

Alabama Primary: The Governor's Race

Campaigning for the May 3 Democratic primary was already underway when Governor Wallace told the assembled press on February 24 that his wife, Lurleen Wallace, would run for Governor. He had been testing reactions to the idea since October and was not deterred by his wife's hysterectomy for uterine cancer only the month before. Both Wallaces made it clear that she was running as his surrogate, in much the same way as Miriam "Ma" Ferguson had run for Governor of Texas in 1924 as a stand-in for her impeached husband. Lurleen said that she would run the mansion and George would run the state. Her election would "enable my husband to carry on his program for the people of Alabama," she told a cheering crowd. (Carter, 1995, 277-79; *BN* 10-27-65, 1; 11-18-65, 2; quote in 2-24-66, 1; *NYT* 2-25-66, 1; *LAT* 2-25-66, 1) The Governor's race was really between George Wallace, campaigning for his wife, and the nine men vying for the anti-Wallace vote. All hoped to get into the run-off against Mrs. Wallace.

Richmond Flowers made his own announcement for Governor the next day. He had planned to run for lieutenant governor in 1966 and use the job to campaign for the first Senate seat that became vacant.¹ What changed his mind was Lurleen Wallace. He later said that he "didn't think the people of Alabama would elect a woman under any conditions." (Hayman, 1996, 250) Flowers had come to the movement's attention five months earlier when he personally prosecuted Collie Leroy Wilkins for killing Viola Liuzzo. He was a law-and-order man, but he was an equal opportunity law-and-order man, which put him at odds with Alabama's concept of justice. Hailing from Dothan, Flowers was elected Attorney General in 1962, after serving in the state senate for nine years. He believed in segregation, and had said so repeatedly in his campaigns, but he opposed George Wallace's dramatic defiance of federal court orders. He thought the state of Alabama should obey the law and the courts, despite disagreement with substance. He prosecuted the Ku Klux Klan rather than tolerate its lawlessness like so many other Southern law enforcement officials. For this, crosses were burned on his lawn, bricks thrown through his windows, threats made on his life and at least one punch landed on his jaw. (*BN* 10-30-65, 1; 12-19-65, C-13; 2-25-66, 1; *CD* 11-1-65, 10)

In his declaration of candidacy, Flowers highlighted several differences between himself and the Wallaces. For starters, he said he would replace the Confederate battle flag flying over the state capitol with the US flag. This was an indirect way of saying that he would take Alabama back into the national polity and not follow the path of resistance in a vain hope of maintaining segregation. Gov. Wallace had raised that flag in 1963 as part of his symbolic struggle against school desegregation (and it would stay there until 1993). Flowers announced that he wanted the votes of Negroes as well as whites. As he campaigned, he called for bi-racial commissions and a rejection of "old slogans, old solutions and old machinery." In past elections such utterances would have been the kiss of death. (*SC* 3-5/6-66, 1; *Tuscaloosa News* 4-14-66; *BN* 4-19-66, 24; Permaloff and Grafton, 1995, 234; Carter, 1995, 285)

¹ Senator Lister Hill, after almost losing to a Republican in 1962, chose not to run for re-election in 1968. If Flowers had stuck to his original plan, he might have been elected to the Senate in 1968 – assuming enough Negroes voted for him and enough whites forgave him for being a traitor to the Southern Way of Life. Instead Democrat James B. Allen, who was serving his last year as lieutenant governor in 1966, was elected as Hill's successor.

Before the VRA became law neither Flowers nor any other ambitious Alabama politician would have said these things or openly courted Negro votes. But over two hundred thousand registered Negro voters made a big difference. Flowers had signaled his desire for Negro votes long before he announced which office he was running for. When he shared a stage with Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach and several Negro leaders at an Emancipation Day rally in Mobile's Municipal Auditorium, he was introduced as "Alabama's Great Emancipator." The crowd roared with approval. (BN 1-8-66, 10)

Former Member of Congress Carl Elliott also sought the Negro vote. A "national" Democrat from the northwest hill country, Elliott had been a close ally of President Johnson during his 8 terms in Congress. To stay elected he voted against all civil rights bills. He still lost his seat in the 1964 primary after attacks by conservatives convinced voters that he was out-of-touch with Alabama. In 1966, he had the support of the state AFL-CIO² and many of Alabama's more liberal Democrats. Calling for "racial peace" he campaigned for Negro support the old-fashioned way – quietly – whereas Flowers did it openly. (Elliott and D'Orso, 1992, 236-37, 247-48, 252-53; BN 1-22-66, 1, 11) Indeed, one of Flowers' favorite jabs at Elliott was to tell Negro audiences to "Make [candidates] meet you eye to eye out in the sunshine" and not "in the halls or back rooms." (BN 4-1-66, 4)

In his search for Negro votes Flowers did things no white man had done since Reconstruction (and only some did so then). He shook Negro hands and kissed Negro babies. He went on a tour of slums with Rev. T. Y. Rogers. He promised poverty money for Negro communities and state jobs for civil rights activists. He promised to hire Negro highway patrolmen. He spoke at the site of the 1963 Birmingham church bombing. He sang *We Shall Overcome* after speaking to a crowd of 3,000 outside of Brown's Chapel, the headquarters of the Selma campaign. He held an integrated reception in a home in the white section of Mobile and opened one of his campaign storefronts in a Negro neighborhood. (SC 4-9/10-66, 2; 4-16/17-66, 1; NYT 4-14-66, 27; 4-17-66, 63; 5-3-66, 1; LAT 4-14-66, 19; 4-18-66, 14; Permaloff and Grafton, 1995, 234; BN 3-12-66, 2; 4-1-66, 1) Indeed he spent so much time campaigning for Negro votes that even Hosea thought it was dumb. (SC 4-2/3-66, 4; 4-23/24-66, 1)

Elliott followed the traditional strategy of racial moderates running for office by asking Negro leaders for their endorsement, but not making a public appeal that might cost him white votes. Instead of offering Negroes jobs and programs, he campaigned against "the lack of responsible leadership." (SC 3-19/20-66, 1) He planted stories in national newspapers arguing that Flowers' open campaigning for Negro votes would cost him crucial white support and hand victory to Wallace. (WP 4-6-66, A25) While Elliott did not appear before the COAPO interviewing committee, he asked President Johnson to speak to Dr. King on his behalf, and when that failed, met with King briefly in the Birmingham airport. Dr. King promised him nothing. (Elliott and D'Orso, 1992, 283-84)

Although Dr. King probably had little to do with COAPO's endorsement, he was

^{2 2} Elliot did not have the support of the union rank and file. They were Governor Wallace's most devoted supporters, and were happy to vote for Lurleen in his place. Indeed, many locals disaffiliated from the state AFL-CIO over its endorsement of Elliot rather than Wallace. (Draper, 1994, 117-119)

acquainted with Richmond Flowers. At the time of the Montgomery bus boycott, Flowers was one of Governor Jim Folsom's floor leaders in the Senate. The Dexter Ave. Baptist Church where Dr. King was pastor was just down the street from the Capitol. When Dr. King wanted to speak to the Governor he would go to Flowers' office, where the Senator would let the Governor know that "Preacher King" was there. That way neither the Governor nor Dr. King had to deal with the possible reactions of dozens of white petitioners waiting in Governor Folsom's reception room.³ Flowers often sat in on these conversations; while he seldom saw Dr. King after he moved to Atlanta, he felt they respected each other. (Hayman, 1996, 113-15)

Flowers submitted to the COAPO interview even though he had every reason to believe that the endorsement was already his. The only other gubernatorial candidate to do so was former Gov. Folsom. At this point in his life, Folsom was more of a perennial candidate than a serious one. In his first term (1947-1951), when race was not an issue, he had made several statements in support of Negro advancement. During his campaign for a second term, while the South was holding its breath waiting for the Court to decide *Brown v. Board of Education* (on May 17, 1954, right after the Alabama primary), he retreated from any sign of support for Negroes, but didn't engage in the race-baiting typical of many Southern politicians. Folsom was, as George Wallace put it, "soft" on the "nigger issue." He was also an alcoholic and too publicly corrupt to have future political prospects. After his second term as Governor ended he ran for everything and was elected to nothing. (Hayman, 1996, 123-23; Grafton and Permaloff, 1985; Howard, 2008, 83-89)

The other former governor running for another term was John Patterson (1959-1963). As Attorney General under Folsom, he had engineered the banning of the NAACP and raided the offices of the Tuskegee Civic Association. In the 1958 gubernatorial run-off primary he had "out-niggered" George Wallace to win. Flowers was also "out-niggered" in 1958, when he ran for Attorney General against MacDonalld Gallion, Patterson's chief assistant in the A.G.'s office. Flowers and Wallace learned different lessons from their defeats. They nonetheless remained friendly with each other until they were both inaugurated in 1963. Once in office, the Governor and the Attorney General did not see eye-to-eye. They locked horns so often that Wallace urged that Flowers be impeached. (Howard, 2008, 100-106, 114, 149; Hayman, 1996, 185, 189-191, 248; Carter, 1995, 276; *BN* 1-7-66, 1,6; 1-8-66, 1) Indeed, when time came to challenge the Voting Rights Act in court, Wallace hired attorney Frank Mizell to represent the state rather than rely on Alabama's Attorney General to do so. (*BN* 8-13-65, 11)

To no one's surprise, Flowers was endorsed by COAPO almost unanimously (one vote for Folsom) when it met in Birmingham on April 16. The ADC also endorsed him when it met the next day, but not without a fight. Flowers had received a standing ovation when he addressed its semi-annual convention in November but Elliott had several staunch friends among the businessmen and professionals who primarily composed the ADC, making for a bitter brawl.

