

## Atlanta

“the city too busy to hate”  
city motto

The day after the election was over Hosea held a press conference in Montgomery to announce that SCLC was pulling out of Alabama. He said 50 staff members would go to southwest Georgia to run a voter registration project in anticipation of the Georgia primary on September 14. Some would go to Chicago. Only 20 would remain in Alabama, where they would work on bringing more federal money to Negroes in the state. Although he told the press whom he was sending where, we all knew that he was pulling that off the top of his head. Most of us returned to the Freedom House not really knowing who would go where or when. (SC 6-4/5-66, 1) Hosea told us there would be a staff meeting in Atlanta the next week, when we would find out who was being cut (for budget reasons) and who was being sent where. I hoped I wouldn't be cut. Hosea seemed to like my work, but I still wasn't back on subsistence. Hosea hadn't even given me the check for March, which he was supposed to send to me in New York. My money from selling buttons in NYC and DC would only last so long.

Senior staff encouraged us to become registered voters in Georgia in time for the September 14 primary. I knew my eligibility to register was a bit shaky, but thought it worth a try. Georgia permitted people to vote at age 18, and to register at 17 ½. Age should not be a problem. Residency might be. Although I had moved every few weeks for the last year, the closest thing I had to a “home” address was the Atlanta Freedom House. Who at the registrar's office would know that I hadn't slept there more than a few weeks, and why would anyone care?

On Friday, June 3, I walked downtown to register to vote. Much to my surprise, I found all the government buildings and most of the stores closed. Why was not obvious. I finally asked a white guy in one of the few open shops why everything else was closed. He looked at me strangely and said, “It's Jefferson Davis' birthday.” Oh, I said, quickly switching to a Northern accent to excuse my ignorance.

On the way back to the Freedom House I remembered my mother telling me as a child that Lincoln's birthday was a holiday only in the north; Jeff Davis's birthday was the equivalent holiday in the South. Lincoln's birthday was a state holiday; Congress could not make it a federal holiday because the South would never agree. Of course, I hadn't known that Davis was born on June 3, 1808, only that as the sole president of the Confederacy he was the favorite son of the South. While some of the native Southerners living in the Freedom House probably knew about the Georgia holiday, they probably didn't care. No one had said anything and the SCLC office wasn't closed.

Monday I went back and tried again. This time the county courthouse was open, but not welcoming. I filled out the form and handed it to the clerk. He looked it over carefully and asked me if I really lived at 563 Johnson Ave. NE. Yes, I said, I did. How long had I lived there, he asked. A year, I replied. I had first slept at the Freedom House a little less than a year ago, but I knew that in California the key date for residency was how long before the election, not before

one registered, that one “resided” in the state. I figured this was also true for Georgia.

He asked my occupation and other personal information. I do office work, I said, being carefully vague about where and for whom. He continued to give me a hard time, wanting to know where I *really* lived. Although I used my best Southern accent and my most polite and deferential manner, I figured he recognized the address as formerly that of Dr. King. Maybe he knew that it was now the Freedom House. Somewhat exasperated, fearing that he wouldn't let me register, I pulled out my birth certificate. It said that I was born in Atlanta. I didn't tell him that I had only stayed in the military hospital a week before my mother took me to her sister's house near Birmingham. Finally, the clerk threw up his hands and let me register to vote in Georgia. I walked out with a signed and sealed Certificate of Registration. Stamped on it was “No. 2407.”

I wanted to vote not just because of the principle involved, but because SCLC had decided that there was actually someone to vote for – or more accurately, against – in the forthcoming Georgia primary. Lester Maddox, the owner of Atlanta's Pickrick Cafeteria and a political wannabe, was running for Governor. He had attained public fame when he refused to comply with the requirement of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that all public accommodations involved in interstate commerce be open to anyone, regardless of race. On July 3, 1964 Maddox stood outside his restaurant with an ax handle and a gun, threatening three civil rights workers who were testing to see if the law would be enforced. He was immediately sued in federal court by three plaintiffs represented by the NAACP Inc. Fund. The DoJ intervened, asking for a three-judge district court pursuant to Sec. 206(b) of the 1964 Act when “the case is of general public importance.” Judges Elbert Tuttle of the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit and Lewis Morgan and Frank A. Hooper of the Northern District of Georgia held a quick hearing and issued a TRO. Maddox closed his restaurant rather than serve Negroes. (McDonald, 2003, 139; *Willis v. Pickrick Restaurant*, 1964)

Maddox had run for Mayor in 1957 and 1961 and for Lt. Governor in 1962, but lost badly each time. After a photo of his resistance to integration appeared in newspapers all over the country he became a symbol of resistance not only to integration but to government intrusion to many Americans, and especially to a lot of Georgians. His fame made him the favorite in the primary. SCLC did not want Maddox to become Governor of Georgia.

Atlanta was a cosmopolitan city. It had a large, educated middle-class. The black middle-class was a product of Atlanta University, a consortium of six black colleges and universities. The white middle-class grew when Atlanta beat out Birmingham to become the industrial, commercial and transportation center of the South. When the airlines chose Atlanta to become their central Southern hub, its prospects shot up and Birmingham's went down. Birmingham's economy was dominated by mining and steel. Atlanta's was diverse. Birmingham's elites lived outside the city boundaries; their communities refused to be annexed. The city's white voters were mostly working and lower-middle class who favored outspoken racists. Atlanta kept expanding. Its white voters included a bigger mix of the educated and the affluent who were more concerned with the city's image in the rest of the world. Many of its political leaders were beholden to the business elite and imbued with the belief that strife and disruption were bad for business. Georgia might elect populous leaders who appealed to racist

sentiments, but not Atlanta. (Hornsby, 1982, 121)

Atlanta might be an oasis in a racist desert, but people could still throw sand in your eyes. Brig Cabe was particularly subject to hostile responses because he was neither black nor white, but could be taken for either. He told me that one day he was walking to the Freedom House through a neighborhood that he did not know when he spied a White Castle hamburger joint. Brig was of average build, but he had a tape worm – he could eat more than anyone I ever met. He decided to get a little snack. Seating himself at the counter he asked for two castleburgers and a Coke. The white server thought he was black and didn't want to serve him. Since she knew she had to, she placed the food on the lunch counter a few feet away and slid it down to Brig rather than put it in front of him. He was offended, but didn't respond in kind. Instead he slowly consumed his food then ordered "two more castleburgers and a Coke." Once more she slid the food with a hostile look. "Two more castleburgers and a Coke." "Two more castleburgers and a Coke." The waitress began to look defeated as she realized that he wasn't leaving until she treated him like a normal (i.e. white) customer. The few other diners were all staring as the scene repeated itself again and again. "Two more castleburgers and a Coke." It took ten orders, but she finally put the food in front of him. He smiled, ate, paid and left, calling out as he exited the door "two more castleburgers and a Coke."

After Georgia lost its white primary law Negroes registered and voted in droves, becoming 25 percent of Atlanta voters in 1949. They created the Atlanta Negro Voters League, a loose political machine which could make a difference in which white candidate won city elections. This led to city services in Negro neighborhoods that Negroes in Birmingham and other cities did not have. The first Negro joined the police force in 1948. In 1961, nine black children entered four previously all-white high schools in Atlanta without violence, as the mayor, the school superintendent and the police chief all urged compliance with the court order. The importance of the vote was not lost on SCLC, whose leaders lived in Atlanta. (*King v. Chapman*, 1945, 1946; Hornsby, 1977; *WP* 8-27-61, E1; 9-3-61, F10; *NYT* 8-27-61. 63; *Calhoun v. Latimer*, 1960; <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/atlanta-negro-voters-league-an-vl>)

## The Meredith March

"I don't want this to turn into another Selma where everyone goes home with the cameramen and leaves us holding the bag.

"Mississippi has been exploited enough by Negroes and whites who want to raise money and get publicity."

"I don't see how walking up and down a hot highway helps. I'm for walking house to house and fence to fence to get Negroes registered."

Charles Evers, NAACP director in Mississippi, June 12, 1966

"This traveling circus of Martin Luther King benefits no one except King. It creates bitterness among members of both races and smacks of mob rule as opposed to traditional justice. When these outside publicity seekers have milked the current situation of all the headlines they can garner, they will call off their invasion and go elsewhere to create new public disturbances."

Senator James Eastland (D. MS), statement released to the press on June 14, 1966

"We aren't going to wetnurse a bunch of showmen [from] all over the country."

Mississippi Governor Paul B. Johnson, *New York Times*, June 16, 1966

"In a futile attempt to portray Mississippi as a desolate state, King merely acknowledges that he's fast becoming the head witchdoctor peddling hate in return for pennies from the poor."

Rep. John Bell Williams of Mississippi's 7th C.D. and future Governor (1968-72) in response to a fundraising letter signed by Dr. King dated June 14 from Grenada, MS, *Birmingham News*, July 1, 1966.

On Monday, June 6, while SCLC was holding a Board meeting in Atlanta to plan a summer of demonstrations in Chicago, James Meredith was shot in Mississippi while walking down Highway 51. Only the day before he had left Memphis with a handful of friends and supporters telling whomever would listen that he was going to walk the 220 miles to Jackson, Mississippi's capitol. He wanted to "encourage 450,000 unregistered Negroes in Mississippi to go to the polls and register" and to "challenge the all pervasive and overriding fear that dominates the day-to-day life of the Negro in the United States...." (*NYT* 6-1-66, 24) One of those friends was a professional publicist, who had organized a press conference the week before. He invited scores of reporters and photographers to accompany them. In addition, there were "at least 15 Federal and local officials" present in cars. None of them kept a lone white man armed with a shotgun from spraying Meredith's back with birdshot only a dozen miles south of the Tennessee border, then calmly walking back into the underbrush. (Goudsouzian, 2014, 9, 17; quote in *NYT* 6-8-66, 26)

Instead they ran toward Meredith. An AP photographer captured a shot of him crawling across the highway, agony screaming from his face. This photo appeared in newspapers all over the country, indeed the world, eventually winning a Pulitzer prize. Word of the shooting quickly

worked its way up the DoJ hierarchy to President Johnson. The very next day LBJ issued a statement deploring the violence and ordering A.G. Katzenbach to bring the “guilty person or persons to justice,” despite the fact that there was no obvious federal law which applied to this crime. He urged Congress to pass the proposed civil rights bill introduced in April, which had a section in it to make committing racially motivated violence a federal crime. (*CD* 6-7-66, 2; *NYT* 6-7-66, 29)

James Meredith, 32, had gained national fame as the first Negro to integrate the University of Mississippi, known as Ole Miss, in the fall of 1962. He had spent nine years in the Air Force before beginning his two-year struggle to enter the flagship university of his home state. When his admission was ordered by a federal court, his appearance on campus generated several days of riots in which two bystanders were killed and 375 people were injured. Federal marshals stayed with him until he graduated in August of 1963. He was finishing his first year as a law student at Columbia University when he conceived his “march against fear.” (*NYT* 6-12-66, 207)

Leaders of all the major civil rights organizations descended on Memphis to visit Meredith in the hospital where he was recovering from his wounds. They decided to continue his march from where he had been shot. While they did not agree on *why* they were doing this, they all saw an opportunity to promote their own concerns. (*NYT* 6-7-66, 28) Two of these leaders were new and had a more militant agenda than the one the civil rights movement had been pursuing. Only three weeks earlier, Stokely Carmichael, 25, had defeated John Lewis, 26, to become chairman of SNCC in what was seen as a fight over its future direction. (*NYT* 5-17-66, 22) In January, James Farmer, Jr., 46, a founder of CORE in Chicago in 1942, had resigned as its chairman to be replaced by Floyd McKissick, 44, from North Carolina. This switch reflected a shift in CORE membership from a heavily white Northern-based civil rights group to one that was more Negro and Southern. SNCC invited a Louisiana group, the Deacons for Defense, to guard the march. Started in late 1964, the Deacons were committed to armed self-defense of their communities. Dr. King didn’t like this, but agreed as long as everyone made a commitment to be non-violent. (Sellers interview in Hampton, 1990, 286)

After visiting Meredith, the leaders went to Centenary United Methodist Church in south Memphis, whose pastor was Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr. He had personal connections with all the major civil rights organizations and leaders. He had run workshops on nonviolence for SCLC, been the Southern director for CORE, tutored many SNCC leaders in non-violent protest and worked with the NAACP. Rev. Lawson agreed that his church basement would become march headquarters. Afterwards they went to the site of Meredith’s shooting where they began walking south after arguing with the cops over whether they could walk on the asphalt rather than the rocky shoulder. Dick Gregory, an activist from Chicago who had made his name as a stand-up comedian, got there first. But he walked north to Memphis. (*NYT* 6-8-66, 1; *WP* 6-8-66, 1; *SC* 6-11/12-66, 1, 6)

Dr. King called for people from all over the country to finish Meredith’s march to Jackson. It came at an auspicious time. The academic year was over or almost over but students hadn’t begun their summer jobs. One who heard the call was Carl Davidson, a working class kid

from western Pennsylvania. He was a philosophy instructor at the University of Nebraska who was generally involved with left-wing causes. After an intense discussion with his friends and neighbors, two carloads of students, junior faculty and local Negroes drove 500 miles to the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis. There they were sent to Centenary Church, and from there to Mississippi. All but Carl and one friend soon returned to Lincoln. (Davidson interview, 8-24-17)

Back in Atlanta, Hosea had scheduled a meeting with staff to tell them who would be sent to which Georgia counties to prepare for the September primary election and who would be let go due to lack of money. Instead, 16 men were immediately sent to Memphis, some from Atlanta and some who were working in other counties. One of Hosea's first calls went to John Reynolds, who was still in Greene County AL where he had been working to elect Gilmore to be county sheriff. He and four other SCLC staff drove to Memphis to set up an office. Hosea then sent them down Highway 51 to find places for marchers to camp and churches for rallies. (Reynolds, 2012, 70) One of the summer volunteers who came from Atlanta was Robert Waterman, who had worked with SCOPE in Virginia the summer before. He had just arrived at the Freedom House with a carload of students from the University of California at Santa Barbara on their way to spend another summer doing voter registration in their Virginia county. Hosea sent Robert to Memphis and the rest to Georgia to register voters for the September primary. Over the next few days a few dozen people came to Atlanta for a second summer of SCOPE. They were given a week of orientation similar to the year before, but were sent to Mississippi. They joined the march in Belzoni on June 19, when it was about half over. (Waterman e-mails of 8-25-17 and 8-27-17; Dooley e-mail of 12-6-18; Dooley letter of 9-5-66)

Hosea said he didn't want any women on the march; it was for men only. He didn't want this march to be smeared by Southern politicians and press as the Selma march had been for sexual misconduct, despite the fact that such allegations had no basis in fact. (*BN* 3-28-65; *B'ham Post-Herald*, 4-1-65) I asked him how he was going to keep women out since they would come from all over, just as they had for Selma. He couldn't answer that question. He told Terri, his secretary, to take her typewriter and fly to Memphis. She would work at the march HQ, not go on the march itself. She slung her IBM Selectric onto her hip and headed for the airport.

Most of the time I did what Hosea told me to do. Not always. Esther Barmore, my roommate and fellow worker in Macon County during the Alabama primary, was also staying in the Freedom House. Her sister had just arrived for a visit; both were excited by news of what looked like a major civil rights event. Kathleen had a car and was quite willing to drive us to Memphis. She didn't work for Hosea. I asked around for who else wanted to go. The regular female office workers wouldn't leave, but there was one white woman who had just shown up a couple days earlier intending to work for the summer who was also excited about going on a big march. Anna was a sketch artist; she thought she could march during the day and draw during the breaks. (Barmore e-mail of 8-15-14) After driving all day we pulled into the parking lot at the church. Hosea was outside. He watched us exit the car and then walked up to me. "When Atlanta told me a car full of white women had left," he said, "I knew it was you."

I quickly found a job working for Don Smith of CORE, the press officer for the march. A gentleman with courtly manners and grey hair, he wrote press releases and talked with reporters

phoning in to find out what was going on. Hosea wanted to send the other women back to Atlanta, but Esther persuaded him that he needed them to work in the church office making phone calls, running the march registration desk, finding rides and generally taking care of things. She became the *de facto* concierge. She registered a constant stream of people coming to the march, found them places to sleep until tents were secured and co-ordinated the many offers of help with various needs. A dairy and a bakery had offered us milk and bread. Every morning Esther called in how much was needed for breakfast. Some nights she was there so late that she slept in a sleeping bag in a side room. Kathleen became a taxi service, taking people to the march line as they showed up at the church and back again. (Barmore e-mail of 8-4-17)

Don Smith needed me on the march, which is where I wanted to be so that worked out just fine. He had to answer questions from press calling from all over the world. My job was to observe and report back to him. He needed to know the number of marchers every day, who was leading the march, any other “names” and any incidents. The major press sent their own reporters, but the rest wanted more details than those they got from the wire services. I took notes and photographs and looked for pay phones so I could call Smith (collect of course). Pay phones were only in the small towns, not on the highway, so it was sometimes hours before I could call. Some of those pay phones had been vandalized, probably to prevent the press traveling with the march from reporting back to their offices during the day. The Deacons for Defense had brought short wave radios with them from Louisiana so they could stay in touch with each other and with march HQ, as well as check for Klan chatter. Carl had some experience with these radios so he worked with the Deacons setting up antennas and other technical tasks. The Deacons were mostly Korean war veterans, quite familiar with the firearms they brought with them. They patrolled the roads and guarded the camp at night. They kept their guns mostly out of sight because this was officially a non-violent march. (Davidson interview, 8-24-17; SC 6-18/19-66, 1)

For the first few days most of us returned to Memphis to spend the night after marching all day. Memphis had plenty of hotels for those who could afford them. The civil rights leadership stayed in the Lorraine Hotel. Staff stayed with local people. Locals, both in Memphis and on the march route, provided rides and crash pads. People who came from long distances to join the march often slept on church pews until they found someplace else to go at night. Carl Davidson and his friends didn't return to Memphis. They slept on the ground, except for a one-night stay in Batesville, 60 miles south of Memphis. The local couple who hosted him put him in their bed while they slept elsewhere. Late that night, Carl walked out on the porch where he saw the man of the house sitting in a rocking chair with a shotgun cradled in his lap. “I thought we were supposed to be non-violent,” Carl said to the man. “We are,” he replied. ‘But we don't want the Klan to know that.’ Carl walked up the street; on almost every porch sat a man with a shotgun, guarding marchers who slept inside. (Davidson interview, 8-24-17) Once the march secured tents, everyone (except the leadership) slept in those, sometimes on the ground. There were two 80x40-foot tents; one for women and one for men.

