 10, 1965, 19; Wells report of May 21- June 10 and telegram, SCLC IV 146:3; Doar memo of 8-9-65 in Belknap, 1991, 15:200; *NYT* 7-2-65, 30)

Rev. Wells drove back and forth between Demopolis and Albany GA, where his family lived and he was still a local movement leader. That movement wanted him to run for City Commissioner. He finally agreed, coming in third out of four candidates in the June 14 election. The next day he drove to Atlanta for SCOPE orientation. After it ended, he filled his car with SCOPERS and took them to Demopolis. They were greeted at Haskins’ house by two police cruisers filled with cops who proceeded to interrogate them all. The five SCOPERS – a boy and four girls – were all from different sections of the country and did not know each other before the five hour drive from Atlanta. There was no school chapter back home sponsoring the group in Marengo. Dick Reavis was from a small town in Texas. One of the few home-grown white Southerners to hear the call, he had learned about SCOPE when he ran across a leaflet in the Spring at the Oklahoma community college he was attending. Linda Brown was from New York City and had recently graduated from SUNY New Paltz. Ruth Levin hailed from Vermont. Erla Asgeirsson came from California; she soon left to work in the Selma Free College. Irma Lorraine Pearson was a graduate student at UC Berkeley; she soon transferred to a Vista tutorial program in Anniston. When Henry Haskin’s daughter, Julia Mae, came home from college, she was added to the SCOPE staff. (Wells report of June 11-28, 1965, SCLC IV 146:3; Reavis, 2001, 21, 28; Pearson letter of October 2015)

The SCOPers were supplemented by an occasional drop-in. Jim Benston landed in Demopolis at the end of June and stayed long enough to give a statement at a hearing held there by the Alabama State Advisory Committee of the USCCR on July 10. Known as “Arkansas” because that was where he was from, he was sort of a roving agitator. He didn’t stay in one place very long, or with one civil rights organization. He’d worked in Selma during the winter and been arrested in Camden in April. As a Southern white boy, he was a lightning rod for white anger, which gave some relief to the white SCOPers. (Benston statement at ASAC meeting on July 10, 1965, 342-44)

Wells quickly put them to work canvassing and going to mass meetings to get people to go register in Linden. They held classes to teach potential voters how to answer the questions on the voter application test. The first full week in July had extra registration days. On July 6, SCOPers brought 134 Negroes to the courthouse in Linden. Instead of making them wait in the hot sun, officials crowded them into a damp, unlighted room in the basement of the courthouse. Only 69 were processed. While many left after a few hours, 44 were still waiting to fill out the form when the Board closed at 4:00 in the afternoon. By the end of the week, 470 Negroes had come to the courthouse to register, but only 275 were processed. It was too soon to say how many would actually be registered. (Branch testimony, ASAC, 19-22; Benston and Saulsberry statements at ASAC, 64-72; SC 7-16-65, 1)

The city responded to SCOPE’s efforts with increased harassment. The SCOPER who drove people to the Linden courthouse was arrested on Tuesday for having an “improper muffler.” Charles Saulsberry, a high school student who wrote for the *Southern Courier*, tried to take photos of this arrest until grabbed by the cops. He was knocked around and the film removed from his camera. (SC 7-16-65, 6) Civic Club President Maloyd Jones officially wrote the mayor and requested police protection for their activities. The police responded by sometimes arresting them for vagrancy because they had no proof of “gainful employment.” Ruth Levin was interrogated for half an hour by deputy sheriff Ernie Lolly who told her that if he ever saw her out at night, she would end up in the river. The SCOPers who spent the night in Linden saw police cars drive by at regular intervals. Local whites harassed SCOPers verbally. This was ignored by the cops when they weren’t doing it themselves. The verbal harassment took on a different tone depending on whether the recipients were men or women. The guys were hassled about their selective service status and asked for their draft cards. The girls had to endure a variety of sexual innuendos. (Wells report of June 11-28, Branch report of Sept. 6-20 and Jones letter, SCLC IV 146:3; Benston statement at ASAC meeting on July 10, 1965, 64-71, 331-4; Reavis statement at ASAC, 322-327)