^{3 3} Flowers, in his interviews with his biographer, said that Gov. Folsom and Dr. King negotiated terms to end the boycott which were quite modest, but the Montgomery police commissioner, a committed racist, thought their deal was a sell-out and refused to accept it. After the Court ruled that local bus segregation was unconstitutional, the desegregation that followed was far more extensive. (Hayman, 1996, 113-115) There is nothing about this agreement in Folsom's 1985 biography; only that he made a lot of calls to city officials.

After the ADC screening committee finally voted 13 to 8 for Flowers, six Elliott supporters filed an unprecedented minority report. This led to a standing vote in the full convention, in which a significant but not overwhelming majority voted to endorse Flowers. (*SC* 11-13/14-65, 1; 4-23/24-66, 1; *NYT* 4-17-66, 63; 4-18-66, 17; *LAT* 4-17-66, E23; 4-18-66, 14; *BN* 4-17-66, A8; 4-18-66, 1,4) Elliott knew his race was lost at that point, even though his endorsement by the Alabama AFL-CIO would persuade some Negroes to vote for him, as would the endorsement of the Macon County Democratic Club. (Elliott and D'Orso, 1992, 284)

The burgeoning Negro vote changed the tone of the campaign. The word "nigger" disappeared from campaign speeches as did "segregation," though "colored" did not. George Wallace learned how to pronounce Negro correctly. He never mentioned segregation, preferring to dwell on "states rights." Former Governor John Patterson promised a "color-blind" administration. Agricultural Commissioner A.W. Todd said that, if elected governor, he would set up a bi-racial committee "to work out our problems inside Alabama." St. Sen. Robert Gilchrist put a campaign ad in the *Southern Courier*, as did Flowers and Elliott. (Jenkins, 1966, 84, 89, 94; *NYT* 5-3-66, 1; *LAT* 4-14-66, 19; 4-18-66, 14; *SC* 4-16/17-66, 2; 4-23/24-66, 5, 6; 4/30-5/1-66, 2; *BN* 4-7-66, 40)

Appealing to Negroes didn't change the hearts of whites. Flower's campaign posters were regularly ripped down or vandalized and nightriders burned a cross in the front yard of his home. (*BN* 4-3-66, 1) The word "Never" was scrawled on Elliott's billboards. When he shook hands with Negroes after speaking in Greenville, he was denounced by the probate judge for violating Southern racial etiquette. His campaign endured the same kind of threats and harassment normally dealt to civil rights workers in even the best of counties. (Elliott and D'Orso, 1992, 277-78, 282; *BN* 4-1-66, 4)

On March 24 Rep. James Martin announced that he wanted the Republican Party to nominate him for Governor when it met in convention in July. Martin had been a Democrat until 1962 when he switched parties to challenge Lister Hill's re-election to the US Senate. He had received 49.1 percent of that vote – the best Republican showing since Reconstruction. (*NYT* 3-25-66, 26; *SC* 2-5/6-66, 1; 8-6/7-66, 1) In 1964 he was elected to Carl Elliott's seat in Congress. His disdain for Negro votes was clear in an April speech in New Orleans when he called the VRA "the most dangerous thing that could happen in the South." (*WP* 4-12-66, A21)

Alabama Primary: The State and Local Races

Hosea's fondest hope was to Get Rid of Wallace, as the GROW button proclaimed, but local Negroes were more concerned with local offices. Particularly in the rural counties they saw the county officials as having the most impact on their lives, especially the sheriff and the Board of Education. The county commissioners, the tax assessor and tax collector also made important decisions. (*SC 2-19/20-66*, 1; Jeffries, 2009, 151) The Democratic Party nominees for these offices would be selected in the same May 3 primary that chose the Party's candidates for statewide offices. Republicans relied on conventions or mass meetings to select their local candidates; they used primaries in only five counties that had few Negro voters. (*BN 4-20-66*, 18; *5-1-66*, A56) A move in the Democratic Party to allow county parties to use the convention method to select local candidates was beaten back in the same January 22 state executive committee meeting that changed the Party's emblem. (*NYT 1-23-66*, 72)

Although there were ten counties in which the Negro voting age population exceeded that of whites, only in Greene County did Negroes have a significant majority of *registered* voters when the rolls were closed before the primary. That may be why SNCC sent Hubert "Rap" Brown, who had just become a full-time field secretary, to Greene County to organize an independent political party like the one in Lowndes County. (Carson, 1981, 252) In Macon and Wilcox Counties Negroes were 51 percent of all registered voters. In Bullock, Sumter, Marengo, Perry, Dallas, Lowndes and Hale counties Negroes were at least 40 percent of the registered voters. Federal examiners had been active in all but Bullock, Macon and Sumter; in those three the county registrars were operating under court order. In six of these ten counties the number of whites on the voter rolls was greater than their number in the 1960 voting age population because the lists hadn't been purged of the dead and departed for decades. Consequently, Negroes were probably an even greater percentage of the actual number of eligible voters. (Registration statistics published in *BN 5-1-66*, B2)

Statewide, twelve Negroes filed for the state legislature, seven filed for county sheriff, 35 for other county offices, and around forty for the county executive committees of the Democratic Party by the March 1 filing deadline.¹ Reflecting the importance of sheriff in their eyes, Negroes

¹ Exactly how many Negroes ran in which counties in the May 3 Democratic primary is a little unclear. The major newspapers repeatedly said 52, 54, or 56 Negroes were candidates, but didn't separate those running for an unpaid *party* position on the county Democratic Executive Committee (DEC) from those running for a *public* office in the state legislature or a county government. Hosea sometimes said there were 70 candidates for both and sometimes 75. I have looked at four separate sources for Negro candidates in the May 3 primary, and none of them agree. In the SCLC papers, IV 165:10, there is an undated list of 61 "Alabama Candidates running for Public Office in the May primaries," in 14 counties with a handwritten note at the top saying "A total of 59 candidates." *The Southern Courier* from March 5/6 through May 7/8, 1966 has several stories on Negro candidates running in different counties. A story on p. 14 of the *Baltimore Afro-American* for April 30, 1966 says that 60 persons are seeking public office in 18 counties, accompanied by a list of 40 candidates for public office and 3 for party office in 16 counties. The *Birmingham News* for May 4, 1966 identified the Negro candidates for public office in most of the county returns; updates and additions were in later stories. The SCLC list includes candidates for the DEC in four counties; the *Southern Courier* mentions candidates for

had filed to run for this office in Barbour, Bullock, Greene, Hale, Macon, Perry and Wilcox Counties. Whites muttered that if any won, they wouldn't live long enough to be sworn in. (*LAT* 4-19-66, 21)

Expectations of success were highest in Greene County, where Negroes were 81.3 percent of the population, 67 percent of the registered voters and had been organizing for some time. Five Negroes filed for public office – sheriff, tax collector, tax assessor, two for the Board of Education – and one for the county DEC. Rev. Thomas E. Gilmore was Sheriff William E. Lee's only opponent. The office of sheriff had been in the Lee family for 45 years. The incumbent, a former professional football player, inherited the office from his older brother, who had inherited it from their father. None of them wore a gun. After ten years as sheriff, Lee had a reputation for being "fair." He did not come down hard on the Negro population as did some white sheriffs. Gilmore had been on SCLC's staff for a year. To make ends meet, he also pastored a rural church. He had never thought of running for anything, let alone sheriff, until he found himself leading demonstrations in Greene County the summer before. His willingness to stand up to the local authorities made him something of a legend at age 25. When he complained to Rev. Branch and James Orange about how the law ignored the threats they faced and the beatings they took, Orange told him that he should be sheriff. Gilmore later said he was running because he wanted to give his "children and the rest of the children in the Negro community somebody they can look up to without being afraid." In fact, Gilmore got frequent threats to his life. (Gaillard, 2004, 317-18; Gilmore quote in *SC* 3-26/27-66, 1,6; 5-7/8-66, 1; *NYT* 5-2-66, 25; *WP* 3-16-66, B19; *BN* 4-1-66, 14)