We walked on the left side of the highway, in double columns, facing the oncoming traffic, which was standard for pedestrians. Although we were on the shoulder, cars and trucks still sometimes came too close for comfort. Sometimes we had a rest car behind us, also on the

shoulder but going against traffic. That could be tricky when the shoulder wasn't wide enough for a car. At first only a few dozen marched, but the numbers grew over time. They temporarily increased with locals when we went through the small towns right on or near Highway 51. They also increased over the weekends when people would flock in from outside Mississippi. The first weekend we had almost 300 marchers. As we neared a town, local Negroes would come out and march with us, while whites scowled from the sidelines. At intervals, local whites put their trucks and chairs on the other side of the road, often decorated with Confederate flags.

We were mostly fed by local women, sometimes sumptuously. They would bring baskets of cooked food to where we had our rest breaks, or invite us to stop in their yards or fields. Our presence clearly made them feel good, even though they knew that local whites who recognized them could and would retaliate. It gave them hope that freedom was coming, even if they couldn't articulate exactly what that meant.

As more and more women showed up to join the march, Hosea stopped talking about men only. James Meredith didn't. Recovering at his home in NYC, he wrote a statement for the press which said, among other things, that there were too many women on the march. He had originally conceived it as one of independent men marching against fear. (BN 6-16-66, 2; Goudsouzian, 2014, 122-23) Meredith couldn't dictate who could and could not join, but his belief that this was a march for men permeated the atmosphere.

Among other things, the guys got it into their heads that we needed protecting. They created a rule that every woman had to walk with a man to her right.<sup>1</sup> Supposedly this was to protect us from snipers and passing cars. It meant that no two women could walk together. While walking, women could only talk to men. It also meant that women were walking on the rougher part of the shoulder where the rocks were. This all seemed very stupid. Any sniper would shoot from the woods, not the roadway where the cops were. The guys who wanted to "protect" us didn't give us their sun hats, or defer to women at the water line during breaks. "Protection" may have made the guys feel good, but it didn't do anything for the women.

I assumed that rule didn't apply to me since I was staff and had to observe the line occasionally. I needed information to report on numbers and participants to Don Smith and I wanted to take photographs. Other staff left the line at will, why shouldn't I? Not every man agreed with me. I was often told to get back in line and at least once two guys dragged me from the road while I was counting marchers and literally pushed me into the line. When I tried to run ahead of the line to take photos of each day's leaders, the "protectors" wouldn't let me. Instead I took photos from the march line, on breaks, at rallies, and on those occasions when groups left the march to talk to local folk or take side trips to nearby towns.

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<sup>1</sup> Goudsouzian says that it came from the Deacons for Defense, who were "guarding" the march with pistols in their cars. Like Meredith, they saw marching through Mississippi as a form of black male empowerment. (2014, 91) In the *Southern Courier* story on the Deacons, it quoted Leon Hall of SCLC as saying "keep men on the outside." (6-18/19-66,1) I hadn't encountered that rule on any of the other marches and demonstrations I had been on with SCLC.



In fact we were protected by the Mississippi Highway Safety Patrol. They were present everywhere we went, often joined by sheriffs' deputies and local police. Much to my surprise, I saw some black faces in those uniforms. The restraint they showed was surprising, but not an accident. A.G. Katzenbach had negotiated a "truce" with Mississippi Gov. Paul B. Johnson, Jr. The governor would curb the cops and the feds would stay out of Mississippi. (*WP* 6-30-66, A25) Thus, the A.G. ignored repeated requests by march leaders for federal protection while state and local law enforcement, for the most part, were downright civil and didn't give us a hard time. Gov. Johnson was a staunch segregationist, but he had learned a few things from the bad publicity Alabama received during the Selma march and Mississippi experienced during Meredith's admission to Old Miss. He wanted us to go to Jackson "quickly, safely and quietly... without attracting undue attention." (*NYT* 8-8-63, 17; Goudsouzian, 2014, 113) Highway patrol officers visited town and county leaders in advance of the march to explain how to keep things under control. They directed traffic around marchers and sometimes provided escorts. Consequently, local whites, for the most part, ignored us. (*BN* 6-27-66, 4) Meredith's shooter had been identified, arrested and put into the county jail to await trial. We often camped on the grounds of black schools without objection from the various governmental bodies which controlled those spaces. Even the grass along the shoulder of the road had been cut, rendering moot our demand to walk on the asphalt. (*NYT* 6-16-66, 65)

From the beginning, SCLC and the NAACP called for Mississippi to be flooded with federal examiners to register more voters. They were already in 24 of Mississippi's 82 counties. More feds was the last thing Mississippi officials wanted, so they quickly scheduled voter registration days in the counties we were marching through. The first of these was Grenada County, whose county seat was also called Grenada. By the time two hundred people marched into town on June 14, the march leadership had negotiated a deal with the county officials. The Circuit Clerk hired four teachers as temporary clerks to sit in the courthouse ready to register anyone who wanted to and agreed to stay open late at night. This could be done quickly because a year earlier Mississippi had removed the legal barriers to voter registration in order to keep the feds away. That pre-emptive strike didn't work, but the simplified process was still the law. Registration could be done daily with simple forms and no literacy test. A dozen workers went into the neighborhoods to pull people to the courthouse. (*NYT* 6-16-66, 35; 6-26-66, L40; *BN* 6-15-66, 5; Goudsouzian, 2014, 121)

Grenada was a high point for us. We marched in as though we were a liberating army, jubilantly greeted by swarms of black folk. Indeed they came out to join us when we were at least a mile away. It was a festive occasion. Those who didn't join us lined the sidewalks three-deep. The warm reception by blacks was marred only by the silent scowls and occasional catcalls by groups of whites. By the time we got to the courthouse, our numbers had swelled to a couple thousand. We surrounded the statue of Jefferson Davis in the center of the courthouse square. Our speakers used it as a podium from which to bash white supremacy. Bob Green, SCLC's Education Director, shook his fist at an oval of Davis' stone face, called him a symbol of everything we were fighting against, and stuck an American flag into the rim of the oval above his head. We continued marching and chanting in the streets most of the night, while hundreds of Negroes came to the courthouse to register to vote. The DoJ said that 5,938 whites and 727 Negroes were registered in Grenada Co. before we arrived. At least 500 more Negroes

registered before we left, though some estimates were as high as 1,200. Workers stayed behind to continue canvassing for more. (*SC* 6-18/19-66, 1; *WP* 6-27-66, A10)

March leaders decided to leave Highway 51 and go into the Delta, a large region in western Mississippi with a heavily black population. Alabama's blackbelt looked like a belt; Mississippi's looked more like an urn. We would march through these heavily black counties for a few days before turning back to Highway 51 for the final march into Jackson. Our first stop was in Holcomb, an unincorporated town still in Grenada County. While the volunteers were marching, staff were making side trips into nearby counties to encourage voter registration. They went into Bolivar, Quitman, Sunflower and Tallahatchie Counties. Only the first had federal examiners, though the other counties would get them eventually. (*NYT* 6-13-66, 32; *BN* 6-16-66, 2)

Once we left Grenada County, local officials became less accommodating. They probably got an earful from their white constituents about what they were letting us do. Our Highway Patrol escort dropped to four cars. The Confederate statue in every courthouse square was surrounded by Negro prisoners from the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) in Sunflower County, also known as Parchman Farm. The prisoners guarded the statues as long as we were there. There would be no more speeches from the very symbols of what we opposed. When we got to our first camping spot in Greenwood, the county seat of Leflore County, local officials initially wouldn't let us camp in the black school yard. They arrested three SNCCers trying to set up tents before reluctantly letting us stay. One of them was Stokely Carmichael, SNCC's new chairman. He was bailed out by the white priest of the black Catholic Church. (*NYT* 6-17-66, 1; *Sun* 6-17-66, A6; *BN* 6-17-66, 1; 6-18-66, 3; 6-20-66, 10; Payne, 1995, 327)

After the marchers arrived, I heard a small commotion. Cleveland Sellers was leading a small group of school children in a call and response chant. It sounded like the familiar "What you want?" ... "Freedom" that we chanted all the time. But the kids were responding to "What you want?" with "Black Power !" That was a new one, or so I thought. The small commotion was caused by others asking him what was meant by that phrase. Sellers, a Howard University dropout who had run SNCC's Holly Springs project during Freedom Summer, didn't answer. He ignored anyone who interrupted the call and response chant.

The answer, or at least an answer, came from Stokely Carmichael at a rally that night. He said he was tired of going to jail and tired of begging. He wanted black power. Carmichael was a charismatic speaker; he got the crowd cheering every time he used the phrase. SNCCer Willie Ricks had spent the day talking up black power to local Negroes so they were ready to respond. Dr. King wasn't there, nor was any other prominent black leader who might have disagreed. The phrase wasn't completely new. SNCC had used the slogan "Black Power for Black People" while organizing a third party in Lowndes Co., AL during the Spring. It had cropped up in news stories written even before that. But not until then was it promoted with vigor. For the rest of the night blacks and whites under the tents talked about the meaning of black power. (*BN* 6-17-66, 1, 4; Jeffries, 2009, 181; Sellers and Carmichael interviews in Hampton, 1995, 289-93)

The next day Dr. King spoke to 800 marchers near Greenwood's courthouse square – the

cops wouldn't let us on it. He interpreted black power as political power secured through the vote. Other march leaders tried to tone down the implications from militant to normal. That mollified our white marchers and supporters, but not our white opponents. To local whites "black power" meant "bottom rail on top" – the very thing they were most afraid of. The fact that federal examiners had moved into their county the previous August and were still there made the federal government complicit. (*NYT* 6-18-66, 20) As black rhetoric grew stronger, so did white reaction. Gas station attendants sprayed us with water. Cops became rougher, using billy clubs to push us out of the street when we marched through towns. (*BN* 6-18-66, 3)

The debate continued as we marched through the Delta counties. Humphryes and Leflore counties had federal examiners. Blacks were examined by them, not the Circuit Clerk. Sunflower County, where Sen. Eastland had his plantation, did not. In a side trip to Indianola, its county seat and the birthplace of the white Citizens' Council, SNCC and SCLC speakers gave conflicting instructions to the crowd. Charles McLaurin of SNCC told them to respond to "What do you want?" with "Black Power." When Rev. Abernathy arrived and asked the same question, he frowned at that answer. "Say freedom," he said to the crowd. "FREEDOM," they yelled back. (*NYT* 6-22-66, 25) A nighttime rally at Yazoo City was consumed with calls for Black Power. The debate expanded to one of violence vs. non-violence because the march had faced its first serious violence the day before in a side trip to Philadelphia, 80 miles away. (*SC* 6-25/26-66, 1)

Philadelphia was the county seat of Neshoba County in east central Mississippi. That was where the three civil rights workers, Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, had been murdered in 1964. They had been arrested by Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price, released from the county jail, then captured by two carloads of KKK members. June 21 was the anniversary of their disappearance. Their bodies were found on August 4, buried in an earthen dam. The DoJ had recently announced that 18 white men, including Sheriff Lawrence Rainey and Deputy Cecil Price, would face a trial in September on federal charges. Murder is not a federal crime, but the state courts had refused to prosecute them. Since the sheriff's office was involved, the DoJ charged them with conspiring to deprive the three of their civil rights under color of law. When federal district judge William Harold Cox dismissed these charges, the CRD appealed all the way to the Supreme Court, which reversed Cox in March. Two years after the highly publicized murders, the accused would finally face a trial, or so it seemed at the time. (*U.S. v. Price*, 1966; 18 U.S.C. 242; *Sun* 6-21-66, A6)

Dr. King took 20 marchers to Philadelphia to conduct a memorial service. They were joined by about 150 local Negroes. While they walked two miles from the MFDP office to the courthouse square, law enforcement took a vacation. Sheriff's deputies stood by while hundreds of local whites screamed and yelled, shaking guns and fists. In other towns whites had watched in silence, broken by a few catcalls. Here they actively harassed the marchers. A few blocks from the courthouse, cars and trucks drove into the crowd, barely avoiding injury. Press holding cameras were roughed-up. Cherry bombs were thrown at Dr. King while he spoke on the street; Deputy Price had blocked his way onto the lawn. As Dr. King led the marchers back to the Negro quarter, several white men, mostly auxiliary police who were also KKK members, began pummeling Negroes "with fists ... stones, bottles, clubs and firecrackers." Fights broke out. The Highway Patrol could not be seen. Local cops stepped in only when Negro youth started fighting

back. Later that night white toughs shot up the Negro section of town. Only after John Doar spoke with the head of the Highway Patrol did it move in and block streets to the Negro neighborhood to keep marauding whites out. Dr. King promised to return. (Mars, 1977, 206-10, quote on 210; Goudsouzian, 2014, 173-6; *BN* 6-22-66, 2, 15; *NYT* 6-23-66, 22; *SC* 6-25/26-66, 1)

While Dr. King was in Philadelphia the rest of us were marching to Yazoo City, county seat of Yazoo County. With a 60 percent Negro population, Yazoo County had a reputation for keeping Negroes in their place. During the lynching era, 19 Negroes had been murdered by white mobs. (Tolnay and Beck, 1995, 41) When 53 local black parents filed a desegregation petition with the Yazoo City school board in 1955, the WCC used intimidation and economic retaliation to persuade 51 of them to withdraw their names; the other two soon left town. County NAACP membership plummeted while WCC membership went from 16 to 1,500. (Halberstam, 1955) In 1966, the white elites followed the admonition to keep it cool. Elected officials published a request in the local newspaper that there be no heckling or violence, and there wasn't. As was true in other places, local Negroes chopping cotton in the fields stopped to wave as we passed and local kids came out to escort us into town. A few whites gathered on street corners but they didn't shout or wave Confederate flags as they did in other towns. (Goudsouzian, 2014, 170-1; *BN* 6-22-66, 9)

While we were setting up camp a local Negro woman asked me if I'd like to come to her house and take a bath. "YES," I said with great gratitude. Getting clean was the hardest thing to do on the march. She turned out to be a hairdresser. After I bathed, she put me into her chair, washed my hair, fed me and put me to bed for a few hours. When I awoke, I discovered that she had washed my clothes and bought a new pair of tennis shoes for me. Mine did look pretty raggedy. They were well worn when I started out in Memphis. By the time I reached Grenada there were holes where my little toes poked out, which got larger and larger as I walked. The backs were the next to go. The kids teased me about them, so I made up a funny rap about the virtues of ventilated tennis shoes. Now I had a new pair of sneakers! The kindness with which I was treated by the Yazoo lady was typical of the marchers' reception by local Negroes. They were glad that we had come and wanted to show it.

About four to five hundred people rallied at the courthouse in the morning, after which 135 lined up to register to vote. Yazoo didn't have federal examiners, so they would face the county registrars. As we marched out of Yazoo City, the civil rights leaders held a 5-hour meeting. (FBI-LBJ, 6-23-66; *BN* 6-22-66, 9; *Sun* 6-23-66, A4)

Canton was different. There, the hatred and anger that the Highway Patrol felt toward us came out like a blast of projectile vomit. We marched into Canton, county seat of Madison County and the location of an active movement, after a long day on the road. At the courthouse, we heard some brief speeches and were told that we would camp at the black elementary school ten blocks away. I was under the impression that we had permission to camp there, as had been true at other black schools in other towns. Later I learned that Hosea and nine others had been arrested that morning when they attempted to erect the tents. Permission had been withdrawn at the last minute. (FBI-LBJ 6-24-66; *BN* 6-23-66, 10)

At the school, I saw the tent truck in the middle of a grassy playing field with the tents spread out on the ground ready to be hoisted into place. About two thousand men, women and children, mostly locals, swarmed around the yard. On top of the truck I saw three young SNCCers, one holding a microphone; others stood in the open back of the truck. Soon Dr. King, Floyd McKissick and Stokely Carmichael spoke to the crowd from the top of the truck. Mississippi Highway Patrol cars were lined up on the field. Suddenly a white car drove onto the field, the sheriff got out and announced in a loud voice that we all had to leave or be arrested. McKissick told everyone to sit down. "If anybody goes to jail, we all are going to go." As some linked arms and others sat down, over a hundred Highway Patrolmen in riot gear stepped into the field and put on teargas masks. (FBI-LBJ 6-24-66; quote in *BN* 6-24-66, 4)

Shouts of "pitch the tents, pitch the tents" rumbled throughout the crowd. Marchers slowly lifted them into place like a great khaki cloud. Just as the center poles were being shoved underneath, the cops lobbed teargas bombs into the middle of the crowd. There was no warning. Usually police line up and try to drive a crowd in one direction. These didn't. They just threw canisters everywhere they saw a group. Some were thrown under the tent as it collapsed on those trying to raise it. Several were aimed at the top of the truck as the leaders scrambled to get down. That's the last I saw before the burning smoke filled the air and cut off all vision. I tried to take photographs, but it was too dark and smoky. When the smoke touched my skin, my body felt on fire. Turning to leave, I dropped my lens cover onto the grass. I kneeled and groped for it, as people screamed and ran in all directions. My eyes burned as though massaged with hot poker. I wheezed and gasped. It appeared that the fiery canisters were all around me. I lay down with my arm over my head, put my mouth next to the grass, and tried to breath as the smoke rose. From underneath my arm I could see the legs of cops as they poked the slower people who didn't exit fast enough. Soon they kicked my legs and poked me with their rifle butts. Initially I just lay there, but when they aimed for my camera I scrambled to my feet and staggered off the field.