When they had time, the SCOPers also promoted the Negro boycott of white stores by organizing car pools to make shopping trips to Uniontown, 21 miles to the east in Perry County. (Reavis, 2001, 42) The boycott led to the arrest of 16 teenagers while they were picketing two supermarkets with signs that said “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work.” Sheriff’s deputies then went to the church and arrested another youth who was painting a sign and Rev. Wells, who was watching him paint the sign. All were charged with violating Alabama’s anti-boycott law. After they were in jail, some of the younger children started to sing. When they wouldn’t stop, the sheriff put them into a “sweatbox” for half an hour. Rev. Wells objected to this so the sheriff sprayed tear-gas into his cell. (SC 7-16-65, 1)

Like most SCOPE projects, this one was short on funds and cars. After Linda wrote her parents a letter describing the project's many problems, the residents of their Riverside Drive building collected and sent her \$500 and a mimeograph machine. (*NYAN* 7-31-65, 19) That made leaflet preparation easier, but without a car they still couldn't get out to the rurals except when the occasional high school student with a car would drive. Ruth went to live in Linden so she could canvass there while the others stayed in Demopolis. She continued working for a few weeks after the others left at the end of the summer. (Reavis, 2001, 59)

Marengo was one of the first four Alabama counties to get federal examiners. On August 9 they opened their office in the back of the U.S. Post Office in Demopolis, keeping the hours of 8:00 a.m to 4:00 p.m on Monday through Saturday. By then, thanks to SCOPE's diligence, the number of Negroes registered to vote in Marengo County had increased to 771, or ten percent of a Negro voting age population of 7,791. By October 30, the federal examiners had listed 4,442 Negroes and 90 whites as eligible for registration. The local registrars had registered 211 whites and no Negroes. The USCCR estimated that there were still seven thousand people who were eligible to be voters, but were not yet registered. There was still much to do. (Doar memo of 8-9-65 in Belknap, 1991, 15:200; USCCR, Nov.1965, 54, 71)

My Time in Selma

Selma seemed like a big city after living in Abbeville. At ten times the size, it was a city of many historic distinctions. Settled by whites in the 18th Century because of its strategic location on the Alabama River, and incorporated in 1820, it was one of the older urban places in Alabama. The first capitol of the new state of Alabama was located in Dallas County, at the junction of the Alabama and Cahaba rivers, about 15 miles from Selma. Called Cahawba, its location was good for commerce but bad for flooding. After a disastrous flood in 1825, the capitol moved to Tuscaloosa. Another disastrous flood in 1866 prompted most businesses and residents to decamp for Selma, which became the new county seat. As a military manufacturing center during the War, Selma was captured right before its end but wasn't leveled. Many of its historic buildings were still in place when I arrived. It was also the home of the first woman to serve in the Alabama state legislature, elected in 1923. (Farmer, 1949, 276; <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/h-1543>)

In the 1960 Census its 28,385 people were almost equally divided between white and nonwhite. That was the only way in which the two races were even almost equal. By every other measure whites reigned supreme. Although Selma was relatively prosperous, Negro maids still received the standard blackbelt wage of two to three dollars per day for a ten-hour day taking care of a white family's home. Men made more, but few made the federal minimum wage of \$1.15 an hour. (Selma Report, SCLC IV 148:6)

I didn't talk much with Selma's white population. In Henry County SCOPERs interacted with whites, even if not always pleasantly. We had to speak to the police and city officials. We did business in the local stores. Some local whites wanted to talk to us out of curiosity. They viewed us as invaders, but didn't know quite what to make of us. Selma whites knew exactly what we were – the same people who had brought the opprobrium of the world to their quiet town the previous Spring. The white population of Selma hated us all.

The Negro population was ambivalent. Great expectations had come from all the marching the Spring before. Local Negroes took pride in what they had done but didn't think much had changed. They mostly agreed with Mayor Smitherman, who told the press in May, that "things are pretty much back to normal." (*NYT* 5-30-65, SM8; *CD* 6-9-65, 4; *CD* 6-10-65, 3) But they weren't. The white population was looking for subtle ways to retaliate. In April, Dr. King said that 200 Selma Negroes had been fired as a result of their participation in the movement. (*CD* 4-29-65, 3; 5-8-65, 8; *NYT* 4-20-65, 25) In June, the city fathers convinced the Catholic Bishop to order Father Oulette, pastor of St. Elizabeth's Mission, a Roman Catholic parish for Negroes, to leave the Mobile-Birmingham diocese because of his civil rights work. (*NYT* 6-26-65, 13) In early July, Rev. F. D. Reese, one of the local leaders who had been fired from his teaching job, was arrested and charged with embezzling some of the funds donated to the Dallas County Voters League. He was cleared the following April, but only after the city prosecutor went after him like it was a capital case. (*BN* 7-6-65, 1, 7-8-65, 2; Chestnut, 1990, 231-233; *SC* 7-16-65,1; 4-9/10-66, 1)