In Wilcox County, one of the poorest in the state, grocer Walter J. Calhoun was taking on another long-term sheriff. "Mr. Lummie" Jenkins had been sheriff for 27 years. The 30-year-old grocer thought he had a chance because Negro registration exceeded that of whites, though not by much, in a county where 70 percent of the voting age population was Negro. As soon as he announced, the white woman from whom he rented his home told him to pack up and leave. Wilcox was one of two Alabama counties in which *no* Negroes were registered to vote prior to 1965. (*SC* 4-2/3-66, 5; *BN* 2-13-66, A-34; Roberts, 1966; *Jet*, 3-10-66, 20) In Macon County, Lucius D. Amerson, a Korean War veteran who had not been involved in the movement, filed for sheriff. He gave up his job in the Montgomery post office to do so because "Macon county needs a sheriff that will work for the benefit of everybody in an unbiased way." (*SC* 4-2/3-66 1) Two white men also filed to run against the incumbent in a county that was 83.5 percent Negro. (*NYT* 4-21-66, 30)

In Hale County, where white registration slightly exceeded that of Negroes, the incumbent sheriff was retiring. Henry Lee McCaskill was one of four to file for that office in an

the DEC in 5 counties; the *Birmingham News* occasionally identifies these candidates. All sources agree that 11 Negroes ran for the state House, one for the state Senate and 7 for sheriff. In 3 of the 4 counties in the Senate district there were no local candidates. In Jefferson County all four candidates for public office ran for the House but at least three Negroes ran for the county DEC. In five counties Negroes ran for local office but not the state legislature. I found errors and inconsistencies in all four sources. Putting them together, my best guess is that there were 35 Negro candidates for county offices in addition to 7 for sheriff and 12 for the legislature. This would bring the total to 54 candidates for *public* office, and 40 candidates for the county DEC's.

open race. He said he wanted to be sheriff because “Our churches have been burned and nothing has been done about it.” Long active with SCLC, McCaskill also pastored a small church and ran a grocery store while his wife taught at the Hale County Training School. (McCaskill quote in *SC* 3-5/6-66, 1) Bullock was another county in which the official white registration barely exceeded the number of Negro voters. T.V. repairman Henry Oscar Williams challenged incumbent Sheriff Clarence M. Blue. (*SC* 4-16/17-66, 6; *BN* 4-24-66, B6) In Perry County, where three whites were registered to vote for every two Negroes, Patt Davis challenged incumbent sheriff Bill Loftus. (*SC* 4-30/5-1, 66, 6)

Negroes were only 26 percent of the registered voters in Barbour County but that did not deter them from filing for five county offices and six positions on the county Democratic Executive Committee. Although Barbour had seen a lot of movement activity in 1965, political activity was new. The new chairman of the newly formed Barbour County Political Association said that “[t]here's been nothing like it in the last 100 years.” In the county where George Wallace grew up, Wesley McNear, a funeral home employee, boldly put in his bid to dethrone Sheriff William J. Adams on the very day that George was telling a Montgomery audience that his wife would run for Governor. McNear promised “law and order and justice for all.” (quotes in *SC* 3-12/13-66, 1; 5-7/8-66, 2)

The hottest races for sheriff were between white men in Dallas and Jefferson Counties. Jim Clark, the poster boy for police brutality during the Selma demonstrations, was running for re-election as Dallas County sheriff. Appointed to the office in 1957 by Gov. Jim Folsom to fill an unexpired term, he had been re-elected twice. His opponent was Wilson Baker, the public safety director of the City of Selma, who had lost to Clark in 1958. Baker had wanted the police to exercise restraint and let the demonstrators march as long as they weren't breaking the law. The DCVL, which had seen Clark oppress Negroes for years, wanted him out. They believed that Negro votes might make a difference in the sheriff's race; therefore they discouraged any Negro from running for sheriff while running many Negroes for other offices. (Chestnut, 1990, 238; *SC* 3-19/20-66, 6; *NYT* 4-20-66, 27; *Jet*, 3-10-66, 20) Ironically, if Baker had been Sheriff in 1965, “Selma” would never have happened. His conciliatory strategy would have stifled the movement in much the same way as Sheriff Laurie Pritchett had done in Albany, Georgia in 1961-62.

Al Lingo was the other highly visible symbol of racist resistance looking for political validation. Appointed by Wallace to head the state highway patrol in 1963, he gained notoriety for dealing forcibly with Negro protestors and civil rights demonstrators. Under his direction state troopers freely used cattle prods, tear gas and billy clubs on non-violent marchers. It was his troopers who had turned March 7, 1965 into “Bloody Sunday” when they attacked the marchers on the east side of the Edmund Pettus bridge. It was his office which amassed files on “subversive” civil rights workers. In September of 1965 he resigned as state Public Safety Director to run against Mel Bailey, the incumbent sheriff of Jefferson County. The biggest complaint Jefferson County Negroes had about Bailey was the complete lack of Negroes among his 96 deputies, even to work in Negro neighborhoods. That paled compared to their feelings about Al Lingo. (*NYT* 8-18-69, 35; *SC* 4-9/10-66, 6)

The new importance of the Negro vote was readily seen in these races. Lingo spoke at Negro churches, donated money at an SCLC political rally, promised to appoint Negro deputies, and advertised on a Negro radio station. (*NYT* 4-13-66, 53; 4-14-66, 27 photo, 5-3-66, 33; *LAT* 4-14-66, 19; *BN* 4-14-66, 1) Jim Clark discarded the “NEVER” button he had worn during the Selma demonstrations and shifted his rhetoric from denouncing civil rights agitators to

denouncing Communists. He even invited Negroes to a campaign barbeque. (*LAT* 4-17-55, F5; *WP* 4-18-66, A2; *NYT* 5-3-66, 33) Wilson Baker was also courting Negro votes, but doing it quietly to avoid alienating whites. He didn't mention race in his campaign and refused to be interviewed by a *Southern Courier* reporter out of fear of being labeled the "Negro candidate." He let others talk him up among Negroes. (*LAT* 4-17-55, F5; *SC* 3-19/20-66, 6; Chestnut, 1990, 236, 239-240)

Seats in the state legislature also attracted attention, especially since most of the house districts were new ones created by the federal district court according to population. Previously, each of the 67 counties had been entitled to at least one representative in the House. Many rural counties were now combined into single districts, though some of the districts could elect more than one representative. Fred Gray, Thomas Reed and Jessie P. Guzman all filed in Assembly District 31, which consisted of Macon, Bullock and Barbour counties. Two representatives could be elected from this district, but not the two highest vote getters. Instead, each candidate ran for one of two "places." which is what the two seats were called. Jessie P. Guzman, a history professor and former dean of women at Tuskegee Institute, and Thomas Reed, a restaurant owner, filed in Place #1, as did the incumbent Representative. Guzman had run for school board in 1954, but lost. Attorney Fred Grey filed in Place #2. He had made his legal reputation in Montgomery as Rosa Parks' defense counsel after her 1955 arrest but had long had a second office in Tuskegee. He had clients throughout southeast Alabama and had been retained by the NAACP and SCLC numerous times. Gray had a house built in Tuskegee and moved his family there in the summer of 1965 in order to run for the legislature. This district had a majority of Negroes in the population, if not yet among the voters. These counties had been put together into a district by the federal court in order to make it possible to elect a Negro to the state legislature. (*SC* 2-19/20-66, 1; 3-12/13-66, 2; Gray, 1995, 237-38; *Sims v. Baggett*, 1965)

Two Negroes were running in District 27, a three-county district (Sumter, Marengo and Perry) with two places. Although the Negroes of voting age were more numerous than whites in these three counties, the number of Negroes actually registered was still running way behind. One of the candidates was Albert Turner, SCLC's Alabama state director who had organized the Perry County movement; the other was F. N. Nixon, an NAACP leader in Sumter. In District 28 only one Negro was running for the House even though it had two places in a district consisting only of Dallas County. The Rev. P.H. Lewis, pastor of Brown Chapel, the headquarters church for the Selma demonstrations, was running against an incumbent in Place #2. In fact, two incumbents were running, one in each place. Negroes were slightly more numerous than whites among the voting age population, but only 45 percent of the 22,775 registered voters in Dallas County in 1966.

The urban counties could elect multiple members. Only one Negro was running in Mobile County, which had ten places in District 37, but he had to run county wide. Mobile County had 314,301 people living in it when the 1960 Census was taken, of whom 32.3 percent were nonwhite. Even though Mobile had had an active voter registration program for years, only half of the NVAP were registered to vote, giving Negroes 18.7 percent of the total registration. C. H. Montgomery, a long-time member of the Mobile County Democratic Executive Committee, a barber and vice president of ADC, ran for Place #10.