Carl Davidson was singing loudly as a whole line of police came toward him throwing gas canisters. He just stood there and kept on singing as the smoke rose around him. Then Stokely grabbed him and literally pushed him off of the field. Robert Waterman was helping to raise a tent. As the gas canisters bounced around, he stood there watching people run away. "Time seemed to stand still," he wrote later. "The gas wafted around me." Robert fell to his knees, his eyes burning. As he coughed, a cop took him by the arm and said "come on lad." He walked Robert past the other cops then let him go. At a nearby house, he washed the sting out of his eyes. (Davidson interview, 8-24-17; quotes in <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/waterman.htm>) Martin Dooley had come from South Bend IN but had only been marching for four days. Even though he was on the outer fringes of the crowd, tear gas canisters landed in front and in back of him. The group he was with all knelt down. Next to him was a mother holding a small child. One gas bomb landed under the face of the child. When the mother dropped her child, Martin picked him up and carried him out of the gas and into the home of a Negro family where both were washed down. When he left the house he could see cops beating people through the cloud of dark smoke. (Dooley ltr of 9-5-66, 1) Day Patterson came from Connecticut. He left the field as the clouds of gas engulfed him. In the melee, some people fell or were knocked down. Ahead he saw a young Negro girl fall and lay there as someone tripped over her. He picked her up and carried her down the street away from the gas. When in the clear he knocked on a door, hoping it would

open. A Negro youth opened it and just stared at this young white man carrying a younger black girl. Day barged right in, put her into a chair, went to the kitchen to wash out his eyes, and left to find his fellow marchers. (Patterson interview, 3-3-19)

As the smoke rose, I made it to the houses across the street. People were crying and moaning, expressions of shock on their faces. A man came out of his house, asked if I wanted some water, then took me inside. In his kitchen I put my head under a faucet and ran cold water over it. I also doused my face, arms and some of my body. That cleared my eyes but didn't lessen the burning in my skin. It was a good three hours before my body felt like it wasn't seared from head to toe. Thus were we baptized with the two Mississippi versions of Southern hospitality.

Staff went through the streets telling people to go to Asbury Methodist Church. I followed the crowd, as the locals knew where to go and I didn't. We were fed at the church. Those who needed medical attention got it from the Medical Committee for Human Rights. We soon moved to a gymnasium at a nearby Catholic Church, which was larger. A few hundred people marched around the city for half an hour to let off steam and pent-up anger. Then most of us went to sleep, more or less. Some local people took marchers into their homes for the rest of the night. The rest of us slept on the gymnasium floor. (Goudsouzian 2014, 203-4)

On Friday, June 24, Dr. King returned to Philadelphia. This time I went with the SCLC crew. We marched at noon, after a brief meeting at Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, taking the same route used on June 21. We were greeted by a pale shadow of the violence that had occurred on Tuesday, though the hatred of the white onlookers was even more intense. After Canton, there had been a flurry of phone calls between A.G. Katzenbach and both Johnsons. March leaders had once again appealed to President Johnson for federal protection, only to learn that Gov. Johnson had reassured A.G. Katzenbach that the state could maintain law and order. Gov. Johnson phoned the Mayor to insist that the events of June 21 not repeat themselves. The city issued a parade permit. The Chamber of Commerce asked merchants to mingle with the anticipated crowd urging that there be no violence. The Mayor and the Sheriff made tapes calling for peace that were repeatedly played on the local radio station before we arrived. The local newspaper published a front-page editorial headlined "Let's Hold Our Tempers." These appeals put the brake on white violence but not on white hatred. (FBI-LBJ 6-23-66, 6-24-66; Mars, 1977, 210-12; Goudsouzian, 2014, 176-78; *NYT* 6-23-66, 23; 6-25-66, 14; *WP* 6-24-66, A4; *BN* 6-24-66, 2; 6-26-66, 2)

I saw maybe a dozen feds present on June 24 but they weren't federal marshals. Their suits and ties marked them as FBI agents or DoJ lawyers. This time there were plenty of uniformed cops. "Highway patrolmen stood almost shoulder-to-shoulder separating the three hundred marchers from the large crowd of onlookers that numbered about fifteen hundred." Their backs were to the crowd; their rifles faced us. The Mayor had requisitioned the auxiliary police, which put them in uniform and took them out of the crowd where they had harassed the marchers on June 21. Sheriffs' deputies were brought in from neighboring counties. The street we walked on was roped off. Whites gathered behind the ropes. Few jeered. Their faces were rock-hard with the hate stare that I had seen when working in Alabama. A few bottles and eggs

flew over the cops into our march line but mostly the whites just stood and radiated hatred. When we passed the Neshoba County library, I saw more whites glaring down at us from the second floor windows. Dr. King spoke from the courthouse steps this time, along with a couple of others, but not for long. We were glad to get out of there. I wasn't sure how long the cops could have held back the crowd of whites if we had stayed there very long. Our presence made our point. We had a right to march and to rally. We were entitled to police protection from those who hated us, even though the police hated us just as much as the bystanders. (Mars, 1977, quote on 211; Goudsouzian, 2014, 208-9; *BN 6-25-66*, 2)

We returned by a different route. By the time we reached the Negro section we were loosely flooding the street, having broken the tight march line. Suddenly a white car turned a corner and bore down on the crowd of three hundred or so. As the car barreled into the throng, a wave of screaming rolled down the street. The car was going about 30 mph by the time I barely jumped out of the way. I don't know which was more amazing, the fact that no one was hurt or that the cops actually arrested the driver. If our march line had been in formation, that car could have caused a lot of serious injuries. We returned to Canton to spend another night in the Catholic gym. The tents were taken to Tougaloo College, which was supposed to be the last stop before the final march into Jackson. (*BN 6-25-66*, 1,3)

In addition to the debates over the meaning of Black Power and whether blacks should remain non-violent when attacked, there was a third debate. This one took place under the radar. The march leaders knew about it but didn't care. The press would have cared, but didn't know about it. I had no small part in this, both in informing march leaders and keeping it out of the press. This debate was by women, about the men, or at least some of them.

In addition to our "protectors," who wanted to limit what women could do and where we could go, there was an epidemic of predators engaged in what we now call sexual harassment. Some young guy would walk up to a young woman and ask: Are you married? If the answer was no, the next question was: do you have a boyfriend at the march. Those who said no were asked for sex. If a woman said no to that, she was pressured to "prove you believe in civil rights." I got some propositions, but mostly I heard about it from other women. I had learned from my years of hitchhiking that guys were attracted to vulnerability. The best way to keep guys away was to say no early and often and not appear to be vulnerable. Some guys were very persistent. Instead of taking no for an answer, they took it as a challenge. Since I was staff I was a logical person to ask for help in making the guys cut it out. All the women who spoke to me were white, and the young men they complained about were black. That doesn't mean that black women weren't propositioned, or that white men didn't do it, only that I didn't hear about it.

Initially I was surprised at the numbers. Black men raised in the South are socialized to avoid white women, not pursue them. Getting close to a white woman was dangerous. As Emmett Till learned in 1955, behavior that might evoke a harsh rebuke in the North could result in death in the South. Most young women from the North were used to some propositioning, but this was several orders of magnitude above "normal." "Prove you believe in civil rights" was a line they could not easily respond to. I took these complaints to the march leaders. I'm not sure they believed me; if they did they didn't take the women seriously. They told me that they had

too many other problems to deal with; those who couldn't handle it could always go home. Remembering how the Selma march had been smeared through allegations of sexual impropriety they were very concerned that it not get out to the press. We shared that concern, and were very discreet. We talked among ourselves, but that's as far as it went. Fortunately the press weren't interested in talking to young Northern white women so no one had to dodge questions.

There weren't any women among the leadership that we could talk to. The Mississippi civil rights movement had some great women in it, but they weren't marching with us. Fannie Lou Hamer led us in singing freedom songs on June 12. Annie Devine lived in Canton, where she tried to intercede with the local officials to let us camp in the schoolyard. Along with Victoria Gray, both women were the alternative candidates for Congress the MFDP proposed in its 1965 challenge to seating the Democrats elected from Mississippi. But they weren't around to quietly talk to the women on the march, let alone the men.

Wanting to be neither "protected" nor prey, women gathered in small groups in the women's tent before we bedded down for the night. I do not remember if these groups were all white or included black women. Any woman could join, but not all did. Sexual pressure and false "protection" were some of the irritations we discussed. From listening to the women, I concluded that the primary source of the harassment were gang kids from Chicago, not the Southern black men that I had been working with for the last year. SCLC was trying to train these youth in non-violence and had brought a bus to the march from Chicago. I also heard about a paper written by Dr. Alvin Poussaint, a psychiatrist working with the Medical Committee for Human Rights, on "the Stresses of the White Female Worker in the Civil Rights Movement in the South." (<https://www.crmvet.org/docs/poussaint.pdf>) Based on interviews with those who came to him for counseling during the 1964 Freedom Summer, it was presented to the annual meeting of the American Psychiatric Association a month before the march. Andy Young had passed out copies at the SCLC retreat after the May Alabama primary saying that this would help the staff better understand white female civil rights workers. I was in NYC at that time, but Esther was there and told me about it.

It would be several months before I read the paper, but word was going around that two respected authorities, a physician and a minister, had said that white women came South to sleep with black men. I couldn't imagine Andy saying that and I didn't know Dr. Poussaint, but I could see how the Chicago kids could stretch what they heard about the paper as an endorsement from reputable sources of what they wanted to do. An axiom of social psychology is that people see what they expect to see and hear what they expect to hear. One shouldn't be surprised that young black men from Chicago were just as eager as white Southerners to believe that white women coming South to work for civil rights were sexually promiscuous with a yearning for young black men.

When I finally read the paper months later I found that it said no such thing. It did start from the historical observation that "It has been in her name and for her glory that the white South has oppressed, brutalized, lynched, and mutilated the black man for centuries." (One century would have been more accurate, but Poussaint wasn't an historian.) Among its many observations was one that "No matter what the actual personal behavior of the white girl, she is



accused by both white and black Southerners of having a perverse sexual interest in Negro men.” Through retelling, this myth morphed into the belief that white women come South to sleep with Negro men. And that led to the aggravated sexual harassment that women experienced on the Meredith march.

While some of us were in Philadelphia, the rest were heading toward the penultimate stop at Tougaloo College, a black college founded by the American Missionary Association in 1869. They walked the 20 miles, but most returned to the gym in Canton to spend the night; some slept at Tougaloo. By then Don Smith was working out of the Jackson HQ in the basement of Pratt Memorial Methodist Church near Jackson State College. That’s where I went when I wasn’t on the march line.

March leaders wanted to conclude with a massive rally Sunday afternoon, June 26, on the steps of the state Capitol. However, after the demonstrations there a year earlier, the legislature had passed a law prohibiting any demonstrations on the Capitol grounds. On Friday, workers put a fence around the entire Capitol; on Saturday they took it down, symbolically replicating the inconsistency with which Mississippi authorities responded to the march. As late as Saturday, march leaders were still announcing that the Capitol grounds was where the rally would be while the Governor was issuing statements that all laws would be enforced. The broadcasting stations brought in their equipment; they wanted to catch the action, one way or the other. (*NYT* 6-23-66, 23; 6-26-66, 40; *BN* 6-25-66, 2)

At 11:00 a.m. Sunday morning, almost two thousand people left Tougaloo College and began marching toward Jackson. As they got closer to the city, they were joined by more and more people who had come from all over. By the time they reached the Capitol grounds five hours later, there were close to 20,000 people flooding the streets. Greeting us were lines of uniformed men wearing helmets and holding rifles. Mississippi had mobilized the highway patrol, the Jackson police, the military police unit of the National Guard, the county sheriff’s office and state fish and game wardens to keep us away from the front of the Capitol with its photogenic steps and Confederate memorial. But they let us gather in a parking lot at the back. There a flatbed truck served as a stage for two hours of speakers with the hot sun beaming down late in the afternoon. (FBI-LBJ 6-27-66; Goudsouzian, 2014, 240)

I sat underneath the truck, next to the wheel, having come early to get a place where I could hear the speakers and take photos. Nonetheless, I could barely hear and couldn’t see. When Meredith asked how many in the crowd were native to Mississippi, I couldn’t tell how many raised their hands. I later read that it was 95 percent. (*CD* 7-23-66, 11) I moved out front long enough to take a photo of him speaking, but no one else. Standing up to shoot through and over heads in a tight crowd was so uncomfortable that I didn’t try to get anyone else. I knew Bob Fitch would be taking the official SCLC photos; he didn’t need mine. I went under the truck to make my way out from the back before the rally ended at 6:00 p.m. because I had another responsibility. I had to sell buttons.

At some point I had decided that the march needed an official button. We could sell it at the final rally in Jackson and make a little money from the thousands of people who would be

pouring in for the end of the march. I said something to Hosea, and he said sure, go ahead, in his usual casual fashion. I already knew what to do. I phoned N.G. Slater Co., which was the best of the button companies I had “shopped” when in NYC the previous Spring, and spoke to Ruby, a middle-aged black woman who ran the place. I wanted something a little fancier than plain words, but I knew that any kind of drawing would require an extra charge to make a plate. We had to keep costs down. Ruby said to make it simple and she’d keep the charge as low as possible. I envisioned a map of Mississippi with stick figures walking across it and Meredith Mississippi March circling the rim. Ruby told me she could vary the color of the paper without extra charge as long as I ordered at least 500 buttons for each color. Ink was another matter. Multiple colors of ink would cost extra because each color required a separate run through the press. We’d stick to black ink.

By then Anna, the sketch artist who had come with us from Atlanta, had left the march. On one of my trips back to the march line I asked around for someone who could draw. A couple guys offered their artistic skills, but they wouldn’t prepare the simple drawing I wanted. The drawings they showed me were creative, but would have been expensive to turn into a button. Time was wasting, so I took my problem back to Ruby. She said she could give us a line drawing of Mississippi with “for FREEDOM” written across it instead of the stick figures. If I ordered 5,000 buttons, she could print them on ten colors of paper in black ink for a little less than \$500, including shipping. She said they would be in the Jackson airport three days after Slater received a check. I asked Hosea how to get the money and he gave me the phone number of the SCLC office in NYC – the one I hadn’t been able to find in the phone book the previous Spring. (The number actually belonged to the National Council of Churches. SCLC-NYC worked out of their offices but I didn’t know that at the time). I phoned that number and Slater had a check by the end of the day. Three days later ten boxes of buttons were in the airport. It was harder to get them out of the airport than in. Kathleen, with her car, had left with her sister Esther to go to Texas to visit a third sister. It took a day of asking to find someone to drive to the airport to get the buttons.

As the rally ended, I passed out buttons to staff to sell to the departing throngs. After a while, others also asked for quantities of them. I wasn’t sure I trusted total strangers to bring back the money, but I couldn’t very well say no, so I took names and recorded the number of buttons I gave out. I told everyone to sell them for \$1 each. That was a lot for a 2.25" button in 1966 (which cost about a dime each to make) but we were using the buttons to raise money and dollars didn’t require making change. The box of green buttons was opened first; tan was last. I was also selling so I couldn’t monitor the distribution. I know we didn’t get back \$1 for each of the buttons we sent out; maybe we got half. I saw some guys who were selling buttons put the money in their pockets and leave with it. I wasn’t going to confront them with what looked like theft and I certainly couldn’t call the cops. I did tell Hosea, but he just shrugged his shoulders and said it happens all the time. Reverse donations, he called the walking money. Those buttons were hot; I sold over a hundred myself. When the rally was over I packed up the leftovers and took them back to Atlanta.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2 2</sup> SCLC didn’t want the leftover buttons so I shipped them to my friend Jerry Fishkin in Berkeley who was storing my button collection. Today they sit in my basement in Brooklyn. In 2000 I visited the Mississippi Department of Archives and History to do a little research. There

In the Freedom House I wrote letters to my mother and my friends describing what I had seen, heard, and felt during the march. I calculated that I had walked about half of the 300 miles. I didn't know anyone who had walked the entire distance, but I later learned that both Carl Davidson and Robert Waterman had done so. John Doar of the DoJ also stuck with the march pretty much the whole way, but he rode in a car and stayed in motels, as did the other feds with him. (BN 6-26-66, A2) In addition to the work I did for Don Smith, I drove one of the cars occasionally and did lots of odd jobs. My most important contribution was the march button. My general impressions weren't much different than those expressed by the SCLC leadership to the press. The SNCCers did a lot of talking, but they let our staff do the work. SCLC estimated the cost of the march was about \$30,000. We lost a lot of our equipment when it was confiscated by the police or just disappeared. SCLC didn't get enough donations to pay all our costs. With the exception of the Urban League, the other organizations didn't contribute. My impression was consistent with what Andy Young told the press after the March was over. "We felt we were doing all the work and paying all the bills but somebody else was getting all the credit while handing us all the blame for things that went wrong." (Hosea Williams ltr of 7-13-88, SCLC IV 165:1; quote in UPI story in CD 6-30-66, 16; Goudsouzian, 2014, 221)

The Meredith March was the last big integrated march of the civil rights movement. The press estimated that more than 10,000 Mississippi Negroes joined the march at least briefly, before the final surge into Jackson. While the march had some effect in reviving the Mississippi movement, its primary outcome was to elevate Stokely Carmichael to national prominence. It also launched the "Black Power" movement, which had been simmering for a year or two. On one level, black power sounded like empowering Negroes, exactly what we were working for. On another level it sounded vaguely menacing, captured by a poster SNCC printed for the Alabama primary with the black panther symbol on it which said "Move on Over or We'll Move on Over You." (SC 6-25/26-66, 1)

One month after the Jackson rally, SCLC placed a 7-column ad in the *New York Times* declaring that "IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO CONDEMN BLACK POWER." On July 31, an "informal committee of Negro churchmen" placed another one on "BLACK POWER." While black political power had always been a goal of the civil rights movement, the very phrase, especially as it was used and publicized in the press, implied something more like black nationalism coupled with white exclusion. No amount of "explaining" undermined this general impression. The phrase appealed to a lot of blacks, especially youth, but not all. And it alienated a lot of whites, especially those who wrote checks, but not all. The phrase confirmed the worst fears of white Southerners that what Negroes really wanted was "bottom rail on top." In the north, whites divided over its meaning. In October, SDS at UC Berkeley sponsored a 3-day conference on "Black Power and its Challenges," where Stokely captivated 14,000 students with his black power rhetoric. ([https://www.crmvet.org/docs/660000\\_bp\\_berkeleyconference.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/660000_bp_berkeleyconference.pdf)) While the major civil rights organizations had squabbled from the beginning, "black power" increased their fragmentation and made it virtually impossible for them to work together. (BN 6-8-66, 1; NYT 6-26-66, E2; 6-28-66, 23; 7-26-66, 23; 7-31-66, 143; BAA 6-16-66, 3; Reynolds,

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was a display case of Meredith March artifacts in the hallway. In it I saw the button – my little contribution to Mississippi history.