After the press and the movement people who flooded the town cleared out, the

movement pretty much fell apart. If anything, “things” were worse. Segregation still existed throughout. Those places which were “officially” desegregated as required by law were still off limits to Negroes, even after federal Judge Thomas ordered five Selma cafes who were defendants in a 1964 lawsuit to provide Negroes with the same service they provided to whites. (*BN* 7-3-65, 9) No Negroes were hired as police, or in stores if the job involved contact with white customers. When the Board of Education voted to desegregate the first four grades, only twenty Negro parents came to a meeting called to demand more. When white merchants, feeling the pinch of Negro absence from their stores, organized a “Friendship Day” to bring white shoppers from other counties, a few dozen Negro youth picketed their stores. The youth were arrested. More were arrested for violating Alabama’s anti-boycott law. (*NYT* 6-1-65, 23; *BN* 6-2-65, 50) Lines were still long to register to vote on the two days a month the registrar’s office was open. About 150 Negroes were processed each day, but only about 40 percent of those were accepted. (*NYT* 6-13-65, 73) Sheriff Clark and his deputies engaged in low-level harassment, first telling those waiting in line to stand on one side of the street and then telling them to move to the other side. (ASAC hearing, 7-10-65, 214) The 4,600 wannabe voters who had signed the appearance book while the demonstrations were going on were never told to come in to fill out a voter application. People who attempted to register still faced reprisals. Some lost jobs; others were evicted; those receiving public assistance found themselves suddenly cut off. (*CD* 4-25-65, 1; *CD* 6-9-65, 4; 6-10-65, 3)

SCLC’s Citizenship Education Program set up 150 schools in Selma and environs to teach people how to write sufficiently to register to vote. They taught 7,002 persons between May 18 and August 15. Some of the “students” lost jobs and housing just for going to class. But once the VRA was signed, these same students kept the federal examiners in Dallas County very busy. (Clark 1986, 68-69)

On Tuesday, August 10, the first day the federal examiners were open for business, hundreds of people walked up the steps of the federal building in Selma, but only 107 were able to be examined and qualified by the two federal examiners initially assigned to Dallas County. They were soon joined by four more. On Wednesday 218 Negroes were examined and certified; 291 were added on Thursday. The federal examiners worked six days a week from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., averaging about 200 new “eligibles” each day. By September 25, 6,789 had been examined and declared qualified to vote by the federal examiners. (*NYT* 8-11-65, 20; 8-12-65, 15; 8-13-65, 19; 8-14-65, 20; *BN* 8-11-65, 12; USCCR, Nov. 1965, 37) But it was up to the Board of Registrars to add them to the voter roles, which they would not do as long as the state courts enjoined them from doing so. On October 18 Judge Hare, who had tried to quash the Selma movement with injunctions in 1964, tried to stymie the VRA with another injunction. Although only a state circuit judge, he ruled that the federal VRA was unconstitutional and that the county Probate Judge should therefore not certify as registered voters anyone listed as eligible by the federal examiners. (*BN* 10-19-65, 2)

SCLC had just opened its District IV office in Selma, moving into space on the second floor of 31½ Franklin St., right below the SNCC state office. Located in the Negro business section of Selma, just two blocks from the entrance to the now famous Edmund Pettus Bridge, the 3-story building was owned by Mrs. Boynton, whose real estate and insurance businesses were on the first floor. Our office had a magnificent view of the city jail right across the street.

That same building housed the Selma police, the Dallas County Sheriff's office, and the county jail. There was something fitting about being so close to law enforcement by groups that were so devoted to destroying the racial status quo.

Headed by Rev. Harold Middlebrook, District IV was the administrative headquarters for seven blackbelt counties. Rev. Middlebrook had known Dr. King since 1960. Born and raised in Memphis, he went to Morehouse College in Atlanta, where he became involved in the sit-ins that swept the South in 1960. The students asked Dr. King to join them, with the result that Rev. Middlebrook and Dr. King spent 19 days in jail together. For the next seven years, he alternated between going to school and working for SCLC – sometimes simultaneously. He worked all over Alabama, as well as in Virginia and Florida (Middlebrook oral history, 1968, I-2). After the march on Montgomery ended, the movement in Selma was in shambles and the DCVL seemed unable to pick up the pieces. SCLC sent Middlebrook to Selma in July to put them back together. (Ashmore, 2008, 164) No SCOPers were assigned to Dallas County, but three SCLC staff continued to work there. In August Rev. Middlebrook was able to get a few local Negroes put on staff as subsistence workers. (SCLC IV 146:12) In late September, I arrived as his office worker.