Jefferson County had 634,864 people in 1960, of whom 34.6 percent were nonwhite. As a result of the VRA and voter registration drives, over half of voting age Negroes were registered to vote, bringing them to 26 percent of all registered voters. Jefferson County could elect 20 people

to the Alabama house and seven to its senate, but they all had to run county wide. Four Negroes ran for House Places #3, 9, 10, and 20 in District 14. The best known was lawyer Arthur Shores, who had handled cases for the NAACP and SCLC. He got national attention when he represented Autherine Lucy in her 1955 attempt to enter the University of Alabama. Born in 1904, he had run for the legislature in 1954 and '64. He had tried to run in 1942 but was disqualified by the county DEC because a Negro candidate violated its white primary rule (which the Supreme Court found unconstitutional in 1944). At the ADC endorsement meeting he had supported Elliott over Flowers. Dr. James T. Montgomery and contractor Leroy S. Gaillard were less well-known. David H. Hood Jr., a Bessemer lawyer, had some name recognition through his work in the ADC and the NAACP. Hood and Shores had, as their base, the Jefferson County Progressive Democratic Council, which Shores had co-founded in the 1930s. Both were members of the County DEC. When the *Birmingham News* published its "recommended" list of candidates two days before the primary, all but Hood were on it. (SC 4-23/24-66, 5; Shores oral history, 1974; Thornton, 2002, 155; BN 5-1-66, A16; 5-29-66, B2; http://www.bhamwiki.com/w/Arthur_Shores)

The lone candidate for the state senate was Lonnie N. Brown, the Wilcox Co. insurance agent who had organized the Wilcox County Civic and Progressive League. He was one of COAPO's officers. He was running in Senate District 19 which consisted of Clark, Conecuh, Monroe and Wilcox counties. Whites outnumbered Negroes in all but Wilcox County and it was the smallest of the four.

Several important offices were not on the ballot, including probate judge, circuit judge and court clerk, because their terms of office didn't expire in 1966. At SNCC's request, civil rights lawyers petitioned the federal district court to vacate the election of those officials in Lowndes County who had been elected before the VRA on the grounds that the total exclusion of Negroes from the voting lists made their election illegal. The LCFO wanted to run candidates for all county offices in the November general election. However, Judge Johnson, writing for a unanimous three-judge court on March 31, declined to do so. (*McGill v. Ryals*, 1966; Jeffries, 2009, 159; WP 4-1-66, A4)

In the middle of March, SCLC brought a few dozen Negro candidates to Atlanta for two days of training in running for office and to learn the duties of the offices they sought. Meeting in Ebenezer Baptist Church, they were addressed by most of the SCLC executive staff, as well as Negro elected officials from Georgia, Virginia, North and South Carolina, and a few academics. Junius Griffin, SCLC's director of public relations, used the reporters present to give the candidates some experience in speaking to the press. Several of the speakers were county officials from Nansmond County, a tiny county in the Virginia blackbelt where forty percent of the office holders were Negro – more than any other county in the nation. (CD 3-22-66, 4; 4-23-66, 5; SC 3-26/27-66 1, 5)

SCLC sent staff to at least ten counties. In those, and in others where there was an active local movement, meetings were held to educate voters on how to how to vote, as well as whom to vote for. (SCLC IV, 145:4) The county probate judge was responsible for the conduct of elections. In a rural county, a precinct or beat might be 15 square miles. It would be divided into "boxes," each of which housed a poll. In those that had machines, new voters were taught how to pull a lever. In those with paper ballots, they were told to make an X and no other mark inside the right square. They were also told about COAPO and to vote for the candidates it had endorsed. Alabama law allowed each candidate to have one poll watcher at each box. In Wilcox County each of the four Negroes running for county office planned to have a poll watcher inside each

polling place and more outside to check off the names of every Negro who came to vote. (*SC* 4-23/24-66, 5; *BN* 4-20-66, 18)

SNCC held its own political education classes for Lowndes County Negroes. It taught them about county government and the requirements of Alabama election law to form a new party so it could be on the November ballot. The initial workshops in December were held in Atlanta. By the end of February, SNCC staff were running them in Lowndes County for those who couldn't get to Atlanta. On April 2, Negroes met in the Mt. Moriah Church to form the Lowndes County Freedom Organization, elect officers and discuss the legal procedures for holding a nominating convention. On May 3, while Democrats were voting in the Democratic primary, LCFO supporters would choose the candidates to appear under the black panther symbol in the general election. If the party polled more than twenty percent of the county-wide vote in November, it would become a bonafide political party in the state of Alabama. (Jeffries, 2009, 151, 154, 160-162; *SC* 4-9/10-66, 1)

SNCC tried to get third parties going in Greene, Wilcox, Sumter and Dallas Counties. It found resistance in the first three and limited success in Dallas. SNCC workers from Lowndes often went to Selma for R&R, where they had plenty of opportunity to talk to Dallas County Negroes casually. Meeting in Selma, the Dallas County Independent Free Voters Organization (DCIFVO) chose as its ballot emblem a black and white diamond in a circle of chain surrounded by the words "strength through unity." Negroes in Dallas County were anything but unified. Many were unhappy that the DCVL wasn't running a Negro for sheriff. SNCC argued that it was foolish to ask Negroes to vote for the lesser of two evil white men. The new chairman, Clarence Williams, said that another reason was because Selma's Negro leaders were not responsive to the poor and illiterate in the rurals. Several battles had already been fought over getting federal anti-poverty money and more would come. (Chestnut, 1990, 237-38; Jeffries, 2009, 165; *SC* 3-19/20-66, 6; *BN* 4-20-66, 18; 4-25-66, 29) The DCIFVO soon had its own candidate: Samson Crum said he was running for sheriff. (*SC* 4-16/17-66, 4; *Jet* 3-10-66, 18) A postal employee who commuted daily to his job in Birmingham, he had been involved in the march to Montgomery. (*BN* 5-4-66, 6)

On April 23 the US Attorney General sent letters to four thousand Democratic Party county chairmen and Alabama election officials – probate judges, inspectors and clerks for over a thousand separate polling places – reminding them of their responsibility to see that everyone be allowed to vote. He informed them that the DoJ could send federal observers to any of the eleven counties already designated for federal examiners and listed the eight factors important to the AG in deciding which counties would get those observers. He also notified them that the Civil Service Commission would staff the 31 offices already in use by federal examiners as complaint centers on election day and for two days thereafter.² The Commission brought 360 staff from all over the

² Three of those DoJ offices were in Elmore County and two were in Lowndes County, in which no Negroes were running in the Democratic Primary. Nine offices were in Jefferson County (Birmingham), in which there were four candidates for the state legislature. That leaves 17 offices in eight counties where there were both Negro candidates and federal complaint centers. Sumter County was added at the last minute, though it's not clear if the feds were able to find office space for a complaint center on such short notice. Negroes were running in another eight counties in which there were no federal examiners, and hence no federal observers or offices staffed to receive complaints on election day. (A.G. Memo on 4-23-66 in Belknap, 1991,

country to the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel for training on the Friday before the primary. On Monday, the DoJ certified Sumter as an examiner county so that federal observers could watch its polls on election day. It released the names of seven counties – Hale, Perry, Wilcox, Greene, Marengo, Dallas and Sumter – where the feds would be at the polls to observe. (AG letter of April 23, 1966 in Belknap, 1991, 17:1 380-385; *BN* 4-26-66, 1,6; *NYT* 4-27-66, 29, 5-3-66, 1; *WP* 5-1-66, A4; 5-27-66, A2; 31 *Federal Register* 6593, 5-3-66)

The State of Alabama also prepared for the primary. The ASSC voting consultant, Martha Witt Smith, wrote instructions to the polling officials on how to limit the number of Negroes who could cast a valid ballot. Her lengthy memo ended with the admonition “ENFORCE TIME LIMITS IN MACHINES AND BOOTHS! Any voter or watcher may swear out a warrant for the arrest of any election official failing to do so.” (ASSC papers, Reel 1, file #SG 13841.14, emphasis in original)

Dr. King made a whirlwind tour through nine black belt counties – Butler, Wilcox, Marengo, Choctaw, Sumter, Hale, Greene, Perry, Dallas – urging Negroes to vote as a bloc on May 3. Several thousand people left work and farm to hear him. SCLC had run voter registration drives in all of these counties at some point in the last year and local people were running for county office in all but Butler. He avoided Lowndes County where no Negroes were running in the Democratic primary and SNCC was actively discouraging all Negroes from voting in it. As part of his stump speech, Dr. King told his audiences to vote for Richmond Flowers. (*SC* 5-7/8-66, 2; *WP* 4-30-66, A4; *LAT* 4-30-1966, 14; 5-1-66, 1; *NYT* 4-30-66, 1; *BN* 4-30-66, 1) Stokely Carmichael urged Negroes not to vote in the Democratic Primary and to participate instead in nominating conventions for independent political parties. (*NYT* 4-20-66, 27; 5-3-66, 32:3; *BN* 4-27-66, 67)