2012, 71-2)

Whereas the Selma march brought attention to deprivation of the vote and accelerated passage of the Voting Rights Act, the Meredith March delayed the civil rights bill then before Congress. It would take another two years to pass a watered-down version. In the meantime, Meredith's shooter pleaded guilty to assault before a state judge and was sentenced to five years in jail. (*NYN* 11-26-66, 2) Nationally, the march didn't do much for the movement, but there were some concrete gains in Mississippi. The DoJ estimated that 4,077 Negroes were registered to vote in 14 counties (Neshoba not included) during the march. Federal examiners registered 1,422 and local registrars did the rest. Doar told the press that another 500 Negroes registered in Wilkinson County, far from the march in the SW corner of Mississippi (*WP* 6-27-66, A10; Goudsouzian, 2014, 246; *BN* 6-27-66, 2) But the overall impression was that the civil rights movement had passed its peak and was breaking apart.

## Mississippi

As a race the negro is deteriorating morally every day. Time has demonstrated that he is more criminal as a free man than as a slave, that he is increasing in criminality with fearful rapidity, being one-third more criminal in 1890 than he was in 1880.

Inaugural address of Gov. James K. Vardaman, on Jan. 19, 1904, quoted in *The Senate Journal* for 1904, p. 123.

“The way to control the nigger is to whip him when he does not obey without it, and another is never to pay him more wages than is actually necessary to buy food and clothing.”

J. K. Vardaman, Mississippi Governor, 1904-1908, quoted in Cash, 1941, 253.

“I call on every red-blooded white man to use any means to keep the niggers away from the polls[;] if you don’t understand what that means you are just plain dumb.”

Theodore J. Bilbo, Gov. of Mississippi 1916-1920, 1928-1932; Senator, 1935-1947. Quoted in TIME, July 1, 1946.

“the so-called “Justice” Department of our own government has invaded certain counties and municipalities of our State and has become an active party to the harassment of our elected officials and of our people. The U.S. Attorney General ... would create turmoil in our State.

We must protest every invasion. We must fight every inch of the way. We must let the entire nation know that we are proud of our conservative position and that we will not become a part of the blind mob that is rushing our nation into international, one-world Socialism – or worse.”

Gov. Ross Barnett, in a speech to a joint session of the Mississippi legislature on January 3, 1962.

“All NAACP means to me is niggers, alligators, apes, coons and possums.”

Lt. Gov. Paul B. Johnson while running for Governor, at the Neshoba County Fair, Aug. 3, 1963, quoted in the *New York Times*, Aug. 4, 1963, p. 44.

During the year I worked in Alabama there was an ongoing half-joking discussion among the field staff about whether Mississippi or Alabama was a harder state to work in. Since SCLC had little presence in Mississippi this was mostly a theoretical discussion; few of us had a comparative experience. After I spent the summer of 1966 working in Mississippi, I came down on the side of Mississippi as being both more dangerous and more difficult. However, I could not say why. It certainly wasn’t because the white population was more racist; Alabama gave no quarter there. Nor were the Mississippi Governors more committed to white supremacy or antagonistic to federal mandates than those of Alabama; who could match George Wallace, except perhaps his predecessor John Patterson? Yet Mississippi felt different than Alabama. There seemed to be a moat around it, with only a few bridges, all carefully guarded, protecting its dedication to white supremacy.

Years later, I read James Silver's book on *Mississippi: The Closed Society* and realized that he had described in great detail, from decades of teaching at Ole Miss, what I had felt during my seven weeks in the state. White Mississippians were more intensely provincial and insular than in the other Southern states, living in a "localized, inbred culture." (Alsup, 2019, 25) People didn't travel much past Memphis (aka Mississippi's back door) or pay much attention to the rest of the world. As Muse put it in 1964, "The attitude of white Alabama, ... was not as monolithic as white Mississippi; in Alabama there were substantial elements favoring moderation and adjustment, and these became notably more articulate in 1962." (Muse, 1964, 261) Black Mississippi was also provincial, but it was whites who ran the show and wrote the rules. Until late in the Twentieth Century the only choice was take it or leave. Those who rebelled, even a little bit, paid a price.

There were concrete differences between Alabama and Mississippi. The latter was a more rural state. In rural areas, everyone knows everyone else and their political inclinations. Urban areas have business elites who travel a lot more than farmers, even rich farmers, exposing them to broader attitudes and experiences. In the 1960 Census 54 percent of the Alabama population lived in urbanized areas, defined as having more than 2,500 people. In Mississippi, only 37 percent did so. Alabama had six cities ranging in population from 68,944 to 521,330, while the only city over 50,000 in Mississippi was Jackson with 147,480 people. One advantage of an urban area is anonymity. It is possible to think differently than your neighbors without it being known. It isn't always possible to act differently, except when voting, and sometimes not then. Cities often have their own culture. Huntsville and Mobile were not as monolithic on race as were Birmingham, Montgomery and Jackson. As a port city which had been ruled by France and Spain, Mobile had a creole culture with a large pre-War population of free blacks, many of whom were educated and most of whom supported the Confederacy. Huntsville was home to many Alabamians who opposed secession during the War. It became a major military center during WWII and a center for rocket and space research afterwards. As such, its population was not as solidly composed of native born Southerners as other areas. In 1962 it desegregated most of its public accommodations two years before it was required by federal law. (Cashin, 2008, 147) Mississippi didn't have any places comparable to Mobile or Huntsville though Biloxi on the Mississippi coast also had a French/Spanish heritage. This made it a bit more cosmopolitan than the rest of the state, but not much.

### *History*

Mississippi was admitted to the Union on December 10, 1817, seceded on January 9, 1861 and returned on February 23, 1870. At that time, it and South Carolina were the only states whose black population was greater than its white. Over time, the proportion of the Mississippi population who were Negro went from 55 percent in 1870 to 42 percent in 1960. Negroes were still a majority in 18 of the state's 82 counties though the percentage varied from 4.9 to 76 percent. As was true in other Southern states, the greater the percentage of Negroes in a county, the greater the resistance by whites, whether it be to voting or desegregation or just better schools. As was also true in the other Southern states, the planter aristocracy, through the conservative Democratic Party, regained control of state government in the election of 1875 after paramilitary groups known as the White Leagues used violence to intimidate Negroes and drive white Republicans from office. It kept control through electoral fraud, rampant terrorism and economic coercion. (<https://mississippencyclopedia.org/entries/white-leagues/>)

Mississippi was the first of these states to institutionalize elite control of the political process when it adopted a new state constitution in 1890. The convention debate made it clear that its purpose was to “secure the supremacy of the white race.” In addition to age and residency qualifications, the new constitution required that everyone read or interpret a section of the Mississippi Constitution. (quote from Jackson *Clarion Ledger*, 9-18-1890, 3:3, in USCCR, 1965, 3) To actually vote required paying a \$2 poll tax. Everyone had to re-register by 1892, meeting the new registration requirements. Subsequent re-registration was not required. (<https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/constitution-of-1890/>) Even though the Mississippi Supreme Court freely admitted in 1896 that Negro exclusion was the purpose of these provisions, the US Supreme Court found in 1898 that these suffrage provisions did not violate the US Constitution. (*Ratliff v. Beale*, 1896, 266; *Williams v. Mississippi*, 1898 ) After the 1892 re-registration, only 5.7 percent of NVAP were registered. This peaked at 9.1 percent in 1899, and declined to 4.3 percent of NVAP in 1955. During that same period, 56.5 percent of WVAP was registered in 1892, 81.5 percent in 1899, and 59.6 percent in 1955. (USCCR, 1965, 8; Stavis, 1987, 607n57. In between those dates, women were added to the electorate but sex isn’t mentioned in these sources).

Mississippi established its white primary in 1902 which kept blacks from voting in the only election that mattered. After the Supreme Court found the Texas white primary unconstitutional in 1944, many of those few Negroes who were registered tried to vote in Southern Democratic primaries. In Mississippi, they were often just turned away at the polls. Others were warned to not even try. Their efforts caused the DEC to write up party principles and require that all who desired to vote in the Democratic primary to swear to uphold them. They included opposition to FEPC legislation, anti-poll-tax laws, anti-lynching laws and support of segregation laws. (<https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/white-primary/>; *US v MS* 571-2; Lawson, 1999, 106-7) In the state elections of 1955, the head of the state Democratic Party challenged the right of the few registered Negroes to vote in the primary, saying “Negroes might be national Democrats but were no Mississippi Democrats.” Fewer voted than usual that year. (quote in Carter III, 1959, 52)

Concerned that too many Negroes wanted to vote, the state kept tinkering with the requirements. Those who tried to register in 1955 had to demonstrate “a reasonable understanding of the duties and obligations of citizenship.” (MS laws 1954, ch 427 quoted in USCCR 1965, 5-6) In 1960, “good moral character” was added to the qualifications to vote as a constitutional amendment. (MS Const. Art. XII, §241A) The legislature authorized destruction of application forms so federal investigators couldn’t compare them. More hurdles were added in May of 1962. One prohibited a registrar from telling an applicant the reason for a failed test. Another provided that the names of applicants be published for two successive weeks, followed by a two-week waiting period before registration took effect. A third said any current voter could challenge the good moral character of an applicant. (Stavis, 1987, 622n131) Clearly these made it easier for white employers and landlords to discourage Negroes from pursuing the vote.

Historically, Mississippi clung to the past even more than the other Deep South states. It did not ratify the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, abolishing slavery, until 2013. It was the last state to ratify the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, giving women the vote, which it finally did in 1984. It was the last state to repeal its statewide prohibition law, deciding in 1966 to leave it up to each county whether to be wet or dry. As the other Southern states reluctantly gave up massive resistance for at least token desegregation, Mississippi dug in its heels. It was also more willing to use violence. During the

lynching era (1892-1930) more victims (538 including 21 whites) were lynched in Mississippi than in any other state. (Tolnay and Beck, 1995, 273) Of the 41 civil rights martyrs murdered between 1955 and 1968 who are commemorated at the Southern Poverty Law Center memorial, 18 were killed in Mississippi and 13 in Alabama. The other states were: SC: 3, LA: 2, and one each in GA, TX, FL, OH and TN. (The latter was Dr. King.)

### *Maintaining Segregation*

The white Citizens' Council (WCC) was born in Mississippi two months after *Brown* and grew rapidly. In December it helped pass an amendment to the Mississippi constitution to close the public schools if the federal government compelled desegregation. Within a year it had sixty thousand members in 253 chapters. In 1955 it began publishing a monthly tabloid newspaper. By 1960, it was the most powerful force in Mississippi politics. Many members of the state legislature listed WCC membership in their official biographies. (Parker, 1990, 22, 38; <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/citizens-council/>) The Klan also surged, but not as much as elsewhere; it waxed and waned while keeping the smallest membership of any Southern state. The influence of the WCC and the state government's willingness to punish any deviancy from white supremacy dampened Klan growth. All of these stifled COFO's efforts to use a \$14,000 VEP grant to increase Negro registration when funds became available in August of 1962. Indeed, the VEP ceased funding Mississippi in November of 1963 because the results were so meager. (Watters and Cleghorn, 1967, 64-65)

Like the other Southern states, after *Brown* Mississippi attacked the NAACP as the primary purveyor of racial change. It didn't completely ban the NAACP as did Alabama, but did hamstring it with laws that made it a crime to foment litigation or accept funds for that purpose. Another law required teachers to reapply for their jobs every year listing of all organizational memberships for the previous five years and those to which they had made a financial contribution. (Murphy, 1959; Winter, 1957, 151-2) In the eyes of white Mississippi, joining the NAACP was akin to joining the Communist Party; both were subversive. There were quite a few "secret" NAACP chapters in Mississippi. Members asked to list organizational memberships had to choose between admitting to being a subversive by including the NAACP or committing perjury by not listing it. After the NAACP filed petitions to desegregate public schools in Vicksburg, Clarksdale, Natchez, Jackson and Yazoo City, the Yazoo County WCC published a full-page ad in the local paper giving "an authentic list of the purported signers to an NAACP communication to our school board." Reprisals against the signers followed. (quote in Muse, 1964, 82)

On February 29, 1956, Mississippi became one of ten states to adopt a Resolution of Interposition. The legislature declared that the "Integration Decisions of the United States Supreme Court" are invalid and ordered all members of the executive branch of the government to comply with state segregation laws. A month later it created the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (MSSC), which would "do and perform any and all acts and things deemed necessary and proper to protect the sovereignty of the state of Mississippi and her sister states from encroachment thereon by the Federal government or any branch, department, or agency thereof." (Winter, 1957, 153-4; quote in Katagiri, 2001, 6 and Rowe-Sims, 1999, 29)

The MSSC hired several former FBI agents to collect information on the movement and persons suspected of sympathy with civil rights in general (including the white President and



Chaplain of Tougaloo College). This was shared with the FBI and Mississippi's Senators. The MSSC paid quite a few Negro informants to report on meetings and provide lists of NAACP members. Many of these worked for the Day Detective Agency. One, known as Agent X, was hired onto the COFO staff. He stole some of the applications for Freedom Summer from the COFO office.<sup>1</sup> Reports by Tom Scarbrough on the Meredith March were used to brief the Governor. The MSSC also kept an eye on the KKK, whose violence was deemed bad for Mississippi's image. (Katagiri, 2001, Chapter 2, 144, 148, 159-60, 240-41; Bowers, 2010, 16-21, 83-9, 109; Johnston, 1990, 230; [http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/))

The MSSC's public relations director from 1960 to 1963 was Erle E. Johnston, Jr., a professional publicist, skilled at writing and placing sympathetic news stories and editorials. He contracted with a national service to distribute editorials to over 3,000 local newspapers throughout the country that contained derogatory information about the civil rights movement. He sought to promote Mississippi's "splendid race relations," by such means as producing a short film giving *The Message from Mississippi*. Between 1960 and 1964, the MSSC channeled \$193,500 into Mississippi's Citizens' Councils, under the pretense of funding its radio show the *Citizens' Council Forum*. It paid prominent men to tour the state speaking on the connections between the civil rights movement and Communism. It also sent speakers into Northern states to "tell the real story of race relations in Mississippi." One of these was Percy Greene, the Negro publisher of the *Jackson Advocate*. The MSSC paid Greene to attack the civil rights movement. Johnston even drafted some of the paper's editorials on "the evils of integration," which were distributed to the Negro schools through free subscriptions to Greene's paper. In 1963, Johnston was promoted to MSSC director where he served until 1968. He was considered a "moderate" on race who often butted heads with the WCC. (Katagiri, 2001, 74-79, second quote on 74, 82, first quote on 83, 88, 92, 119, 190, 206; Bowers, 2010, 16-17; Williams, 2002, third quote on 68; Johnston, 1990, 231, 350; on Percy Greene see Davies, 2001, 55-83; [http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/sovcom/](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/); on Johnston as a "moderate" see MSSC SCR ID # 2-21-1-50-1-1-1 and <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/erle-johnson/>)

As director, one of Johnston's tasks was to defeat President Kennedy's proposed civil rights bill. After consulting with Sen. Eastland and other dedicated segregationists, the MSSC helped create the Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedoms (CCFAF) in July 1963. Over the next year it spent \$343,191, making it the biggest spender of the 288 lobbying organizations which reported their activities to the Clerk of the House in 1964. Over 75 percent of these funds came from the MSSC and a sixth from the ASSC. (*BN* 8-18-65, 81; 8-29-65, 1; 1-23-66, 33; *NYT* 2-10-64, 8; 3-19-64, 21; 4-12-64, 76; *CQ Almanac*, 1965, 1451; Katagiri, 2001, 123-5, 150-52) CCFAF produced 1.4 million pieces of literature in the next year. It placed ads in hundreds of newspapers all over the country urging people to write their representatives to vote against the 1964 Civil Rights Bill. It advertised especially heavily in the three states where Gov. Wallace was running in the 1964 Democratic presidential primaries. It also tried to embed segregation into the national conservative agenda but had little impact. (*BN* 8-29-65, 1; 1-23-66, 33; *Charleston S.C. News and Courier* 3-15-64, 10-A; *Wall Street Journal* 6-11-99; <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/coordinating-committee-for-fundamental-american-fr>

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup> Freedom Summer applications from the middle of the alphabet are in the MSSC files at MDAH. The rest are at the King Center in Atlanta.

edoms/)

### *Mississippi Politicians and Judges*

Mississippi homogeneity could easily be seen in its elites. In Alabama there was some diversity of views among elites which gave a little wiggle room. In Mississippi there was none. The entire power structure were true believers in white supremacy. In 1965-66 Mississippi had five Representatives and two Senators. One MC was a Republican, who rode into office with the Goldwater sweep and only served one term. The four Democrats had held office for many terms and headed important Congressional committees. Delta Planter Senator Eastland chaired the Judiciary Committee. Senator John Stennis had replaced Bilbo in 1947. In 1965 he became the first chair of the Select Committee on Standards and Conduct (aka the Ethics Committee). All had signed the Southern Manifesto in 1956. All were committed Dixiecrats. At the 1948 Democratic Convention, all of Mississippi's delegates walked out to protest the adoption of a civil rights plank in the platform. Only half of Alabama's left (future governor George Wallace did not walk out). Delegates from the other Southern states stayed.

Mississippi's federal judges were equally uniform in their views. During the civil rights era Alabama had five federal district judges with a sixth being added in May of 1966. Their views ranged from civil rights supporter Frank M. Johnson, Jr. to conservative Daniel H. Thomas. Mississippi had three district judges; a new seat added in 1966 wasn't filled until 1968. All three favored the racial status quo. The result was that most cases had to be appealed time and time again to the Fifth Circuit Court. Even when given a direct order by the Fifth Circuit, the Mississippi federal judges stretched out its implementation to delay any changes as long as possible. There was always one Mississippi judge on the 5<sup>th</sup> Circuit in those years and one or two from Alabama. One of the latter was Richard Rives, who supported civil rights. When Constitutional issues required a three-judge court, in Alabama it was possible to appoint Rives and Johnson who could outvote the third judge, if necessary. Similar courts could be created in Georgia, Louisiana and Texas, but not Mississippi. The losing plaintiffs always had to appeal, causing more work and more delay.