Our tiny office barely had room for six chairs and a table, all borrowed, and a manual typewriter that barely worked. I had brought my hand-cranked mimeo with me to Selma so I could run off flyers, but it proved to be quite cranky. That was pretty much it for office equipment; we didn't even have a stapler. The SNCC office upstairs looked lavish by comparison. In two and half times the space, I counted three manual typewriters and one electric, three filing cabinets, a postage meter, desks, two mimeographs, an adding machine, a cutting board and quite a few books. They even had a photocopier; I wondered how poor SNCC could afford such an expensive luxury. Although I didn't know it at the time, SCLC frequently made financial contributions to SNCC.¹ In Selma, SCLC starved Peter to feed Paul.

Everyone worked all the time. I was expected to keep the office open from 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., and often later. Dallas was one of only seven Alabama counties with federal examiners and we wanted to keep them busy. Canvassers would come to our office early in the morning and then go out to their assigned routes for the day. Rural people were early risers. We needed to find them, persuade them to register, and then bring them to town before the federal office closed for the day. As was true in Abbeville, there was no project car. Finding local people with cars and talking them into driving our canvassers where they needed to go was one of my tasks. This was easier than in Abbeville. Selma had already been mobilized into a movement and I had a list of people with cars who were willing to drive. More important, the level of fear was lower. After all the Negro community in Selma had been through, traffic tickets were the least of their concerns.

¹ Randolph Blackwell sent SNCC a check for \$5,000 with his letter of 8-19-65; SCLC IV 144:20. By way of comparison, an audit done of the SCLC Alabama office found that it had received a total of \$8,200 and spent \$7,996.51 between 10-5-65 and 11-17-65; SCLC IV 147:4. Of that, \$6.00 was to reimburse me for transportation – probably my bus fare from Selma to Greenville.

Once I discovered that the SNCC office had an electric mimeograph, I knew it would be a lot quicker to use theirs than to nurse mine into running off hundreds of flyers every time we needed one. When I needed to use it, I typed a stencil on our ancient typewriter, then went upstairs and begged. Since SNCC had always criticized SCLC for raking in money from King's highly publicized demonstrations and speeches while the poor SNCC volunteers just struggled along, they got a certain perverse amusement from my repeated requests for a hand-out.

After \$7 was taken from my purse in the SCLC office I took to carrying it with me every time I went upstairs. Once I left it in the SNCC office just long enough to carry some wet stencils back down to our office. I returned a few minutes later to find the door locked. Someone told me that all the SNCC people had left for a four day conference in Tuskegee, taking the key with them. For almost a week I had no money and no ID. That made me very cautious. I had heard the cops liked to arrest civil rights workers for vagrancy when they found them with little or no money in their possession. The Selma police knew all of us so I tried to stay out of sight. I was relieved when the SNCC workers returned and I got my purse back, as much for the ID as for the little bit of money in it.

Selma was the only place I worked where I met SNCC staff. I could see that SCLC and SNCC were going down separate paths. Even in Atlanta, SNCC and SCLC staff didn't work together, socialize together, or, as far as I could tell, even talk to each other. This was also true in Selma. Although I used the SNCC mimeo, they never asked me my name. I don't remember if I asked for theirs.

By then I had met enough SCLC staffers (not SCOPers) to see that the differences between them and the SNCC staff were more than organizational. By and large, the SNCC staff were children of the middle class while the SCLC field staff were not. I was alerted to this from listening to the SNCC staff in the Selma office. Growing up, I had learned that language was a manifestation of class as well as race and region; that was one reason my mother was so insistent on the use of "proper" English. The SNCC staff sounded middle-class even when they spoke black English. This impression was confirmed when I read biographies and books about SNCC years later. SNCC staff were college kids; those that dropped out to work in the movement intended to finish their degrees. Most of them had grown up in middle-class homes with educated parents and lots of books. With an occasional exception, the Negro field staff I met in SCLC had come into the movement directly from the farms or from the streets. Their education ranged from high-school drop-out to college drop-out. White SCLC staff were more like SNCC staff, but Negro SCLC field staff were of a different class.²