Primary Day

The eyes of the nation were on Alabama on Primary Day. Although it was only one of six elections held on Tuesday, May 3, 1966, it was the first significant election in a Southern state since passage of the VRA. Federal officials said that in the eight months since it became law 122,079 Negroes had become voters, raising their numbers to 235,348, from 113,269 before the VRA passed nine months earlier. They were 48.9 percent of the 1960 Negro voting age population. In that same period, 110,477 whites had registered to vote, raising their total to 1,064,645 and increasing their portion of the white voting age population to 78.7 percent. Negroes were still only 16 percent of the electorate. State officials said that 257,832 Negroes and 1,142,004 whites were eligible to vote in the primary, making Negroes 18 percent of Alabama voters – roughly twice their share of the total eligible to vote in the 1964 primary. (*WP* 4-30-66, A4; 5-3-66, A2; *BN* 5-1-66, B-2; USCCR, 3-19-65)

The lines were long when the polls opened at 8:00 a.m. In the blackbelt counties, people lined up to vote at 5:00 a.m., many wearing their Sunday best. Where whites and Negroes stood in the same line to vote, it was hard to tell who was more nervous at this breach of the rules of racial etiquette that they had all grown up with. No more than ten voters were allowed inside the polling place at one time. In some places the lines were still long when the polls officially closed at 6:00 p.m. This was particularly true in counties with local organizations which arranged carpools to bring rural voters to their polling place. (*SC* 4-30/5-1-66, 4; 5-7/8-66, 1; *LAT* 5-4-66, 15) The Greene County Civic Organization recruited 37 cars and drivers to ferry Negro voters to the polls. Fourteen students came from the University of Illinois, which had “adopted” Greene County for the 1965 SCOPE project, to act as poll watchers. (*NYT* 5-2-66, 25; *Daily Illini* 5-6-66, 4) Jefferson County had added 300 new voting machines and 400 new poll officials in anticipation of a large vote. The polls officially closed at 7:00 p.m. but the last ballot was not cast until 3:00 a.m. The orders were that anyone standing in line who had declared an intention to vote should be permitted to do so. (*BN* 5-4-66, 21)

Alabama law required a voting box for every 300 voters or a machine for every 600 voters. Each voting place, even when it had more than one box, was monitored by three inspectors, two clerks, and a deputy sheriff. The same people did these jobs year after year, but the increase in voters as a result of the VRA meant that a lot of the poll personnel were new and inexperienced, particularly Negroes who had never even voted before. In each county the probate judge had overall responsibility for the elections. However, since this was a Democratic Party primary, the county Democratic Executive Committee determined the results. (*NYT* 5-19-66, 33)

Voters found a ballot with multiple columns, each one headed by the white rooster of the Democratic Party. “For the Right” was still at the bottom, but at the top “Democrats” had replaced “White Supremacy.” There were ten candidates for Governor; four each for Senate and Lt. Governor and two for Attorney General, plus Congress, the state legislature, local races and both the state and county Democratic executive committees. “Lurleen” was not on the ballot. To no one’s surprise (or protest) she ran as “Mrs. George C. Wallace” – just in case a potential voter didn’t know who was really running. In its pre-election issue, the *Southern Courier* printed copies of the ballot and instructions on how to vote by machine. It also contained a short section on paper ballots for those rural areas still using them. (*SC* 4/30-5/1-66, 4; 5-7/8-66, 1)

Voters in 18 of Alabama’s 67 counties saw the names of Negroes on their ballots. In 13

of those counties 10 men and one woman were running for the state House and one man for the state Senate. Negroes were on the ballot for local offices in 14 counties, including seven men running for sheriff. Both men and women ran for county commissioner, tax assessor, tax collector, coroner, board of revenue and board of education. In eight counties, Negroes were running for the Democratic County Executive Committee. (*SC* 4-9/10/66, 1; *BN* 4-6-66, 2) Two-thirds of these counties had hosted SCOPE projects the summer before and the rest had civil rights workers in them that Spring and/or indigenous movements.

Assistant Attorney General John Doar spent primary day in Dallas County, which he had first visited early in 1961 when he was looking for witnesses for a voting rights suit under the provisions of the 1957 Civil Rights Act. During the nine months of the VRA, ten thousand Negroes had been added to the county's voter lists. After watching long lines of newly registered Negroes waiting to vote, he drove to Orville, about 18 miles away. There he saw much the same thing, except that these were rural people, none of whom had ever voted before. (1966 AAG *Annual Report*, 188; Doar, 1978, 110) As in other counties many carried sample ballots marked for Richmond Flowers and wore buttons which said "GROW with Flowers." (*SC* 5-7/8-66, 1) The Dallas County Voters League worked all day bringing people to the polls. (Chestnut, 1990, 241) They were so successful that 17,440 people voted, many for the first time. Previously, 6,500 voters was the norm, even for important elections. (Doar, 1997, 16) Each voter had to choose among 73 candidates contesting 24 public and party offices.

The DoJ had negotiated with state and county officials late into Monday before deciding to send 357 observers to 163 polls – roughly two-thirds of the total – in Greene, Sumter, Marengo, Perry, Hale, Wilcox and Dallas counties. Doar told the press that none were sent to places where officials assigned Negro poll watchers or "showed other acts of good faith and compliance." Not all counties allowed the observers to do their job. In Greene, Marengo and Sumter counties local election officials, after conferring with federal district judge H.H. Grooms, refused to let the feds observe them help illiterates mark their ballots. The mayor of one small town in Marengo said he would arrest the observers if they got too close to the voters. In the other four counties, local officials co-operated with the feds. All this was detailed in the 8 page form that the observers submitted to their supervisors at the end of the day. (*LAT* 5-4-66, 1; 5-8-66, 2; *NYT* 5-3-66, 1; 5-4-66, 28; 5-7-66, 23; *WP* 5-27-66, A2; *SC* 5-7/8-66 5; 5-14/15-66, 2)

There were many complaints about how Negroes were treated, though none led to any ballots being canceled. Voters were generally allowed to bring their sample ballots inside with them, but didn't always get help when asked. Some polling places were moved from their usual locations without notice. (*SC* 5-7/8-66, 1) Some Negroes were told to hand their ballots to poll officials rather than place them in the box. Two Negro candidates found that the lever beside their name was stuck. (*BN* 6-30-66, 9) In Marengo County, Negro poll watchers weren't allowed to use the "white" bathrooms in the polling places, necessitating that they leave their station to go some place else, or not go. Others said whites assisted Negro illiterates by putting their Xes where the whites wanted them to go. (*WP* 5-8-66; A1) SCLC state director Albert Turner said that in Perry County white poll workers hewed to the letter of Alabama law and would not allow voters, especially illiterates, to stay in the polling booth more than the legal five minutes to cast a paper ballot or three minutes for a machine ballot. This left them no time to vote for the local offices further down the ballot that Negroes were running for. (*LAT* 5-30-66, 19; 17 *Alabama Code* of 1958 §§ 105, 176) Despite these "isolated incidents," as the DoJ called them, Attorney General Katzenbach praised both election officials and voters for their conduct during the election. (*NYT* 5-5-66, 30)

In Lowndes County between 800 and 900 registered Negroes – almost half the county total – held the LCFO nominating convention on the grounds of the First Baptist Church. They wanted to meet at the courthouse because Alabama law said that the mass meeting must be near a public polling place, but Sheriff Frank Ryals wouldn't let them. After DoJ intervention, Attorney General Flowers said the meeting would be recognized as long as it was in Hayneville, the county seat. Separate ballots were printed for each office which voters put into separate boxes on separate tables. There were at least two candidates for every office. Sidney Logan, Jr. was nominated for sheriff, Alice Moore for tax assessor, Francis Miles Jr. for tax collector, Emery Ross for Coroner, and three others for the county school board. A smaller mass meeting was held in Dallas County, where eight people were nominated to be DCIVO candidates in November. (SC 5-7/8-66, 6; *NYT* 5-4-66, 28; Jeffries, 2009, 171-74)

After the votes were counted there was much to laud and much to cry about. A record number of 888,837 people went to the polls. This was 44.8 percent of the voting age population, a striking increase from the 34.4 percent who voted when George ran in 1962. Nonetheless, roughly 30 percent of those registered to vote did not cast a ballot. Of those voting, 480,841 voted to give the Democratic nomination for Governor to Mrs. Wallace. Since she got 54.1 percent of the votes cast for that office, there would be no run-off. Flowers came in second with 19.4 percent and Elliot third with 8 percent. (*NYT* 5-10-66, 19) Flowers' votes came largely from the blackbelt counties, with a majority vote in Sumter, Greene, Hale, Perry, Wilcox, Macon and Bullock. He got 601 votes in Lowndes, showing that some Negroes voted in the Democratic Primary, despite SNCC's discouragement and the lack of Negroes on the ballot. Elliot's votes came largely from the white counties in northern Alabama which comprised his former Congressional District. The only good thing that could be said about this outcome is that no run-off meant no recrimination among the also-rans about who took votes from whom. Wallace scored a clean victory and everyone else lost.
[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:AL_Gubernatorial_Dem_Primary,_1966.svg]