In the Northern District of Mississippi, Claude Feemster Clayton was appointed by Eisenhower in 1958 at the request of Sen. John Stennis. Clayton served as the sole judge until appointed to a new seat on the Fifth Circuit by LBJ on October 27, 1967. While he did not like the civil rights movement, as a former Major General of the National Guard, he believed in following orders, including those of the Supreme Court. (Friedman, 1965, 189; *NYT* 9-16-66, 34; 11-25-67, 55; *WP* 10-14-67, A5) His replacement was Orma Rinehart Smith, who was confirmed on July 25, 1968, just three months after William Keady had been confirmed for the new seat in that district. Only after much of the action was over did Mississippi get federal judges who were "strongly committed to upholding constitutional principles of equal civil rights...." And that was only in the Northern District. Civil rights attorney Frank Parker wrote that "much of the racial progress that has occurred in Mississippi stems from their judicial rulings." (1990, 161)

In the Southern District, Sidney Carr Mize was appointed by FDR in 1937 and served until his death in 1965. He was replaced by Dan Monroe Russell, Jr., who served until 1983. William Harold Cox was appointed by JFK to a new seat created in 1961 and served until 1982. Mississippi's seat on the Fifth Circuit was occupied by Benjamin Franklin Cameron from 1955 until his death on April 2, 1964. On July 25, 1965, he was succeeded by former governor James

P. Coleman who had been a friend of LBJ's for over 30 years. All of these judges resisted racial progress. (Martin, 2010, 57; [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/650600\\_sncc\\_coleman.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/650600_sncc_coleman.pdf))

Cox was the worst. Senator James O. Eastland asked Kennedy to appoint Cox to the new Mississippi judgeship created in 1961. Both Cox and Eastland hailed from Sunflower County where they had known each other since childhood. (*NYT* 7-19-63, 8; Navasky, 1971, 248-52; 259; Nichols, 2007, 266-67) The American Bar Association found him "exceptionally well qualified" and the FBI's background investigation did not disclose anything that could be held against him so JFK had no basis for resisting Eastland's choice. When Attorney General Robert Kennedy asked Cox if he could follow the Supreme Court's mandate on racial matters he simply lied and said yes. (Stern, 1996, 166; Marshall oral history, 6-4-64, 88; Martin, 2010, 53-4; Katzenbach oral history, 11-29-64, 87). He was confirmed by the Senate one week after his name was submitted in June.

After taking the oath on June 30, 1961, Judge Cox became a major impediment to enforcement of civil rights laws. From his very first voting case he raised barriers to the DoJ's lawsuits against registration boards. (*NYT* 8-15-61, 18; 10-23-64, 45; Martin, 2010, 46, 61, 107-8) He revealed his attitude in his comments as well as his decisions. While presiding over a 1964 voter registration case in Canton, Cox called the voter registration drive "grandstanding" and referred to the Negroes standing in line at the registrar's office as "a bunch of niggers ... acting like a bunch of chimpanzees." (*NYT* 3-9-64, 42; Dittmer, 1994, 223) He dismissed the federal indictments of the killers of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman in 1965. After reinstatement by the Supreme Court, 18 men were tried in October 1967 before Judge Cox. Seven were convicted. (*NYT* 2-26-65, 14; Whitehead, 1970 218, 260-84) Cox was more sympathetic to victims of violence than those denied their civil rights. Not even regular reversals by the Fifth Circuit deterred him from frustrating civil rights lawsuits at every opportunity. (Stern, 1965, 165-186; Friedman, 1965, 188-9) He took senior status in 1982 and continued to serve until his death in 1988.

The other judge in the Southern District of Mississippi, Sidney C. Mize, dismissed desegregation suits on grounds that had *already* been rejected by the Fifth Circuit. (Friedman, 1965, 189) In 1961, Judge Mize ruled that James Meredith was legitimately denied admission to the University of Mississippi because "the overwhelming weight of the testimony is that the plaintiff was not denied admission because of his color or race." At that time Mississippi didn't have a single integrated classroom in its entire public school system, primary, secondary or tertiary. A Fifth Circuit three-judge panel reversed him, but Ben Cameron, who had Mississippi's seat on that court but wasn't on that panel, ordered a stay of enforcement pending Supreme Court review. He did this three times, each time reversed by his colleagues on the Circuit court. This judicial volleyball ended only when Justice Hugo Black of Alabama stepped in on September 10 and the Supreme Court declined to review the case. (*Meredith v. Fair*, 1961-2; *NYT* 10-1-62, 25; Martin, 2010, 209) In 1966, before we marched in Philadelphia the second time, lawyers representing the Meredith March asked Judge Dan Russell, Mize's successor, for an injunction to compel local law enforcement to provide the protection that they had not provided during the first march. He held a hearing, then said no. (*BN* 6-24-66, 2)

These were the judges who heard civil rights cases. The CRD filed its first Mississippi cases in July of 1961 before Judge Cox. His rulings had to be appealed time and again. (*U.S. v. Lynd*, 1962, 1963; *U.S. v. Ramsey*, 1964) That same year the CRD tried to get a federal

injunction against a local prosecution of a SNCC worker for breach of the peace after he brought Negroes to be registered. The registrar hit him on the head with a gun, then called the sheriff of Walthall County to arrest him. John Doar argued that this constituted intimidation of prospective Negro voters in a county where none were registered to vote. Cox denied the injunction but the Fifth Circuit granted it on appeal. Judge Rives joined by Judge Brown wrote that those who interfered with the right to vote were “political termites,” undermining the foundation of our government. In his dissent, Judge Cameron wrote that civil rights cases should be decided “in harmony with the spirit, thought and desires of the people” of the South. The Supreme Court declined to hear the case. (*NYT* 9-22-61, 25, quotes in 10-31-61, 20; *WP* 9-25-61, A4; 4-17-62, A7)

### *Here Come the Feds*

The first federal investigators came to Mississippi in 1960, sent by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. They gathered statistics and stories on efforts to register to vote which were incorporated into its 1961 book on *Voting*. In November 1962, the USCCR sent questionnaires to all the circuit court clerks asking for a count of court personnel from judges to bailiffs by race. They weren't returned. (MSSC SCR ID # 2-21-1-53-1-1-1, SCR ID # 2-21-1-54-1-1-1) In 1961, the Civil Rights Commission's Mississippi State Advisory Committee held the first of six open meetings in four cities on the denial of equal justice. The state government advised local officials to provide nothing. The 1960 Mississippi legislature had passed a law minimizing the proof necessary to prove perjury for testimony to a federal agency, including the FBI. (MS Code §2155.4-2155.6) Despite this deterrent, the Advisory Committee heard 150 complaints, mostly on gratuitous police brutality. Seven incidents were described in its 1963 report.

The DoJ first sent lawyers to Mississippi in 1961 to begin a “county by county, case-by-case assault on the caste system.” (Doar, 1997, 4) SNCC didn't get to Mississippi until a few months later. Both relied on long-time local NAACP activists such as Amzie Moore, Medgar Evers and Aaron Henry. The CRD needed people who had tried to register and would testify in court about their experiences. Officially, the circuit court clerk was the county registrar, though the actual registration could be done by hired clerks. Cases were initially filed in six counties to get registrars to apply the same standards to blacks that they applied to whites seeking to register to vote. By mid-1965, over 30 lawsuits had been filed. In addition to those on voting, the DoJ requested injunctions to prevent law enforcement from harassing and arresting SNCC workers and the locals they were taking to register. The CRD also filed suits to desegregate the schools in counties with military bases which were getting federal funds to educate the children of military families. These cases had to be appealed to the Fifth Circuit since none of the Mississippi federal judges would find in favor of the federal government or the local plaintiffs. While the DoJ could occasionally get indictments from federal grand juries when law officers beat up Negroes and civil rights workers, Mississippi trial juries would not convict. (USCCR 1965; 1966 Atty. Gen. Ann. Rep. 203-4)

On August 29, 1962, the DoJ sued the entire state of Mississippi and six county registrars complaining that they were “destroying the right of Mississippi Negroes to vote.” The State responded with massive demands for information from the DoJ asking for the factual basis of the complaint. Over twelve hundred pages were provided detailing how Mississippi had undermined Negro voting since 1890. As a Constitutional challenge, it was heard by three judges, two of whom were from Mississippi. No one was surprised when judges Cox and Cameron dismissed

the case two years later. Judge Brown, one of the “Fifth Circuit Four” who favored civil rights, wrote a stirring dissent. The DoJ continued to file cases while waiting on the Supreme Court to decide this case and a similar one against the state of Louisiana. The Court reversed on March 8, 1965 – five months before the VRA was signed into law – and sent it back to the District court for trial. (*U.S. v. Mississippi*, 1964, 1965)

There was no actual trial; instead the court relied on all the documents that had been submitted. By the time it issued its decision on May 21, 1966, much had changed. The VRA was confirmed by the Supreme Court in March. Judge Cameron had died, to be replaced by Coleman. The DoJ amended the complaint to focus on Mississippi’s refusal to recognize as voters 31,906 persons who had been listed by federal examiners as eligible to vote under Mississippi law, as modified by the VRA. All three judges ordered that those qualified by federal examiners should be placed on the voter rolls in time for the June 7 primary. They also ordered the feds to give copies of the applications to the county registrars in case they wanted to challenge any of those listed. (*U.S. v. Mississippi*, 1966)

Beginning in September of 1964, the federal government put serious pressure on Klan officers, members and resources. The FBI activated its Cointelpro program, the IRS investigated its finances, HUAC interrogated its officers and the DoJ prosecuted its members. At that time there were two distinct Klan organizations. The White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, headed by Imperial Wizard Samuel Bowers, signed up five thousand members in 1964. Robert Shelton of Tuscaloosa, AL, set up a “realm” in Mississippi of his United Klans of America. With a little help from the FBI, the two organizations were soon competing for the loyalty of current and potential Klansmen, creating a lot of in-fighting. By the end of 1966, Shelton’s group was reduced to 750 members in Mississippi, and Bowers’ to about 400. (Whitehead, 1970, 80, 221; Drabble, 2004, 361; HUAC *Report*, 1967, 37, 46; Silver, 1966, 328)  
<https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/ku-klux-klan-during-civil-rights-period/>

### *The Lawyer Invasion*

In addition to the DoJ, three national organizations of lawyers sent attorneys into Mississippi to handle legal cases. Local white lawyers wouldn’t represent civil rights workers or Negroes in race complaints and there were only three black lawyers practicing in the entire state. (Oppenheim, 1965) The NAACP Inc. Fund represented most of the plaintiffs in school desegregation cases. The Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law emerged from a meeting of 244 prominent lawyers with President Kennedy on June 21, 1963. The Lawyers’ Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC) was a unit of the American Civil Liberties Union that was created in 1964. Both brought volunteer attorneys to Mississippi for two to three weeks at a time to defend those arrested in demonstrations, or just for doing civil rights work. By 1965, both groups realized that a more permanent presence was necessary. They opened offices in Jackson and expanded their scope to voting rights cases and challenges to laws that interfered with civil rights work. While the outside lawyers were usually volunteers, sometimes paid by their law firms, the organizations and their staff were funded by foundations. (Parker, 1990, 79-82; Oppenheim, 1965; Hilbink, 1993; Connell, 2003)

The Mississippi Klan revived early in 1964 in response to the “freedom vote” the previous November, it grew quickly. The murder of Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman in June brought national attention, expanding Mississippi Klan membership. It was very violent, imbuing

its recruits with a sense of righteousness that it was their Christian duty to wipe out “the nigger-communist invasion of Mississippi.” The summer of 1964 “was the most violent since Reconstruction” with dozens of shootings, bombings, burnings and beatings of civil rights workers. (Whitehead, 1970, quote on 4, 111, 148, 165; Dittmer, 1994, 215-19, last quote on 251)

Not until late in 1964 did Mississippi follow the other Southern states in moving from massive resistance to passive resistance. Elites finally had to face the fact that they were “living in a changed environment, one where the Civil Rights Act and a new federal posture toward segregation made old ways of operating difficult, if not impossible.” They were led to this conclusion by business executives who headed large plants subject to the 1964 Civil Rights Act. In the past, such men had thought it best to go along with local custom when they set up new plants, but three years of violence had “created an image of a state where lawlessness was widespread and out of control.” In April of 1965, the Mississippi Economic Council told business owners and executives that the state’s economic development was being thwarted by racial turmoil. If they wanted more industry to come to Mississippi it was necessary to comply with federal law. (Patterson, 1966, 67, quotes on 68-9)

In September of 1964 Mississippi became the last state to let Negro children integrate its public schools when 60 Negro children entered first grade in previously all-white public schools in Biloxi, Jackson, and rural Leake County, without a major crisis. (Dittmer, 1994, 256-7, 314) After years of crises in other states and stalling in Mississippi, the threat of loss of federal funds had proven decisive in counties where those funds were important and in those which were subject to court orders. Counties without either continued to deny entrance to Negro children. Mississippians for Public Education had been fighting the white Citizens’ Council for years. Wanting to close the public schools rather than integrate them, the WCC had persuaded the legislature to give \$185 a year to parents who sent their children to private white schools. Apart from the Catholic schools, which admitted black children, there were few private schools in Mississippi before 1964. As black children were admitted to the public schools, many “seg academies” opened for white children. Race discrimination by these schools was legal until 1976. (Silver, 1966, 252; *NYT* 9-1-64, 1; 9-6-64, E8; 9-5-65, 5; *WP* 7-7-64, A19; *Runyon v. McCrary*, 1976)

Ole Miss admitted two more Negroes in 1964. (*WP* 9-16-64, A4) Public schools admitted more black children in 1965, while some private schools for whites received charters to operate. To prepare both Negro and white teachers for this change, the Education Department at Ole Miss received a federal grant to hold a summer institute on desegregation during the summer of 1965. (Height, 2003, 180) Nonetheless, only two percent of Mississippi’s black children attended school with whites in the 1965-66 school year. In the classroom, Negro children were often seated together, away from white children. (Dittmer, 1994, 390) A new law required parents to accompany their children when they registered for school or pay tuition of up to \$360.75 for a child to attend classes. It was aimed at those children left with friends or relatives while their parents worked out of state. While race wasn’t specified in the law, 85 percent of those affected were Negroes. (*NYT* 9-8-65, 25; 9-11-65, 11; *CD* 9-16-54, 5) After a private lawsuit was filed, the DoJ intervened and obtained a temporary restraining order to allow the children to go to school pending a trial on the merits. The legislature repealed the law before trial. (1966 Atty. Gen. Ann. Rept. 197)

1964 was a turning point in other ways. The white Democratic Party supported the

Republican Party's candidate for President because Barry Goldwater spoke out against the 1964 Civil Rights Act. He didn't oppose civil rights, he opposed federal regulation. White Mississippi wanted to run its own affairs; all it wanted from the federal government was money. The MFDP ran three women and one man for Congress in a "freedom vote" campaign like the one the year before. The 60,000 "votes" generated were fewer than in 1963. (Dittmer, 1994, 322-3) The MFDP candidates nonetheless contested the winners' right to be seated in Congress on the grounds that Negroes were systematically excluded from the elections. When the new Congress opened in January, more than 600 Mississippians were combing the halls asking MCs from other states for their help. The House voted 276 to 148 to seat the regulars, but allowed the contest to go forward. (<https://www.crmvet.org/info/guyot1.htm>; *NYT* 1-5-65, 17; 111 *Cong. Rec.* 18-19, 1965) Over 150 lawyers came to Mississippi from around the country to take dispositions from local people on denial of the franchise. Sen. Eastland denounced the "invasion" as "an attempt to take over the state of Mississippi by the Communist Party." Afraid of more incidents like the summer before, Governor Johnson and several important associations publicly denounced violence and called for law and order, at least for the duration of the challenge. In July of 1965, 15,000 pages of depositions were delivered to Congress. Mississippians and summer volunteers lobbied extensively. After a hearing in September, the House seated the regular Democrats by a vote of 228 to 143. At least 143 MCs thought the challenge had merit. (quote at *NYT* 2-4-65, 22; *CD* 6-10-65, 5; *BAA* 9-25-65,14; Stavis, 1987, 647, 650, 664; Dittmer,1994, 338-41, 351-2)

### *The 1966 Primary*

When Meredith was shot, John Doar and a couple dozen DoJ lawyers were already in Mississippi to prepare for the primary election on June 7, as were 205 federal observers. The former were stationed in 24 counties to receive complaints; the latter were assigned to 14 counties to officially observe the voting. The Republicans were also holding a primary on June 7, 1966 – its first in the 20th Century. A.G. Katzenbach had written the election officials in all 82 counties to tell them that any incidents of voter intimidation would be investigated by the FBI. Also observing were six MCs from New York and two from other states who wanted to see how the VRA was working. They stopped in Memphis to visit James Meredith in the hospital before going on to Jackson. Unlike Alabama, only federal offices were at stake. The MFDP was backing five Negroes and one white candidate in the Democratic primary for the six federal offices. The only incumbent not running for re-election was the one Republican. The Republican candidate for Congress was a lawyer representing 11 Klansmen indicted by the feds for conspiracy in the firebombing and murder of Vernon Dahmer in Hattiesburg the previous January. (WP 6-5-66, A2) His clients were among the 15 indicted by a federal grand jury on June 22. (WP 6-24-66, A4) While Negro voters had gone from 30,000 to 130,000 in the first ten months of the Voting Rights Act, they were still less than 20 percent of the electorate. Even though the 35,000 Negroes who voted were the most in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the fact that only a quarter of all registered Negroes actually voted was disappointing. The MFDP slate got roughly 12 percent of the total vote. (*CD* 6-7-66, 4; *NYT* 6-1-66, 55; 6-5-66, 78; 6-6-66, 34; 6-7-66, 26; 6-8-66, 27; *WP* 6-7-66, A4; *BN* 6-8-66, 2)

Despite the relatively low Negro vote, the Mississippi legislature was sufficiently perturbed to pass 13 bills and resolutions in June changing the election laws in order to maintain white control. One was a proposed constitutional amendment to permit the legislature to consolidate counties, even ones which were not contiguous. By combining counties where Negroes were a majority with those with a white majority, Negro candidates could more easily

be defeated. The measure had been defeated in the Senate a month before the primary; it passed the day after. (*BN* 6-9-66, 2; *NYT* 6-10-66, 34) The legislature also increased the number of signatures required to get on the ballot as an independent candidate, changed the requirements for running for some local offices, shifted to at-large elections in some counties, and generally made it more difficult to become a candidate. (USCCR, 1968, 21-23, 44-48; Parker, 1990, 34-77)

Mississippi was one of four states in which rural areas still dominated the state legislature because it had not redrawn district lines consistent with the Supreme Court's "one-man, one-vote" edict. On July 23, 1966 a three-judge federal court, all of whom were from Mississippi, ruled that it had to do so by 1967. Negroes were more likely to be a majority in rural counties. If they voted equally with whites, rural domination would have increased their influence in the state legislature; creating more equal districts that gave equal influence to urban voters reduced that possibility. When the Mississippi legislature redrew the state's Congressional districts, it split the heavily Negro Delta region among three of them. The same 3-judge court dismissed a complaint by the MFDP that this diluted the impact of the Negro vote. (*WP* 6-23-66, E15; *NYT* 7-24-66, 63; 10-1-66, 15; Parker, 1990, 41-51, 85-91; *Connor v. Johnson*, 1967) Nonetheless, Mississippi resisted reapportionment of its state legislature for 14 years, requiring nine trips to the Supreme Court. (Parker, 1990, 104)

Cointelpro caused the Klan to decline in 1966. When another surge of Klan terrorism in 1967 led the FBI to increase its sting operations, the remaining Klansmen became more of a racist social club. (Whitehead, 1970, 302) The WCC would flourish for many more years. It would be decades before Mississippi was ready to admit that its dedication to white supremacy had harmed all of its citizens.