At night there were usually mass meetings in a church someplace. I didn't have to go to those, but I often did. I wanted to see the turn-out from the flyers I prepared. Sometimes I

² This class difference may explain why the work of the SNCC staff is better known than that of the SCLC field staff. With their college-honed skills, SNCC staffers were more likely to write memoirs and other books. Historians writing about SCLC have focused on Dr. King's activities and the major movement projects such as Albany, St. Augustine, Birmingham and Selma. Little has been written about, or by, the SCLC field staff.

wouldn't get to bed before midnight. Mass meetings were as important to the movement as canvassing. Although the people who came were, by the very exertion necessary to go out after work, a select group, their faith that "freedom" would come still needed to be reinforced. Seeing each other, hearing each other, listening over and over to tales of white oppression and stories of success through perseverance, gave them the strength to go on despite white hostility and retaliation.

I stayed with Mrs. E. R. Reese at 1503 Tremont, in the same room as Shirley Mesher. Shirley was SCLC's only white female county project director in all the time I worked in the South. She may have been the only *female* county director (Robnett, 1997, 96). I didn't know of any others though I heard of a couple black women who co-directed a county with their husbands. In her mid-30s, she was older than the typical SCLC project director. Although we shared a room, we never had time to talk so I found out very little about her beyond the fact that she had been working with CORE in Seattle until the Selma march brought her to Alabama. She stayed. I thought she was a very hard, no-nonsense worker, which is what I wanted to be.

In addition to voter registration, the primary focus of the Dallas County project was to get federal poverty program money into the hands of local Negroes. A lot of the flyers I prepared were distributed in the rurals to let farmers know about crop programs and in towns to tell people about anti-poverty programs. Mesher wanted to organize the local committees necessary to apply for these funds. My small contribution to this effort was to get a large box of booklets about the Community Action Program. Mesher had not been able to get them from the regional Office of Economic Opportunity. The next route to get federal documents was to ask your Member of Congress, but that wouldn't work in Alabama. When I learned about this problem I told Shirley that I could write my California M.C. (Ashmore, 2008, 164-170; SC 10-16/17-65, 1)

Instead I decided to write Joe Beeman, who was Cong. Phil Burton's Administrative Assistant. Phil Burton was a very outspoken, liberal M.C. from San Francisco; one of many whom I had helped elect during my days as a precinct worker in California. He had toured Mississippi the summer before. (*STV* 7-15-64, 3) I knew Joe from my days in the University Young Democrats, especially the year he was President of the California Federation of Young Democrats. Joe collected buttons, which we occasionally exchanged. I put together a small packet of civil rights buttons and mailed it to him at Phil's Washington office along with a note telling him what we needed. In only a few days a large box of CAP booklets arrived at our office. Inside each one was stamped "Courtesy of the Hon. Phil Burton."

Each morning I would get up, make myself some tea, and walk the mile and a half to the office. On the way, I'd pick up pecans littering the street and crack them with my teeth for breakfast. My childhood home in Northridge had six walnut trees so I knew something about shelling nuts. Those Selma pecans were a lot harder to get the meat out of than my California walnuts and the shells were bitter to my tongue, but the meat inside was very tasty. In one of my letters to my mother I asked her to send me a nutcracker, but it never came.

After several days of eating pecans, I got a bright idea. I picked up enough on my morning walks to fill a shoe box and mailed them to Mrs. King. Three months later I got a personally signed thank you note – mailed to me in Greenville, Alabama. By then, I was in

Birmingham, but somehow it got to me.

I was only in Selma for about three weeks before I was sent to Greenville. I was replaced in Selma because the mother of a young woman working for SCLC in Barbour County took ill. She lived in Montgomery and wanted her daughter closer to home. Only 50 miles from Montgomery, Selma was the closest SCLC office. This office didn't need two office workers and I was happy to get back into the field. By the time I left, almost half of the Negroes of voting age in Dallas County had been found eligible to vote, though they were not yet officially registered. The flow of people to the federal examiners continued to be strong long after it had dwindled to a trickle in other counties because Dallas County was a highly mobilized county. Rev. Middlebrook returned to his home in Memphis soon after I moved on. Daniel Harrell was appointed as District IV director though he continued to live in Wilcox county. (USCCR, Nov. 1965, 37, 71; Middlebrook interview, 1968, II-4)