While Lurleen Wallace was the only woman on the primary ballot to make headlines and history, nine other Alabama women ran for state office. Indeed certain statewide offices were seen as "women's jobs" which men did not aspire to hold. As a result of the May 3 primary, women were nominated outright for Secretary of State and were in run-offs against other women for Auditor and State Treasurer. Their names were quite familiar to Alabama voters because most of them had run for or served in these offices before. Because Alabama did not allow most statewide elected officials to succeed themselves, four women in particular – Agnes Baggett, Bettye Frink, Sibyl Pool, Melba Till Allen – rotated among these three positions, plus a couple others. Their success had labeled these as women's offices, though the more important statewide offices remained exclusively male. (*NYT* 5-15-66, 75; *Sun* 5-5-66, A8; <http://www.archives.alabama.gov/conoff.html>) A woman also made the run-off for Congress in the Second District. But in Colbert County, a white county in the far northwest corner of the state, voters defeated the state's only woman sheriff, who was running for re-election after being appointed to finish the term of her slain husband. (SC 5-28/29-66, 1; *Florence Times*, 5-4-66, 1; *BN* 5-4-66, 7)

The day before the primary Fred Gray filed a case "on behalf of all Negro citizens eligible to vote in Barbour County, Alabama." On March 17, the county Democratic Executive Committee had changed the election of its members from a beat (i.e. precinct) system to "at-large," claiming that it had done so to comply with the Supreme Court's "one person, one

vote” requirement because the 16 beats had significantly different populations. Six Negroes had filed for the DEC, four from beats in which the majority of the registered voters in 1966 were Negroes. However, running at large in a county where white voters significantly outnumbered Negro voters, they all lost. On August 22, Judge Johnson ruled the new system unconstitutional on the grounds that it was racially motivated, but refused to set aside the election because the suit could have been filed and the ruling made well before the election. After the 5th Circuit upheld his ruling, it ordered a return to the single-member beat system with new elections in 1968. (*Smith v. Paris*; *BN* 5-6-66, 34)

Negroes appeared to vote as a bloc in some races but not in others, or at least not enough of a bloc. The political experts estimated that Flowers got 90 percent of the Negro vote, which was a pretty solid bloc given that Elliott and Folsom also had an appeal to Negro voters.¹ (*NYT* 5-4-66, 1; *BN* 5-8-66, 1,8) In Jefferson County, Al Lingo lost to incumbent sheriff Mel Bailey by nine to one in a county where one out of every four voters was Negro. However, no Negro candidate got over 50 percent of the votes cast in any county, even in Greene where Negro voters significantly out-numbered white voters. Eight of the twelve candidates for the state legislature and 16 of the candidates for county offices got enough votes to go into the run-off primary on May 31. (*SC* 5-7/8-66) In Jefferson, Mobile, Choctaw and Macon counties 38 Negroes were elected to their county DEC. (*USCCR* 1968, 134-5; *SC* 5-7/8-66, 5) The overall pattern appeared to be that Negroes would vote against a particular white with a history of bad acts, but a significant number wouldn’t vote against someone, especially an incumbent, just because he was white, or for a challenger just because he was Negro. There was also evidence that some whites voted for Negroes. (*BN* 5-8-66. A32; 5-13-66, 4)

In Macon County, where Negroes had been voting in more than token numbers for some time, Flowers only got two-thirds of the Negro vote, while Elliott took most of the rest, along with several hundred white votes. Elliott had been endorsed by the Macon County Democratic Club, one of the oldest Negro political organizations in the state. Negro candidates for sheriff, tax collector and board of revenue won enough votes to be in the run-off while two more simply lost. (*SC* 4-23/24-66, 1; 5-7/8-66, 1, 5)

In Mobile, at least six different sample ballots circulated in the Negro areas. Those circulated by the Alabama labor council had Elliott’s name marked because it had endorsed him. Political vote counters estimated that about 80 percent of Negro votes went to Flowers. They said that of those who did vote, only 75 percent voted in the state house and school board races where Negroes were running. (*SC* 5-14/15-66, 6) A later statistical analysis found that two-thirds of Negroes had voted but confirmed the proportion (79.2%) who had voted for Flowers. It found that 85 percent of those who voted for Governor voted in the two local races with Negro candidates and gave them 85 percent of their votes. (Thompson, 1982, 20-25) Their second place finishes put them into the run-off.

Four of the seven black men who ran for sheriff – in Bullock, Hale, Macon and Perry counties – made it into the run-off, largely because multiple white candidates split the white vote. (*LAT* 5-8-66, F4) Bullock County had almost equal numbers of whites and Negroes

¹ ¹ In their 1967 book, Brink and Harris said that Flowers “won 94 percent of all Negro votes cast, but less than 3 percent of the white vote.” (p. 103) They cite no source, published or unpublished. This is worth mentioning only because Harris was a well-known pollster, who might have had a statistically valid source that was not provided.

registered to vote. Henry Oscar Williams was 136 votes short of a majority in a race against the incumbent sheriff and another white candidate. In Hale County, Henry McCaskill was about 600 votes shy of winning against three white men, who got 58 percent of the vote. In Perry County where the incumbent shared the white vote with two other white men, Patt Davis came in second. (*BN* 5-4-66, 6-7; *SC* 5-7/8-66, 6)

It was clear that some Negroes voted for white incumbents. Macon County had more Negro voters than white, yet Lucius Amerson only got 44 percent of the vote for sheriff. The incumbent, who was liked by the Negro population, got slightly less than that. If two other white men had not run, Sheriff Harvey Sadler might well have won re-election. (*SC* 5-7/8-66, 1, 5) Wesley McNear got only 8 percent of the total vote for sheriff in Barbour County – less than a third of the potential Negro vote. (*BN* 5-5-66, 5)

In Wilcox County, Walter Calhoun received 2,451 votes for Sheriff. The incumbent, P.C. Lummie Jenkins, got 2,923 votes. “Mr. Lummie” claimed he got upwards of 800 Negro votes by quietly seeking “the nigger vote.” He asked “... the older ones... the best ones, the landowners, the ones who have influence to work for [him].” (*WP* 5-8-66, A1) DoJ observers estimated that 80 to 85 percent of registered Negroes voted in Wilcox County. (*NYT* 5-4-66, 28)

Something similar happened in Greene County, where Sheriff Bill Lee chose the middle of the campaign to appoint his first Negro deputy. Gilmore lost the sheriff’s race by 297 votes. (*SC* 3-26/27-66, 1,6; 5-7/8-66, 1; *BN* 4-24-66, B6) Although Negro candidates for school board and tax collector made it into the run-off, Gilmore’s disappointment quickly deepened into anger. After two SCLC staffers collected information of suspicious activity, Gilmore filed a complaint with the Justice Department. They had observed many cars from outside the county parked around the polling places, and believed that many whites who no longer lived in Greene County but were still on the voter registration rolls had come back to re-elect Sheriff Lee. They discovered a whole host of minor incidents such as election officials “suggesting” to Negroes how to vote or reading the names of candidates to illiterates so fast that they couldn’t understand them. Greene was one of the three counties where local election officials refused to allow federal observers to watch them help illiterates mark their ballots. One federal observer was threatened with arrest for trying to observe. (*LAT* 5-4-66, 15) The probate judge had said that illiterates could not take their marked sample ballots into the polling place with them but literate voters could. Without their marked sample ballots and with the feds kept out of sight, illiterates were particularly vulnerable to having their votes detoured by the officials who were supposed to help them.

On primary day, six Negroes met in the legally required “mass meeting” to form the Greene County Freedom Organization. It nominated Gilmore for Sheriff and the Rev. Percy McShan for tax assessor. Consistent with SCLC’s policy, Gilmore had actively opposed such a move before it happened, but embraced it after he lost the Democratic nomination. (*SC* 5-14/15-66, 1; *LAT* 5-8-66, 2)

Although two thirds of the candidates for the state legislature came in first or second, only Fred Gray came close to winning. Indeed on first blush it looked like he had won Place #2 of the three-county 31st District, but his 8,322 votes still left him 500 votes short of the crucial 50 percent. He won in Macon and Bullock Counties but lost decisively in Barbour County. Neither of the two Negroes who ran for Place #1 made it into the run-off. (*BN* 5-4-66, 1; 5-8-66, 32) The four Negroes who ran in Jefferson County all made the run-off, as did Lonnie Brown, the one

candidate for the Senate. Albert Turner came in a close second in Place #1 in the 27th District but Rev. Nixon lost in Place #2. C.M. Montgomery made the run-off in Mobile County's Place #10 but Rev. P. H. Lewis lost his race in Dallas County's Place #2. The DCIFVO nominated Jimmy L. Stanley and Mrs. Perl Moorner as its candidates for the state House in the general election. (*SC* 5-7/8-66, 5; *BN* 5-8-66, 32; 5-13-66 4)