## Grenada

SCLC had been looking to get a foothold in Mississippi for some time but it didn't want to compete with the other civil rights groups already working there, of which there were quite a few. It was willing to work *with* them, if that was possible. It often wasn't. When NAACP field director Charles Evers asked Dr. King for help in Natchez in September 1965, SCLC sent Rev. Albert Sampson and four others. After only three weeks, Evers asked them to leave. The head of the Natchez NAACP wrote Dr. King that they were just causing "divisions, dissensions, and confusions. ..among...our...organizations and...residents." (Dittmer, 1994, 356-57; SCLC IV 146:24; quote in ltr of 10-19-65 to Dr. King, SCLC IV 143.25)

SCLC saw an opening in Grenada when the Meredith March went through. Local people wanted a movement, and no other civil rights groups were working there. A few workers stayed in Grenada when the march left. The white power structure thought that if they were accommodating and didn't create any conflicts things would return to normal. They didn't. Local Negroes were simply too excited by the possibility of change. They met and formed the Grenada County Freedom Movement (GCFM) while we were still marching to Jackson. Rev. Sharper T. Cunningham, pastor of the Belle Flower Missionary Baptist Church, was elected chairman. Located on the edge of a Negro neighborhood in north Grenada, his church became movement headquarters – until it was burned on January 22, 1967. (*SC* 2-11/12-67; *NYT* 1-23-67, 10)

Both county and county seat were named for the city of Granada in Spain. It had once been the land of the Choctaws. While not all Choctaws were removed from the state, they were removed from Grenada. When the 1960 Census was taken, there were only a few Native American families in a county evenly split between black and white. In some ways Grenada reminded me of the San Fernando Valley where I had grown up; it was a suburb without much of a city. The downtown area with its stores, courthouse and official offices was only sufficient for a town of 2,000, but the 1960 town population was 7,914, of which 48.5 percent were non-white. Most of the white population lived in the nearby county area, in tract homes with large lawns, on blocks punctuated with gas stations. There was even a major shopping center and several large markets. The 1960 county population was 18,409, of which 49.2 percent were non-white.

Located roughly halfway between Memphis and Jackson, just east of the Delta, Grenada was a major transportation center for crops and people. The town that called itself "The City that Smiles" straddled Highway 51 and was a stop on the Illinois Central railroad. Out in the county was a municipal airport, but only for private planes. There were a few plants and industries. Among these were a hosiery mill and one making railroad ties. (Jaffe, 1966, 16)

Inside the city were some of the worst slums I had ever seen. Whole families were housed in one-room wooden shacks that rented for \$35 a month. I saw stairs, walkways and ditches hazardous to any but the young and agile. As was typical of Southern towns, the Negro population was scattered, with concentrations in eight different sections. You couldn't walk far without going through both white and Negro neighborhoods. Indeed white and Negro homes were on the same block. ([https://www.crmvet.org/docs/grenada\\_map.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/grenada_map.pdf))

I stayed with Mr. & Mrs. Arzo Mullin at 624 Plum St. Arzo Mullin turned 50 while I was in his house. His wife, Essie Lee, was five years younger. She worked as a cook and housekeeper for a white family. They were a little afraid to have a white girl stay in their house. The fact that they did illustrates how ready the black population was for the civil rights movement, even though it was virgin territory. It had never had a CEP program or received any VEP money.

I had to walk through a white business section to go from the Mullin house to our office in Belle Flower Church. Once I was recognized, it was a little like running a daily gauntlet. In only five minutes, I could receive two dozen jeers, catcalls and sexual slurs from passing cars and sidewalk loafers. Occasionally cars would try to run me down as I crossed streets. After a couple weeks, I decided hitchhiking might be safer. I stood by a stop sign in the Negro neighborhood; when cars (driven by Negroes of course) stopped with an empty seat, I would ask for a ride to the church. I was known by then, so no one looked surprised. Some said no, but I usually got a ride within a few minutes. That too illustrated how *ready* Grenada was for the movement. Negroes in most of the counties I had previously worked in were too scared to carry a white girl, or even a white boy, as a passenger, especially through a white section of town. In Grenada, carrying me was kind of an act of defiance. (see also James, 1966)

Grenada could have easily become another Selma if it had had a Sheriff Jim Clark. Instead, Gov. Paul Johnson had learned from Selma and other explosions that white violence brought publicity and sympathy for the civil rights movement. He was determined to keep white violence to a minimum, but to do this he needed the co-operation of local law enforcement, as well as the local political and business communities. Not all were in agreement with him that it was better to put protestors in jail than in the hospital and there were plenty of white toughs who didn't listen to anyone. As soon as our demonstrations started he ordered several dozen highway patrolmen (MSHP) stationed nearby. We saw them frequently. (SC 9-24/25-66, 4) There were several waves of arrests that summer. They began before the Meredith March ended.

On Thursday, June 23, four dozen youth decided to integrate the Grenada Theater. When seven of them tried to buy tickets and were refused they and their friends entered the lobby; 17 were arrested. One of those was Melzenia Cook, who had returned home from college in Texas just as we were marching through Grenada. She quickly became totally involved in the movement, becoming a member of the GCFM steering committee. While the charges were later dropped, one of our staff was arrested along with them because he was in the vicinity. Jim Bulloch was found guilty of disrupting traffic by a Justice of the Peace, fined \$400 and sentenced to 90 days in the county jail. A lawyer from the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law appealed to the circuit court, where Jim was entitled to a new trial at the risk of getting a harsher sentence. (NYT 6-26-66, L40; SCR ID # 2-21-1-84-3-1-1; Eikenberry, 2009, 2010)

As a 40-year-old white man, Jim stood out among civil rights workers. He'd left his job as a design engineer for the Bendix Corporation in New Jersey to work in the movement. He'd been with SCLC for some time, having worked with SCOPE in Georgia in 1965. Although he wasn't a Southerner he incurred the wrath of Southern whites as a traitor to his race so it wasn't surprising that a jury composed solely of white men found him guilty. The only surprise was that the judge didn't increase his sentence. However, one of the local Negro witnesses who had

testified that Jim had no part in the demonstration but had merely been outside was charged with perjury and jailed. Both were bailed out. A year later the Mississippi Supreme Court overturned Bulloch's conviction on grounds of insufficient evidence. (Eikenberry, 2010; *Bulloch v. MS*, 1967)

Hosea started shipping staff to Grenada soon after the March ended. I left on July 1, along with Leon Hall, Big Lester, Herman Dozier and four young men who had come for SCOPE. They were Martin Dooley, 19, of Indiana University, Ron Gordon, 18, from U.C. Santa Barbara, Day Patterson, 23, who had just graduated from Yale, and Joe Kerkvliet, 19, from the University of Montana. Other staff came and went throughout the summer, including Bruce Hartford, R. B. Cottonreader, Willie Bolden, J. T. Johnson, and Robert Sims.

It took a day to drive from Atlanta. We got there just in time to be invited to a July 4 party out in the hinterland. I didn't go, which was fortunate for me because 27 were arrested, including Big Lester, Herman Dozier and the four white SCOPers. Grenada was a dry county; the man of the house where the party was held was rumored to be the biggest bootlegger in the county. We heard that his wife called the cops but no one knew exactly why. The raid probably had something to do with money. The reason dry counties stayed dry wasn't because their morality differed from wet counties, but because moonshining was so profitable. Most of the illegal liquor was made by Negroes, who made a much better living making mash than farmers made growing it (when not the same person). They sold it to white distributors who sold it to their customers. Everyone paid the police for protection. Being sheriff in a dry county could be very lucrative. One of the objections to having Negro police was that they would be better able to collect the protection money from the Negro moonshiners than white cops.

Henry Aronson of the NAACP Inc. Fund represented everyone at a hearing before a Justice of the Peace. All but Ron Gordon pled guilty to disturbing the peace and were fined from \$28 to \$150. Several were put on parole for 30 days, which meant that if they were arrested again they could be jailed on the original conviction. (Dooley e-mail of 12-18-18; MSSC report 7-11-66, 1-2) Ron's trial was scheduled for July 21, but Aronson persuaded him to take a plea rather than risk a much larger sentence. Sheriff Ingram had been angry when Ron told the court that he wouldn't plead guilty because he hadn't done anything wrong. He said Ron would regret this and made sure that he did. Twice during his incarceration he pulled Ron out of the cell with the other white SCOPers and put him into a cell with two local white men who beat the crap out of him. Sheriff Ingram repeatedly laughed at and insulted him. (Gordon e-mails of 2-24-19, 2-25-19)

By Thursday our people were out of jail. We celebrated at a mass meeting at St. Vincent Chapel, which was down the block from where I was staying. When it was over, we marched up the street singing and chanting, on our way to the main business district. It was late. We were loud. As soon as we entered a white neighborhood the cops tried to stop us, saying we couldn't march at night. I suspected that what they were really concerned about was our waking up white residents, who would complain the next day. When I had worked in Butler Co. the previous year, the cops would let us march and shout as much as we liked in the Negro neighborhoods at any hour, but not in the white ones. In Grenada, it was hard not to march in a white neighborhood

because they were so interspersed. When we didn't disperse, they arrested 43 of us and marched us to the county jail that had been emptied only a few hours earlier. (SC 7-16/17-66, 8; MSSC report 7-11-66, 2)

The jail had four cells, one for each race and sex. The cells for men had bars on the doors; cops could see in and the inmates could see out. The two women's cells had solid metal doors. Since I was the only white female, I had a private room. Or to put it another way, I was in solitary. I couldn't see anyone or talk to anyone. There were two beds, each with a thin mattress on a wire frame, a toilet and a shower head. The only window was above my head. If I stood on a bed I could look through the bars, but all I could see on the other side was an awning. There was even less to look at than at the Jefferson County jail I had been in the previous January. From my brief glance across the hallway, the cell for Negro females had the same configuration though it appeared to have a window low enough to see out. But it had several girls in it. I had no one to talk to and they had only two beds in which to sleep. We would be there for four nights.

The cell for Negro males looked larger and probably had more than two beds in it, but not enough for all the guys who were locked up. In addition to several locals, that cell held Big Lester, R.B. Cottonreader, and Robert Sims. Jim Bulloch also got a private cell, but only until the Saturday night drunks were brought in. Jim told me later that he was a bit worried that they would beat him up once they found out that he was one of us, but they were so inebriated that they didn't know what he was. They were released the next morning and he wasn't. The white male cell was next to the Negro male cell and both had bars, so Jim could see and talk to the other guys.

Breakfast was black and white. It consisted of one cup of strong, black coffee and a paper plate with a scoop of rice, a scoop of mashed potatoes, and a slice of white bread. We got the same for lunch and dinner, sometimes varied with a scoop of grits. During the day, local women came in to see how we were doing. I could hear their voices in the hallway, but no one opened my door. I learned later that they had brought food, but they didn't know I was there so I didn't get any. By their second visit, I realized that no one was going to open my door so I started pounding on it. A cop finally opened the door a few inches to ask me what I wanted. A local woman saw me and handed me a small towel. The guys had complained that the cells had showers but nothing to dry off with so the women brought towels, as well as cards and dice so the guys could play games. Another time the cops opened the door so one of our lawyers could get my statement on what had happened. I asked him if he could give me something to read – anything – as I was going stir crazy with nothing to do. He left some legal papers. On the next visit by the local women, I heard one ask “where is the white girl.” I heard a male voice say that there was no white girl in his jail. Needless to say, no one opened my door.

Bored though I was, my four days in solitary weren't quite as bad as my stay in the JeffCo jail. For one thing, I didn't feel abandoned. I knew that they knew I was there. For another, I had a mattress; I wasn't sleeping on a metal plate or sitting on a cement floor. I didn't suffer from as much stimulus hunger as I had in the JeffCo jail. The guys did a lot of singing; I could hear them loud and clear. I also played a little game with the girls across the hallway. Our doors were right across from each other with about half an inch of space between the bottom of

the door and the floor. One of the girls slid an object underneath her door across the hallway and into my cell. I slid it back. Of course we were flying blind and our objects didn't always make it, but it gave us something to do. That Grenada jail was hot and humid, just as it was outside. The guys must have been really hot, crowded together into one cell. In the JeffCo jail in January, I had huddled next to the heater trying to stay warm. I didn't see a heat source in this cell; I wondered what it would be like in the winter.

My one experience that was worse than JeffCo came from a deputy whose face I never saw. He would stand outside the cell underneath the window and hit the wall with his billy club. Once he had my attention, or thought he did, he would talk sex. He described all the things he wanted to do to me, none of which sounded very nice. After the first time, I realized that the best thing to do was not respond at all. He got his kicks from getting a response. So when he hit the brick wall with his billy club, I'd grow very still and say nothing. Of course I couldn't avoid hearing him, but I could act like no one was home.

I never knew who he was for sure, but from voices I heard later I suspected it was constable Grady Carroll. Mississippi counties were divided into beats, each with a constable, as well as a county sheriff. Grenada County had five beats. Grady Carroll was in charge of Beat 1, which included the city of Grenada. Unlike the sheriff, who was a relatively peaceful, rather dull-witted barber, Carroll was vicious. He beat our people at will. He threatened to smash any camera pointed at him, and did smash that of one of our SCOPers. He threatened to smash mine once, but I had many Negroes on either side of me so he wisely stuck to verbal threats. If Grady Carroll had had more power, Grenada might have become another Selma.

The day after our arrests SCLC issued a statement from Atlanta. In it, Dr. King said that Grenada officials had reneged on promises made in June. "Local police began harassing, beating, and jailing our staff, as well as the local Negroes much worse than they had before the marchers had visited Grenada." He promised that the campaign would be intensified. (*WP* 7-9-66, A4) That same day the city council passed a new ordinance severely restricting demonstrations.

While we were sweating it out in jail, our colleagues were trying to make the power structure sweat. Hosea came in from Atlanta to take charge. Hosea came and went. He often left Leon Hall in charge when he wasn't in Grenada. At a meeting in Belle Flower church on Friday night, Hosea said that he was there to "turn the town upside down and right side up." The GCFM voted to tell the city what it wanted. On Saturday, July 9, Rev. Cunningham and Leon Hall, along with other members of the GCFM, met with the Mayor, Chief of Police and several city officials. The GCFM gave them a list of 51 Demands addressed to "All City and County Officers of Grenada, Mississippi." What followed was a list of everything to be desegregated immediately, which was pretty much everything, followed by "Equal Employment," "Evening and Night Registration," "Adequate Police Protection" and a few other things. (MSSC report 7-11-66, 3; SCR ID # 10-32-0-13-2-1-1; <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/grendem1.pdf>) Grenada officials published the Demands in the local paper with their reply that "There will be no concessions of any type or degree made to anyone whatsoever, likewise there will be no acceding to any such demands." (*NYT* 7-12-66, 28)

In between, there was more action. The teenagers went into restaurants, motels, the library and the swimming pool to integrate them. For the most part, they were served in compliance with the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Not always. Three carloads went to Haley's Restaurant on Highway 8 during the lunch hour. The door was locked. When they tried again four days later they were served. The library took longer. The swimming pool closed. On Sunday several integrated teams tried to enter five white churches. Black and white together, all were denied entry. Churches weren't covered by the Civil Rights Acts. Houses of God were private clubs. We sent integrated groups to churches on several Sundays but never got in. That evening about 300 Negroes demonstrated in front of the jail demanding our release. Their freedom songs attracted a crowd of 100 angry whites. "About 25 steel-helmeted highway patrolmen, armed with shotguns, carbines and tear gas grenades" scattered about 200 Negroes on the lawn then "turned on another group of 100 Negro onlookers who had gathered across the street." They began "hitting these bystanders with billy clubs and the butts of their weapons." Deputy sheriffs dispersed the whites without striking any of them. (quotes in *NYT* 7-11-66, 1; *BN* 7-11-66, 2; FBI File #173-3477)

After our first massive integration attempt, local whites wanted revenge. Saturday evening, July 9, two local white men were outside Belle Flower when they saw a dark blue VW with California plates park in front of the church. Inside the car were three white men. The local whites aimed a submachine gun at the car and let loose as the three leapt from the car and ran. The shooters were arrested the next day and charged with the attempted murder of Henry M. Aronson, 32, an NAACP Inc. Fund attorney from Jackson, James L. Draper, 51 of the Federal Community Relations Service, and Oliver Rosengart, 24, an NYU law student working for Aronson that summer. Three weeks later, the county grand jury reduced this to unlawfully pointing a firearm, which was only a misdemeanor. The defendants' bullets hadn't hit any of the three men, who ran when they saw the gun, but had damaged the windshield of the car, which had been driven by Ron Gordon from his home in California. (*NYT* 7-11-66, 1; 7-30-66, 1; 8-10-66, 1; Sun 7-14-66, A6; *SC* 7-16/17-66, 8; Gordon e-mail of 2-25-19)

Monday we were all released on \$100 bail each as were the two white men arrested for the Saturday night shooting. Eventually the charges against us were dropped. Our lawyers told us that a similar statute in a neighboring county had been found unconstitutional so the local prosecutors deemed it a waste of time to pursue that charge against us. The two white men arrested for the shooting were acquitted by a jury a month later. (*King v. City of Clarksdale, MS*, 1966; *NYT* 8-10-66, 1; *LAT* 8-10-66, 6; *BAA* 8-13-66, 2)

That week, our teenagers tried again to enter the swimming pool. It had been built and was owned by the city, but leased to the Kiwanis Club. The Kiwanis claimed that only members could use the pool, and only whites could join the Club. The kids next went to Grenada Lake, a federal flood control reservoir with recreational facilities. The white beach and park was on the south side of the lake and the Negro beach was on the northern side of a fork in that lake. Because the white beach and park had amenities unavailable at the Negro beach the MSSC had heard rumors for years that blacks would try to integrate the white beach. Authorities had made plans on what to do if Negroes tried to enter the white beach or use the restaurant. However, knowing that there would be trouble with the feds if Negroes were turned away when they finally

came to the better park, Sheriff Suggs Ingram kept whites away until all Negroes were finished and left on their own. That night Hosea led a major rally. "Keep the streets hot," he said. He called for a "black-out," by which he meant a boycott of all white merchants, as well as marches every night and more street actions. Stokely Carmichael was watching but not participating. He agreed with the white power structure that SCLC should leave Grenada, but not for the same reasons. He wanted SNCC to move in. (*BN* 7-12-66, 2; MSSC report 7-21-66, 2)

Tuesday we began picketing the downtown merchants to enforce the "black-out." It was a very hot day, so about 50 teenagers decided to go for a swim. Accompanied by a few of us, as well as cops, reporters and various officials, they headed to Grenada Lake. I brought my camera and took a lot of photos but didn't go in the water. We bought food at the local concession stand. Two dozen whites left the water when we arrived and watched us until we left after an hour or so. About 50 Highway patrol and half a dozen sheriff's deputies kept local whites away. There were no incidents. (*NYT* 7-13-66, 32; FBI File #173-3477)

On Wednesday, July 13, 35 of our picketers were arrested while parading through downtown streets led by R.B. Cottonreader. They weren't released until Friday, on \$100 bail each. (*BN* 7-16-66) Our lawyers asked the federal court for a temporary injunction to keep the police from enforcing the town parade ordinance. Judge Clayton granted a 10-day TRO on Thursday, pending a hearing. We celebrated by marching to city square, where we saw the Confederate statue surrounded by eight large Negro men brought in from the state prison. Supervised by Constable Grady Carroll, they shoved back anyone who approached them, including reporters. Hosea mounted a stone bench to make his speech. (*Sun* 7-14-66, A6; 7-15-66, A5) That morning a group of school children had marched to the library to demand library cards. This time the librarian gave them applications and accepted those that were completed. There were no incidents. (FBI-LBJ 7-15-66)

Once we could use the library I tried to find the same Census publications that I had used in Birmingham. The librarian told me that they didn't have any because they couldn't afford to buy them. I replied that they could get them for free just by writing their Member of Congress. She said that she didn't have time to do that; that if I wanted Census materials, I should write him – and then refused to give me his name! Instead, I wrote Joe Beeman, my contact in Congressman Phil Burton's office. I asked him to send one set to me and one to the Grenada County library at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Line Streets. I never found out if the library got those publications.

Even while we were marching, we were also trying to register more Negro voters. We discovered that all those who had registered during the Meredith March had only registered for state and federal elections. To vote in municipal elections they had to take proof of their first registration to city hall and register again. We learned that the temporary clerks hired in June should have given them registration slips with instructions. No one did that. During the day we knocked on doors not only to find people to register with the court clerk for the first time, but to tell those who had already registered to take proof of registration to city hall. Not surprisingly, white officials weren't trying to expedite our efforts to turn Negroes into voters. The sheriff would only let four at a time into the clerk's office in the courthouse, whether they were new applicants or had registered in June and only needed proof of registration. Once we started

marching every day, most Negroes were afraid to go downtown by themselves. They went to the courthouse in groups or not at all. Mostly it was not at all.

The city of Grenada was fairly small so the high school students knew which doors we should knock on. That wasn't true when we expanded our canvassing into the countryside. We needed a map. The Negro agricultural extension agent told us that the Army Corps of Engineers had made maps for each county showing the location of all buildings. He said that the main USDA office in Jackson had them. However, he didn't want to ask for any out of fear that that office might suspect his reason (to give them to us) thanks to all of the publicity about our demonstrations. After a little discussion, I phoned the Jackson office and pretended to be the secretary of the white extension agent. The office confirmed that they had Grenada County maps and offered to mail them. Of course, we couldn't have them mailed to the white agent and I couldn't give out the address of the Negro agent, so I said that I would be in Jackson the next day and would pick them up. In the morning I put on one of my two good suits, put my hair up and took the Greyhound to Jackson. Once there I walked into the Extension office and in my best Southern drawl said I was there to pick up the Grenada County maps. Ten minutes later I walked out with five maps rolled up under my arm. They were excellent maps and *very* useful.

Because canvassing kept us busy during the day we started marching at night. Our first night march was on Friday, July 15. We numbered roughly 400. This began a regular pattern of meeting in a church – usually Belle Flower – then marching through the Negro neighborhood on our way to the courthouse, around city square and back again. Sometimes we'd hold a rally downtown, or someplace on the way, before returning. The cops really didn't like that. It was more dangerous to march at night when local whites were off work and available to harass us. It meant working at a time when they wanted to be home with their families. However, we thought it better to march at night and knock on doors during the day. We got bigger crowds when people didn't have to take off work to join us. They did have to take off work to register, but that was just for one day. We wanted them to march every night. For weeks, between several dozen and several hundred did just that. Even at night, the adult marchers were mostly women; the rest were mostly students.

I had one disagreement with Hosea over the boycott of white merchants. There were two Italian families with stores in Negro neighborhoods that had an exclusively Negro clientele. We picketed them both; 45 were arrested outside of one store on July 18. The purpose of our pickets was to get white merchants to hire Negroes. Both of these stores were run solely by the owner and his family. Both said they didn't need any employees and couldn't afford any. Hosea then told them to contribute some money to our cause. They didn't want to do that either. Hosea threatened to run them out of business. I wasn't privy to these negotiations, only to what Hosea told us to explain why we were picketing them so heavily. He thought that putting them out of business would send a message to the white power structure about what would happen to other merchants if they didn't give in to our demands. I was bothered by this tactic. I knew that in Southern small towns these Italian store owners were at the bottom of the white social and economic hierarchy. No one among the other merchants or the power structure cared whether they survived or not because they weren't part of their social circles. I was also bothered because Hosea kept calling them wops. My mother had taught me not to say "wop" for the same reason



that I shouldn't say "nigger." I spoke to Hosea in private about why I didn't think the two Italian small business owners were appropriate targets. I said putting them out of business wouldn't change anything, beyond removing a store convenient for Negro shopping, compelling those customers to go to other white merchants. He listened, sort-of, but shook his head no. His only concession was to tell me that I didn't have to picket those stores. I didn't.

Of course our protests attracted lots of attention. Roy Reed came in from the *New York Times*' Atlanta Bureau, as did Jack Nelson of the *L.A. Times*. Even the *Birmingham News* sent staff writers to Grenada; they stayed long after the national press had left. Stringers filed stories with AP and UPI. The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission assigned investigator Tom Scarbrough to consult with law enforcement and local officials in order to file reports so that Director Erle Johnston could brief Governor Paul Johnson. Resident Agents for the FBI came in from Jackson and Memphis. Their reports went to Director J. Edgar Hoover, whose office summarized them and sent them to President Johnson's special assistant Marvin Watson. We also got the attention of the CRD of the DoJ. On July 20, federal examiners came to Grenada and set up shop in the downtown post office.

The feds first came to Grenada in May of 1961 when the FBI found private intimidation was keeping Negroes from registering. FBI agents returned on April 24, 1963 to photograph registration applications back to 1871 and send them to DC for analysis. These records disclosed that between 1892, when every voter was required to re-register, and 1896, 303 Negroes registered. Only another 70 registered between that year and 1948. Some of these died and others left the county. By March 24, 1955, only 130 Negroes were registered to vote in Grenada County. Between April 6, 1955 and April 4, 1963 only 28 Negroes but 1,355 whites applied to vote. All of the whites but only 7 Negroes were accepted. As a result 95 percent of WVAP but only 3.1 percent of NVAP in Grenada County were registered to vote. The FBI returned a year later to photograph more records but the DoJ had not yet analyzed them. The CRD negotiated with the county to apply the same standards to Negroes as to whites, but didn't reach agreement. Nonetheless, the number of Negroes registered to vote reached 700 by the time the Meredith March came through. The CRD wanted to file a complaint in federal court, but it didn't have enough statements on people's actual experiences trying to register to support the statistics. Once we started demonstrating, the DoJ skipped these preliminary hurdles and sent in examiners. (*US v MS* 393, 395, 525, 565, 862-66; Scarbrough report to MSSC of 6-28-63, SCR ID # 2-21-1-60-1-1-1; CRD 1964: I:196-7, II:18 in Senate *Hearings* 1347, 1373)

Since we were testing public accommodations we filed a lot of complaints with the FBI agents who were hanging around. Our primary targets were Haley's Restaurant and Spencer's Dairy-Kream. Haley's eventually served our testers. Spencer's didn't. The FBI agents did a thorough investigation of the Dairy-Kream, as well as Spencer's other businesses. In addition to observing the race and time of those who requested service, they counted out-of-state license tags, drew maps, took photos, looked at the records of the state tax commission for each month's proceeds and counted the amount of advertising in the local papers and on the radio. Of course they took statements from our testers and Spencer's employees. In their reports, the FBI wrote "All persons interviewed were advised that this investigation was being conducted at the specific request of Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, Civil Rights Division, U.S. DoJ." (FBI

file # JN 173-3477) On July 20, the DoJ filed a complaint in federal district court against owner Joe Bob Spencer for violation of Title II of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. (BAA 7-30-66, 12) I have found no record of an actual trial. Over fifty years later, Spencer's Dairy Kream is still in business at the same location.

In Alabama, SCLC had to hire local lawyers and pay them. In Mississippi LCDC and the Lawyers' Committee supplied legal help as needed. Our lawyers volunteered their time or were paid by their out-of-state law firms. Our protests gave them plenty to do, both in municipal and county courts where we were usually defendants, and in federal court where we were usually plaintiffs. On Friday, July 15, our lawyers filed several suits in federal court. Several were against businesses which did not serve Negroes equally with whites. One was to desegregate the swimming pool. The biggest and most important was to desegregate Grenada's dual school system. (BN 7-16-66)

After a hearing during the day on July 22, Judge Clayton turned his July 14 TRO into a preliminary injunction late in the evening. He said the town ordinance gave the police chief too much discretion in granting parade permits. He also said we could not march, parade and shout when, where and how we pleased. The judge wrote rules for our demonstrations and our picketing of white stores. As long as we followed those rules, we could not be arrested, prosecuted, knocked-around or interfered with. More importantly, the judge said that the cops had to protect us from others who might want to threaten, punish, or interfere with our actions while we were "engaged in exercising rights guaranteed and protected by the First and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution." (*Cunningham v. Ingram*, 1966, 55)

Those rules specified that

- a) there could not be more than one march at a time,
- b) all traffic signals would be obeyed,
- c) we would walk in groups of 20 or less, two abreast, with at least 20 feet between each group. There could be one marshal per group, who could walk outside the group to keep it in formation and make sure everyone stopped at the lights.
- d) all marchers would stay on the right side of the street (marching with traffic),
- e) no singing or disturbing the peace in a residential area between 7:30 p.m. and 7:30 a.m.
- f) notice to be given to the police at least one hour in advance of any march, including information on route and rallies.

There were additional rules for picketers.

- a) picketers must walk single file in such a place and manner as to not interfere with customers going in or out of businesses,
- b) size of signs was specified (and small) depending on the size of the sidewalk,
- c) at least three yards between each picketer,
- d) police must be given an hour's advance notice if there will be more than ten picketers.

The police's willingness to protect us was tested over the weekend following the injunction. Both Saturday and Sunday night over 700 whites gathered in city square awaiting our arrival. There were twice as many of them as of us. The cops convinced our leaders not to march

on Saturday, claiming that there weren't enough police to protect us. By Sunday night about a hundred highway patrolmen had been brought in from over a hundred miles away. Wearing full riot gear with tear gas grenades on their belts, they barely kept the mob away. Our marchers were mostly women, teenagers and children; the white mob was virtually all men. That didn't keep them from jeering, cussing and throwing rocks at us. Martin Dooley remembered them yelling "get the white niggers." Over the jeers we could hear records being played of Southern patriotic songs. At one point, the whites put on a record of the Klan crow call. Piercing the still night air was the sharp raucous sound of "CAW, CAW, CAW." (*BN* 7-25-66, 2; 7-26-66, 2; Dooley ltr of 9-5-66) Coming from the back of a pick-up truck, that record was used to drown out the sound of our daytime rallies. But used at night, it violated Judge Clayton's order that there be no disturbing of the peace – or did that order only apply to us?

Not all of those whites were from Grenada, though no one knew how many came from where. Several of the merchants, infuriated that the federal court would let the pickets continue, had invited Klansmen from as far away as Neshoba County (where they were notorious for killing Schwerner, Cheney and Goodman). The local newspaper surveyed the license tags of cars parked in the downtown area and found that most were from other counties. The MSHP copied license plate numbers. Of course, it's always popular to blame trouble on "outsiders" (and SCLC staff were also outsiders), but outsiders and insiders on both sides held the same sentiments.

At a staff meeting on Monday, Hosea announced that since the whites among us were particular targets, whites shouldn't march, or at least shouldn't marshal a 20-person group. The white staff revolted. Hosea backed down. Then he said that women shouldn't marshal, as that made them particularly visible. He didn't say women shouldn't march; women were well over half the marchers. I was the only female staff member, but there were some local women who marshalled when there were too many marchers to assign a staffer to each 20-person group. I objected, very loudly. All staff should be treated equally I said. The white men didn't back me up. The local women weren't there (it was a staff meeting). I was ignored. I was infuriated.

As we filed out of the church that night, I stood by the entrance waiting to see how many would march. As I expected, we ran out of male marshals before we ran out of marchers. There had always been fewer adult men among our marchers; they liked to be in the first couple groups. I stared at Hosea, as if to dare him to tell a man who had never marshaled and hadn't volunteered to do so that he was being drafted – or to draft a young teenager who had never marshaled. Finally Hosea told me to go ahead and take a group. It was one of the last groups to form and it was all women. The irony is that the end of a march line is more dangerous than the beginning, or the middle, where the cops are. If it's a big march, by the end of the line there are few cops left to provide "protection." Hosea did make one concession to the potential violence. We didn't stop at city square for a rally as we had done on previous nights. We paused to sing one freedom song and left via a side street.

I later heard that after we returned to the church, the white men in city square marched into our neighborhood heading toward Belle Flower Church. According to press reports, they were stopped by the MSHP one block away. Thwarted, they returned to city square. A second group marched later, saying they would not be turned back. The highway patrol let them pass,

but kept them under surveillance. The whites only tarried for about ten minutes before returning to the city square, and eventually dispersing. (BN 7-26-66, 2)

The next day, July 26, Governor Johnson came to Grenada. He spent over three hours speaking to law enforcement officers and conferring with local officials and business leaders. He wanted them to cool down the militant whites, telling them that otherwise “Grenada might become another Bogalusa.” He pointed out that only innocent Negroes were being hurt, specifically referring to three who had been beaten by the white mob Saturday night as they left a movie theater. Quick intervention by the sheriff kept them from being killed, but they still had to go to the hospital. Insisting that law and order be maintained, the Governor said that if it had to be done by force, it would “cost the town’s business community dearly.” (FBI-LBJ 7-27-66; quotes in BN 7-27-66, 2)

His appeal worked. Using the same technique used when the Meredith March entered hostile towns in June, on Tuesday night the Grenada merchants mingled with the whites who had come to jeer and told them to stay cool or go home. Town officials set up a loud speaker at city square three hours before our marchers were expected to arrive urging everyone within hearing to not cause any trouble. By the time our 300 marchers reached city square only a few dozen white men were there to jeer. They did so haltingly; after we departed, so did they. (BN 7-27-66, 2)

This continued for about a week. Roughly one to three hundred of us marched every night to city square. Merchants stood in the streets a block away urging whites to stay away. Generally they did. After about a week, the number of whites waiting for us was down to a few dozen – we actually outnumbered them. On July 29, no whites waited for us in the square. The number of merchants waiting to discourage the whites also declined, probably to zero, though no one counted. The MSHP continued to watch everything. We resumed our rallies on the lawn, where officers of the Mississippi Game and Fish Commission surrounded the Confederate monument to make sure that we didn’t go near it. (FBI-LBJ 7-29- to 8-6-66)

This isn’t to say that *nothing* happened. The police turned to low-level harassment, repeatedly arresting us for trivia. Four of our young workers were arrested when the car they were in was in an intersection when the light changed. R.B. was arrested when he brushed up against a white woman while picketing. Charged with disorderly conduct, his bail was set at \$250. Eleven marchers were arrested for walking through a red light and one for intoxication. (FBI-LBJ 8-1-66 to 8-3-66) Locals told us that they had been fired from their jobs by employers who suspected that they marched with us. (<https://www.crmvet.org/docs/gren01.pdf>) Melzenia told us that her younger brother was threatened. Her father used that threat to demand that she drop out of the movement, but she refused. The county ended distribution of surplus food and food stamps under a USDA program which had benefitted roughly 4,800 persons in the county, mostly Negroes. Someone issued fake handbills saying “the blackout is over.... We will still march for Freedom.” (BN 8-2-65. 2; BAA 8-13-66, 2)

On July 30, Martin Dooley got into an argument with a deputy sheriff over whether they were picketing too close to a store entrance in violation of Judge’s Clayton’s rules. The next day

the cops arrested Robert Johnson, the local youth leader who had been in charge of that picket line, and put out a warrant for Day Patterson, whom they probably confused with Martin. Two hours later two local high school girls were arrested when they tried to visit Robert at the jail. Dooley and Patterson spoke to one of our lawyers because they were still on probation from their July 4 arrest. He advised them that they could be jailed immediately to serve that sentence and it might be best to just get out of town. Big Lester drove Martin to Memphis where he caught a bus for Atlanta. He spent the rest of the summer working with SCLC there. Day went to Jackson, where he stayed in the home of an Inc. Fund attorney for a few days before returning to Connecticut. (FBI-LBJ 8-1-66; Dooley ltr of 9-5-66; Patterson e-mail 3-4-19)