As the votes were counted the reality sank in that *no* Negro candidate had received a majority of votes for *any* public office in *any* county, even in Greene County where registered Negroes significantly outnumbered registered whites. There was both soul searching and a flurry of accusations. Dr. King sent telegrams to Gov. Wallace and A.G. Katzenbach protesting inadequate voting facilities as a "de facto denial of the right to vote." (*LAT* 5-7-66, 11) In the counties, local civil rights leaders blamed both Negroes and whites for the results; Negroes for believing that it was "too early" to elect Negroes to important offices, especially sheriff, and whites for "using every trick in the book." (*NYT* 5-8-66, 1; *SC* 5-14/15/66, 1)

Negro ambivalence about which offices Negroes should hold could be seen in the actions of the Macon County Democratic Club. Composed primarily of the professionals associated with Tuskegee Institute and the Veterans Administration hospital, its endorsement had long carried great weight. The leadership wanted to endorse the white incumbent for sheriff, but they were pressured by the younger generation to support Amerson. Instead of an endorsement, the Club gave him a lukewarm "expression of preference." The Club did endorse two of the three Negroes running for the state legislature; both got a significant majority of the votes in Macon County but not in the three-county district. (*NYT* 4-21-66, 30; *SC* 5-7/8-66, 1)

What mattered as much if not more than Negro cohesion in determining the outcome on May 3 was the 150,000 whites who had registered to vote in the previous year. Over 200,000 more people voted on May 3, 1966 than had voted on November 3, 1964, and most of those were white. In addition to nominating Lurleen Wallace for Governor, they gave the Democratic nomination for Attorney General to MacDonald Gallion. He had held that office in 1959-1963 and was considered as militant a segregationist as Wallace, if not more so. (*NYT* 5-5-66, 30) Everyone thought Negroes would vote as a bloc for members of their own race, but it was whites who were more cohesive.

In past years some of the blame might have gone to Republicans. Since there was no party registration, the Alabama Democratic primary election was open to all registered voters. Republicans often voted in it so they could have some say in who represented them. They might also vote for the weaker Democrat on those rare occasions where a Republican stood a chance of winning in November. This year Republican leaders told their voters to stay out of the Democratic primary so Mrs. Wallace would look like she had less support among white voters. (*BN* 5-1-66, A56; *NYT* 5-3-66, 1) While there were heavy turnouts in the five counties where the Republican party held primaries, there was also some evidence that in other counties many voted in the Democratic primary who had no intention of voting for the Democratic candidates in November. (*BN* 5-4-66, 22, 73) However, there is no evidence on *how* these Republicans voted.

When the Alabama Republican Party selected its candidates at a party convention in Montgomery in July, a lone Negro sat among the 2,000 delegates in an auditorium where a huge Confederate flag hung on the wall; he left after one day. The Alabama branch of the party of Lincoln wasn't looking to appeal to the growing Negro vote. It was trying to lure disgruntled Democrats into the Republican Party by running against LBJ's Great Society programs. The new

party chairman, Alfred W. Goldthwaite, had only been a Republican for two years. He was one of the two Republicans elected to the legislature in 1964 and he wanted other disaffected Democrats to join him. While he didn't openly say that Negroes weren't welcome, he did say he only wanted those who didn't like "the things LBJ stands for," such as the Voting Rights Act and the poverty program. (*SC* 2-5/6-66, 1; 8-6/7-66, 1; *BN* 1-30-66, 1)

SCLC staff debated the cause of the disappointing primary results at a staff retreat held at the Penn Community Center near Frogmore S.C. at the end of the week. Staff made a lot of allegations about whites stealing votes and a few about Negro poll watchers not doing their jobs, but reports from ten counties indicated that the biggest culprit was inexperience. Lack of organization loomed large. Too many candidates assumed that after all the sacrifices Negroes had made to regain the franchise, they would flock to the polls and vote for the candidate that promised change. They did not fully understand that the two months they campaigned prior to primary day were simply insufficient to motivate all the friends and neighbors whose votes they sought to spend the better part of a day standing in line at the polls. In short, they assumed too much and had too little time to do what needed to be done. Experienced politicians knew that elections are won between campaigns. People just dipping their toe into the political pond for the first time had a lot to learn. (Retreat summary in SCLC IV, 145:4)

Perhaps the biggest loser on primary day was Sheriff Jim Clark of Dallas County, but he went down fighting. The returns came in slowly, especially from the rural Negro boxes where paper ballots were counted by hand. These were among the 24 Dallas County precincts which did not have federal observers because local officials had hired Negro poll watchers. They made a few errors, including not attaching the certificates of results to some of the boxes delivered to the Dallas County courthouse the next morning. On that basis Jim Clark contested six boxes which contained the votes of 1,672 Negroes and 162 whites. These boxes had 1,412 votes for Baker that put him over the threshold necessary to avoid a run-off. Without the other two white men in the race, Clark might win that run-off. Because of a few discrepancies (one or two more or less votes than people who had voted) the 42 white men on the DEC voted to reject *all* of the votes in all six boxes, because they were "infected with irregularities." (*NYT* 5-6-66, 1; 5-7-66, 1, 23; quote in *LAT* 5-6-66, 1) The DoJ applied for an injunction to keep the boxes from being thrown out. On May 24, after two days of hearings, Judge Thomas of the Southern District ruled that the errors were minor ones which would not alter the outcome. He ordered the boxes counted. (*NYT* 5-19-66, 33; 5-25-66, 28; *U.S. v. Dallas Co. DEC*) Jim Clark's career in law enforcement had come to an end.

It was also the end of Flowers' political career. Many thought he had committed political suicide when he personally prosecuted Viola Liuzzo's killer in October of 1965. A businessman interviewed by a reporter said that he "got so far ahead of the pack that he is completely ineffective." (*WSJ* 10-22-65, 16) In a 1993 interview, Albert Brewer, who had been Speaker of the House that year, said that "[t]he change in public opinion of Richmond came as a result of the Hayneville trials. When Richmond went over to prosecute those cases, that pretty well put him on 'their' side in the public mind instead of ours. By 1966, Richmond was perceived as an integrationist, a traitor to the cause, a flaming liberal and those sorts of things." (Interviewed by John Hayman on July 20, 1993, in 1996, 282-3).² Attorney General of Alabama was Flowers'

² Brewer became Speaker of the Alabama House in 1963, was elected lieutenant governor in 1966, assumed that office in 1967 and became Governor when Lurleen Wallace died on May 7, 1968.

last job as an elected official.



Returning South

All the headlines about the Alabama primary election told me that it was time to return to the South. When I came to NYC in March, I had planned on being back in time to work in the primary, but one thing led to another led to another. Besides, I didn't have enough money for bus fare. Hosea had told me he would mail my last subsistence check to New York but waiting for it was like waiting for Godot. If I was going to return, I would have to do it on my own. An anti-war march in DC was coming up on May 15. I figured I could get a ride to DC with someone else going to the march; there I might find some SCLC staffers who had driven up from Atlanta like they had the previous fall.

I got to the march easily but the only person I saw from SCLC was Harky Klinefelter, who was on his way to New Jersey. It was a small march – only about ten thousand people – and I didn't see anyone else I knew from the South. I phoned Walter Fauntroy, SCLC's DC representative, but he didn't know of anyone there from Atlanta. I sold some buttons at the march, but not many. I wasn't going back to New York so I'd just have to hitchhike to Atlanta, even though I really didn't want to. I knew that a girl hitchhiking by herself in the South would be even more morally suspect than in the north or the west.

Before I left, I paid a visit to Joe Beeman, the former President of the California Young Democrats who was now chief of staff to Cong. Phil Burton. He didn't keep me waiting long after the receptionist told him I was there. He showed me around the three rooms of Phil's Congressional office and the elegant desk Joe's staff members had bought for him as a present. We talked about politics – Alabama and California – and I gave him some buttons for his collection. I expressed my gratitude to him for sending me Community Action Program booklets for Dallas County the previous fall when the local M.C. ignored our requests and told him that I might need him again.

Late Tuesday morning I was on my way. Atlanta was 700 miles away so I knew I wouldn't make it in one day. The question was would I get a ride traveling all night or have to find a crash pad someplace; if so, where? I ran into my first problem in Virginia. A man in a pick-up truck stopped for me who said he was going to North Carolina. I put my suitcases into his truck bed and hopped in the cab. When he exited the expressway onto a side road I knew I was in trouble. He unzipped his pants and pulled out his penis. While he masturbated, he told me what he wanted me to do. The truck was moving slowly – he couldn't masturbate, look at me while talking sex and drive fast at the same time – so I briefly thought about opening the door and jumping out. But, that would mean leaving my suitcases behind. Instead I looked around the rather messy cab and spied a pipe wrench on the floor. I picked it up, brandished it and threatened to bash his head in. He must have believed me, because he pulled the truck over so I could get out. I left the door open and kept the wrench in my hand until I had dragged my suitcases from the cargo bed. Then I tossed the wrench inside and slammed the door and he went on his way. That left me on a country back road with 80 pounds of luggage. The highway wasn't too far away but I still had to get there.

I don't remember how I did that – whether I walked the whole way or someone gave me

a lift – but my next ride was a trucker going to Charlotte. This trucker was a very nice guy; didn't give me any problems; just wanted to talk. When we got to Charlotte he tried to give me bus fare to Atlanta. I always refused to take money from rides, but I did let him drop me off at the bus station, appearing to agree with him that I should take the bus the rest of the way to Atlanta while letting him believe that I could afford the bus fare. In fact, I thought that I might settle down in a chair and sleep the night but none of the seats were sleepable. They were molded plastic with arms and weren't even up against a wall where I could lean my head back and snooze.

The only name I associated with Charlotte was Harry Golden, publisher and writer of the *Carolina Israelite*, a newspaper full of his reminiscences, opinions and humor. My mother had subscribed and occasionally sent me issues when I was at Berkeley. He had also written a lot of books, which made him famous nationally. Golden was born Herschel Goldhirsch in the Ukraine but was raised in New York. The 1929 stock market crash cost him his job as a stockbroker and his freedom when he was convicted of mail fraud and sent to a federal prison for five years. When he got out he changed his name and moved to Charlotte to become a writer. He started his newspaper in 1942, filling it with anecdotes from his former life on NYC's lower east side and his opinion of southern racial practices.

Satire suited him well. One of his more famous proposals was "The Vertical Negro Plan" as the solution to court-ordered school desegregation. Written in 1956 when the North Carolina legislature was looking for ways to keep the schools segregated without open defiance of the Supreme Court, Golden noted that whites only objected to the presence of Negroes when both were seated. Whites and Negroes shopped and banked together without friction because both were vertical. If the legislature would just remove the seats from the schools, requiring students to remain standing, children of both races could go to school together and the legislature wouldn't have to waste a lot of the taxpayer's money looking for ways to keep them apart. Needless to say his humor was more appreciated in the North than in the South; that's probably where most of his subscribers were located. (<https://jwa.org/media/vertical-negro-plan>)

I found Harry Golden listed in the phone book and decided it was time for this WASP to show a little "chutzpah." He answered the phone. I told him who I was, what I was doing, where I was going and asked him to put me up for the night. He gave me bus directions to his house on Elizabeth Ave. In fact, he owned two houses right next to each other. One was his personal residence. The other he used for his business. There was a furnished bedroom in the business house which led me to believe that he probably had a lot of visitors. We had dinner and talked. I wanted to know how he survived in the South in which he was clearly an oddity. He said he was *so* different from the normal white Southerner that he was considered exotic. He was left to do his thing for the same reason that dangerous animals in a zoo were not attacked; just don't let them out of their cages and don't invite him into your social circles. The next morning he gave me several copies of the *Carolina Israelite*, an autographed copy of his 1964 book on *Mr. Kennedy and the Negroes* and had one of his employees drive me out to the highway. I really appreciated that ride. Without it, I would have had to deal with city cops and traffic while lugging my two heavy suitcases. Once on the highway, I stuck out my thumb and waited. It took me about six hours to get to Atlanta. I phoned the Freedom House in hopes that someone would come pick me up. No such luck. It took two hours to get to 563 Johnson Ave. even though it was

right at the end of a freeway exit.

Once in Atlanta, I wanted to go to Alabama immediately but Hosea put me to work typing stickers to be put on envelopes for mailings. I hated it. Hosea believed that a woman's place was in the office. I had run into that attitude the year before when I first arrived and I ran into it again even though I had spent months working in the field proving that I could do more than type. I thought of it as a kind of box. In Hosea's head – indeed in that of men generally – there were male boxes and female boxes. Your sex determined where you belonged and what you could do. Southern whites had very similar ideas about race. (I hadn't thought about the attitude of Northern whites at that point because all the Northern whites I knew supported the civil rights movement). They didn't think "niggers" were capable of high level functioning, no matter how much evidence to the contrary. That's why they assumed it was white subversives who were behind the civil rights movement. That was also their justification for not spending money on Negro education. If a Negro got too big by becoming economically successful, they took him down a notch, by ruining his business or forcing him to leave town. Rather than allowing reality to challenge preconceived ideas, they conformed reality to those ideas.

I'd spent most of my life challenging social expectations about women and girls without really understanding what I was doing, let alone why. My mother challenged them by the way she lived her life, but she conformed superficially to avoid trouble. She urged me to hide my true self behind a feminine façade and was perpetually disappointed that I refused. I saw my lack of conformity as a personal attribute, not a social problem. My perspective shifted the longer I worked in the South. Comparing white attitudes toward race with male attitudes toward sex helped me to see the boxes and to understand them as social constructs. The civil rights movement was ripping apart the race boxes. Perhaps it was time for the boxes labeled "male" and "female" to meet the same fate. Little did I know that other women had long since come to the same conclusion and were doing something about it. In particular a coterie of women working for the federal government thought that there needed to be "an NAACP for women" and that very Spring were lobbying women outside the government to organize such a group. (Freeman 1975, 54)

The one benefit of my week in the Freedom House was that I was able to show my new camera to Bob Fitch. Just 25, he was SCLC's primary photographer. Bob was a California boy, who had gone to work for SCLC a year before SCOPE. The son of a UCC minister, he had also been ordained but wasn't called to the ministry. He never used the "Rev." title, though a lot of men in SCLC who had never been ordained used it. Bob's calling was photography, for which he had a natural talent. He was also a very good teacher, giving directions with patience. Bob lived in Atlanta but not at the Freedom House though his darkroom was in that basement. He was often out taking photos of a project or an action so I was lucky to find him in. Bob gave me some basic lessons in photography. Although I had shot a few rolls in New York, I didn't know what an F-stop was, or the difference between Tri-X and Plus-X film. If my new camera hadn't come with a built-in automatic light meter, I would have been completely lost. Bob gave me some film and showed me how to roll it from a film pack. That way film cost only a penny a frame, which was a lot cheaper than buying it by the roll in a store.

The only Southern field activity going on that month was in the Alabama counties where Negro candidates had made it into the May 31 run-off primary. SCLC was concentrating on

Macon County where Fred Gray, one of SCLC's lawyers, was running for the Alabama House and Lucius Amerson had a good chance to become the first Negro sheriff in the South since Reconstruction. Gray was running in a three-county district where he had almost gotten the 50 percent necessary to win. One of eight Negro candidates to make the run-off, Gray was given the best chance to win the Democratic nomination, which was tantamount to victory in November.

Hosea said I should go to Macon Co. but stalled on giving me bus fare to go there. I called the campaign office in Tuskegee. They told me that they desperately needed more workers and I should come as soon as possible. They had arranged for outside workers to stay in the Tuskegee Institute dorms. I had enough money left to pay my bus fare, but I also had acute memories from the previous December of how unpleasant it was to run completely out of cash. I didn't want to make the same mistake of spending out my cash before a subsistence check actually arrived. I wrote Mark Harrington, who was working in Tuskegee, that "the movement can have my blood, sweat, tears and maybe even my life. My sanity, or what's left of it, it can't have.... I'll be goddamned if I'm going to stay in this fucking office typing duplistickers for envelopes."

After a few days of going crazy in the office I told anyone and everyone that if Hosea didn't give me bus fare asap, I'd hitchhike to Tuskegee. Since that was dangerous, I thought my threat would get someone's attention. The only person who responded was a new white guy in the Freedom House, who had a motorcycle. He said he'd take me to the highway. I don't know if he was trying to call my bluff or was serious, but I took him up on it. I stashed my suitcases in a closet and put a change of clothes into my book bag, which was all I could carry on the back of a motorcycle. Clutching my new camera and a few rolls of film Bob had given me, I hopped on the back of the cycle. Away we went.

While standing on the highway, I thought about what story would I tell. I knew I would be picked up by a white man, who would want to know what a girl was doing hitchhiking. That just wasn't done in the South. I thought it unwise to ask for a ride to Tuskegee, a black town that was the county seat of a black county. I could only guess at what conclusions the hypothetical white driver might jump to if I told him where I really wanted to go. I didn't like any of them. Since the road to Tuskegee went through Auburn, home of Auburn University, I decided that the best thing to do was get off there and take the bus to Tuskegee. When I was picked up I told the driver that I was going to visit my brother in Auburn. I made up some tale about losing my cash and not wanting to call my brother or my parents to wire money. I just needed to get to Auburn and my brother would take care of me. As we approached the town he asked where to let me off. Of course, I didn't have my "brother's" address, or any address for that matter. I told the driver to drop me off at the bus station and I'd phone my brother from there, letting him think that I had taken the bus from Atlanta rather than hitchhiking. The driver complied. At the bus station, I bought a ticket for Tuskegee and waited for the bus.