The evening of August 5, the GCFM held a fund raising party in Collins Café at Tie Plant –an unincorporated community about three miles south of Grenada. Its name came from a plant which produced railroad ties. Shortly after midnight, Sheriff Ingram and his deputies surrounded the building and threw teargas inside. As the partiers rushed out, 57 were arrested. They were charged with disturbing the peace, being drunk and carrying concealed weapons. Two SCLC staff – Herman Dozier and Leon Hall – were also charged with resisting arrest. (FBI-LBJ 8-8-66, 2)

Our marches and the hostile whites in the city square had an adverse affect on getting Negroes to register to vote; only 22 registered in the first ten days that federal examiners were at the Post Office. They moved to the Chat & Chew café on Union Street on Monday, August 8, because it was a safe location for Negroes register. Over 300 Negroes registered that first day and 1,100 by the next week. That night 500 marched to the café from the New Hope Baptist Church around 8:30 at night, believing that the federal examiners would still be working. When we found that they weren't, we held a rally out front. Hosea denounced the feds for closing early. Unbeknownst to us, the city council had told the police to start getting tough. The cops told us to clear the streets. Numbering several hundred, the crowd couldn't move out of the street fast enough. The cops threw tear-gas and waded in with billy clubs. They even chased people down the street into the yards of their own homes. Almost two dozen were injured. (*NYT* 8-9-66, 1, 24; *SC* 8-20/21-66, 1; Jaffe, 1966, 22) Dr. King responded by stating that he might send his entire staff to Grenada. (*CD* 8-10-66, 9; *WP* 8-10-66, A4)

The next afternoon Leon Hall led a children's march in the afternoon from Belle Flower to city square. Hosea held another rally that night in front of the Chat and Chew. It was only half a block from the white neighborhood we had to march through to get to city square. A large mob of whites was waiting for us on the other side of Commerce Street. They attacked the front of the line. The police pushed them back so we could continue our march, as required by the federal court. The mob of whites trotted up the street to city square, where they joined several hundred already there. When we reached city square, fire crackers and bottles, bricks and jagged pieces of metal came soaring through the night air. I wasn't near the front of the march line. By the time the 20-person section I was marshaling got near the square, we were pushed up against the store fronts by those ahead of us trying to get out of the way. There was a thin line of cops in the street between us and a crazed mob of whites thirsting for blood. The troopers faced *us*. Their rifles pointed at *us*. Their backs were to the mob that was yelling and jeering and throwing things over their heads at *us*. From what I could see of their faces, the cops looked like they were having a

good time. (*NYT* 8-10-66, 1; *LAT* 8-10-66, 1; *BN* 8-10-66, 1; *CD* 8-11-66, 4)

Like the other white workers, I was a favorite target for the UFOs. I dodged as they showered around me. The crowd of Negroes surged out and surrounded me, bringing me back into their midst. I knew they were trying to protect me, but that was counterproductive. My white face was still very visible and still a magnet, only now I couldn't dodge. One bottle bounced off my shoulder. Two firecrackers hit the back of one leg leaving small burns like a cigarette. Another bottle hit the top of my Achilles tendon. The people around me – my protectors – were also hit because they couldn't dodge either. We were there for several minutes. It's the one time that I was really scared. I learned later that there was some barrier keeping us from retreating. The cops finally removed it and we went back to the church. There, those with obvious burns and cuts were bandaged up. One young woman whose head was cut by a pipe was taken to the hospital. (*NYT* 8-11-66, 21; *LAT* 8-10-66, 1; *BN* 8-10-66, 1)

The next day Governor Johnson sent aide William Simpson and Giles Crisler, head of the MSHP riot squad, to Grenada to cool things down. The merchants went back to city square. The cops acquired some spunk. Over 150 troopers and 75 game and fish wardens guarded about 150 Negroes when they marched to city square. Two days of violence persuaded the press covering the SCLC convention in Jackson to take the two-hour drive to Grenada. Dozens of journalists and TV cameras from across the country came to film the confrontation. This time the troopers told the whites to move out when they began throwing things, and they did, though reluctantly. They still used sling-shots to throw steel balls over the heads of cops into the Negro demonstrators and later at passing cars with Negroes in them; 12 "slingshot shooters" were arrested. (*NYT* 8-11-66, 21; *BN* 8-11-66, 2; *Sun* 8-11-66, A5; FBI-LBJ 8-11-66; Jaffe, 1966, 22)

This march was almost all adult men. Having skipped the mostly peaceful marches for the last month, they wanted to show their bravery after two nights of attacks. They told the women and children to stay home. However, the leader of that march thought city square looked liked a trap; after reaching its edge he chose to take the men back to the safety of the Negro neighborhood rather than get clobbered as had happened the two nights before. Bruce later told me that the men were disappointed. They felt that they had been denied the opportunity to display their courage.

I wasn't at this march because I went to Jackson with several other staffers to hear Dr. King speak at SCLC's annual convention. This was the first time SCLC had met in Jackson. Those of us working in Grenada couldn't leave the movement unstaffed for the entire four days of the convention, but we got permission for a few of us to go for the third day when Dr. King was scheduled to speak. We missed hearing Sen. Edward Kennedy on Monday night while we were being teargassed. I got up very early and put on one of my two good suits for the drive to Jackson. The blow I had received the night before to my Achilles tendon had caused it to tighten so that I could barely hobble. When we entered the lobby of the King Edward hotel a middle-aged white man with a camera walked up and took my photo. I thought that strange since I wasn't anybody important. We didn't get to hear Dr. King speak because he was sick that day. Andy Young read his speech to the convention instead. (*BN* 8-9-66, 2; *WP* 10-11-66, A10)

Bob Fitch had put up a display of photos of the Meredith March in the lobby for everyone

to see. I was thrilled when I saw one of *my* photos among Bob's dozens. It showed a bunch of Ole Miss students standing on a car watching us pass. One wearing a Confederate flag shirt was giving us the finger. It was dramatic. The thought that Bob chose one of my photos for his exhibit made me feel really good. But when I saw Bob and thanked him, he looked crestfallen. It turned out that he had not intended to post anyone's photos but his own. He said that he would take it down. Now I was crestfallen. Later, when we were both in Atlanta, he asked me to give him the negative. I agreed. Bob had done a lot for me so I would not deny him. He had cut the film into strips of six negatives each to make the contact sheet. He cut out this frame and the one next to it and took them. He did make several prints for me of both photos, so I had something. Neither one of us knew anything about copyright law, so I didn't sign over my rights. We both used that photo in books we later published. Bob kept the negative and I kept the copyright.

On Thursday, after meeting with an Asst. State Attorney General, the city council passed another law banning all gatherings on the city square – shortly before we marched again. This march was small, composed mostly of children. Police surrounded the square, protecting it from entry while the children marched around the outside, heckled by a couple dozen whites. No one was arrested. On Friday, we decided to test the new ordinance. Led by Alphonso Harris and T. Y. Rogers, most of us walked around city square; 18 tried to get on the grass. They were shoved off by the cops and seven were arrested. Some whites threw cherry bombs at us; several tried to enter the square. The MSHP ordered them to leave and they did. The press were also shoved off city square as they tried to capture the scene with their cameras. One cop broke the light on an NBC camera. (MSSC report 8-26-66, 4; *BN* 8-12-66, 2; *NYT* 8-12-66, 16; *BAA* 8-20-66, 1; *FBI-LBJ* 8-13-66, 3)

After Tuesday's violence our lawyers asked Judge Clayton to find the police in contempt for failing to protect us from the white mobs. At his office in Oxford, MS, Clayton turned the preliminary injunction of July 22 into a permanent one. He ordered that all charges under the old parade ordinance be dismissed. Most of the 224 arrested so far had been charged with violating that ordinance. He ordered the head of the MSHP and various other officials to appear in federal court to show cause why they should not be held in contempt for failing to protect our marchers. The hearing wouldn't be held until September. (*BN* 8-12-66, 2; *NYT* 8-13-66, 8; *BAA* 8-20-66, 1; *SC* 8-20/21-66, 1; *Cunningham v. Ingram*, 1966)

On August 14, some of our people tried once again to enter the white First Baptist Church. They had been trying to do this for the last six Sundays. They were always denied entry. This time 19 were arrested. Two days later they were tried and found guilty of disturbing divine worship. They were each sentenced to 15 days in jail and fined \$150. Leon and Robert Johnson were also charged with trespassing and fined an extra \$100. Leon was released on bond while an appeal was filed; the others stayed in jail. Jim Bulloch was our only white worker to be arrested this time. While he was in jail, his car was firebombed. (*NYT* 8-15-66, 16; *LAT* 8-15-66, 18; *CD* 8-15-66, 3; *FBI-LBJ* 8-17-66)

The last two SCOPERS left at the end of the summer. Ron Gordon drove his VW bug back to California after SCLC paid to have it repaired. Joe Kerkvliet was the last to leave. His brother and sister-in-law drove to Grenada from Washington, DC in September to take him north in time

to start school. They stayed for a week to participate in the marches. The night before they departed, Hosea asked Joe to address the mass meeting in Belle Flower church. Joe long remembered “seeing the hope and determination on their faces.” (Kerkvliet e-mails of 3-8-19 and 4-12-19)



## Leaving Grenada

On Thursday, August 18, when I entered our office in Belle Flower church, the other workers asked me if I had seen the latest *Jackson Daily News*. I quickly discovered that “Mississippi's Greatest Newspaper,” as it called itself, had devoted two-thirds of its editorial page to an expose of my activities, mostly during my senior year at the University of California at Berkeley. (<https://www.jofreeman.com/sixtiesprotest/clipping.htm>)

“Professional Agitator Hits All Major Trouble Spots” blared the headline. It was accompanied by five photos – front, side, hair up and hair down, with and without glasses – including the photo taken at the SCLC convention hotel on August 10. The other four showed me demonstrating in Grenada on July 14, my July 7 mug shot after my arrest, one taken during the Meredith March, and one taken of me speaking from the second floor balcony of Sproul Hall during the big student sit-in on December 3, 1964, which resulted in 773 arrests. I had never seen any photos on an editorial page in other papers, let alone five.

The obvious purpose was to associate me with Communism, and by extension to imply that Communists were “stirring up racial turmoil in Grenada.” Citing the 1965 report of the California Senate’s Factfinding Subcommittee on UnAmerican Activities (SUAC) as its primary source, the editorial didn’t call me a Communist. It said I worked with Communists and was a member of a student organization for young Communists. It also informed its readers that I was “active in the Free Speech Movement” and a “sparkplug in the Filthy Speech Movement.”

It was the five photos, not the numerous false allegations, that prompted Hosea Williams to tell me to get on the next bus out of town. “This thing makes you Klan bait,” he said. “We don’t need more martyrs right now.”

If this had happened a year earlier, I would have resisted Hosea’s order to leave Mississippi. But after working in the South for over a year, I knew it meant that I was being set up to be taken down. The purpose of the five photos was so the potential shooter would aim at the right white girl. I knew that my presence put others in danger. Almost every time a civil rights worker had been exterminated, others had been killed or injured as well. I couldn’t let that happen. I did grab a couple newspapers and took the editorial pages with me in case I wanted to send the originals someplace. I said goodbye to Mr. and Mrs. Mullins, packed my bags and left, never to return to Grenada.

On the bus ride to Atlanta, I read and pondered the content of the editorial, wondering where the factual claims came from that weren’t in the SUAC report. For example, while that report had placed me in the FSM, it said nothing which would lead one to put me in the so-called Filthy Speech Movement. In fact there was no Filthy Speech Movement. There were just a few boys who walked around the edge of campus with signs that said FUCK. In those days, saying “nigger” would incur social disapproval (in Berkeley, not Mississippi); saying “fuck” in a public place could result in arrest (even in Berkeley). Legally, that word was considered obscene. While nine boys were arrested and four expelled, it was the press that portrayed it as a movement after the student newspaper editorialized that “there is absolutely no need for a Filthy Speech Movement.” (Freeman, 2004, 230-7)

There were other falsities. The *JDN* said I was 25, even though I had not yet reached my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. I suppose it was harder to portray a 20-year-old as a professional agitator than a 25-year-old. It gave dates for two of my arrests in 1964 which it said were in Berkeley “in connection with the youth insurrection on campus.” Those arrests were in San Francisco in connection with my participation in the Bay Area Civil Rights Movement.

At that time, calling someone a Communist was libel *per se*, if untrue. Instead the *JDN* resorted to guilt by association. The Communist it said I had worked with was Bettina Aptheker, a Berkeley student who had publicly admitted her membership in the CP only recently. Her father was a prominent Communist so we all assumed she had followed him into the party. I first met Bettina on election day in 1963 when we were assigned to the same precinct in a GOTV to elect the Democratic candidate to be Mayor of San Francisco. In 1964 we were both in the Free Speech Movement, but in different factions. So much for “working together.” My other alleged Communist association was my membership in SLATE, a campus political organization which was new left, not old. It focused on issues of civil rights and civil liberties. Even SUAC didn’t call it a Communist organization.

The claim that I was on the staff of *Spider*, a sometimes raunchy student magazine which only published for a few months in 1965, almost made me laugh. *Spider* devoted its back cover to an “atrociousness of the month,” featuring a white Citizens’ Council leaflet or something similar. In its third issue, I was the “atrociousness of the month.” I earned this distinction because I and a few others in the moderate faction of the FSM had engaged in secret discussions with the University President to see if there was a way to bring the conflict over free speech on campus to a conclusion without a major blow-up. Nothing came of our effort, and most of us were arrested when the blow-up finally happened. In the world of foreign affairs this would be called back channel diplomacy. To the radicals, it meant that I was a traitor. I was portrayed as such on the back cover of *Spider*; I certainly wasn’t on its staff. (Freeman, 2004, 226)

Back in Atlanta, I wrote letters to my mother and my friends explaining why I was no longer in Grenada. I thought the information in the editorial was planted by the FBI – who else would be able to provide photos from California and Berkeley? Also in Grenada that summer were a couple students with summer jobs investigating hospitals for HEW. Being northerners who were sympathetic to civil rights, they hung out with us. One told me that he had heard a couple FBI agents discussing me, though he didn’t know the details. My belief that the FBI had planted the editorial was reinforced many years later when the FBI’s cointelpro actions against the Civil Rights Movement in general and its persecution of Dr. King in particular were revealed. Not until 1997 did I discover that the actual source of the editorial and photos was the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, an official state agency of which I was completely unaware in 1966.

When the MSSC was officially dissolved on March 4, 1977, the legislature ordered the files transferred to the Department of Archives and History (MDAH) and closed until 2027. By then some records had been destroyed or lost. The remaining six file cabinets plus a few boxes were sealed in the MDAH vault where they sat for two decades. After twenty years of litigation by the Mississippi chapter of the ACLU and several federal court orders, the files were opened for public inspection on March 17, 1998. A friend of mine sent me an ad from the January 27, 1997 issue of the *Wall Street Journal* inviting anyone who suspected their activities in Mississippi had been monitored to apply for a copy of their files. In my MSSC file I found the

source of the “information” the *Jackson Daily News* had used in its August 18, 1966 editorial. It wasn't the FBI. (Rowe-Sims, 1999)

The MSSC had its own informant on the Berkeley campus. From 1964 through 1967, Edgar Downing regularly supplied the MSSC with information on Berkeley students. Described by an MSSC investigator as a “professional informer” with a “Communist record for approximately 24 years,” Downing was a native of McComb, Mississippi, who lived and worked as a welder in Long Beach, California, some 500 miles south of Berkeley. His avocation was collecting information on “leftists” of varying hues and selling it. During the three years he informed for the MSSC, Downing occasionally returned home to Mississippi. In the summer of 1966, he went to Grenada, Mississippi where he took photos of our demonstrations, including some of me. (Freeman, 2003)

Southern segregationists fished for connections between events, incidents and people, no matter how flimsy, which supported their belief in Communist control of the civil rights movement. Downing recognized me as one of the Berkeley students that he had photographed in 1964 and told MSSC director Erle Johnston. Johnston, who had graduated from Grenada High School in 1935, paid Downing for “valuable information and a wide variety of photographs of some of the professional agitators who have been in Grenada and Jackson, and, also, at other riots and demonstrations in the nation.” He drafted an editorial linking “Communism” with “civil rights” and “outside agitator” from “Berkeley” at the expense of facts and sent it to Jimmy Ward, editor of the *Jackson Daily News*. The *JDN* and the morning paper the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* were owned by the Hederman family, who were charter members of the state’s white power structure. Ward’s editorials reflected their commitment to segregation and white supremacy. (Freeman, 2003; Davies, 2001, 85-109)

## Meeting the Kings

Back in Atlanta SCLC didn't know what to do with me. I worked for Hosea, but his focus was on Grenada and I could no longer work in Grenada. While no one said anything, I knew that the *Jackson Daily News* expose' made me a liability in any field assignment. At some point, the local newspaper, or even the white Citizens' Council, would discover my past and use it to claim that SCLC was a Communist front. If I wanted to stay with SCLC, I needed a job that would keep me in the shadows. What could I do?

SCLC had recently hired a new public relations director. Tom Offenburger had been the Southern bureau chief for the weekly newsmagazine *U.S. News and World Report* for ten years. He did not have a secretary so the office next to his was empty. It had a desk and an electric typewriter. I was given the job of answering Dr. King's "easy" mail until that chair was filled by a secretary. Dozens and dozens of letters addressed to Dr. King arrived daily. Most were pretty straightforward. The writers described situations, expressed opinions, occasionally asked for information or pleaded for help. Someone had prepared a series of form letters to answer the most common questions, or just to acknowledge the letter and thank the writer. My job was to pick the right form letter and type it, making it appear as though it had been composed specially for that correspondent. If the letter I was answering was complex, I could mix and match sentences from several of the form letters. The trick was to sound original without actually being original. If I found a letter not answerable with sentences from the form letters, I had to pass it on. I don't know who answered the hard letters.

I often wondered who signed these letters for Dr. King. I heard that his secretary, Dora McDonald, did that, but there were so many letters requiring his signature that one person signing them all would have used up a lot of time better spent on real work. I knew there were signature machines that could be programmed to duplicate a particular signature over and over again but I didn't see one in the SCLC office. I only knew about them because in the summer of 1962 I had done some volunteer work in the Washington office of Jim Corman, who represented my mother's District in Congress. Rep. Corman knew me because my mother was a stalwart worker in the local Democratic club who had worked hard for his re-election. That summer I had a job as a clerk-typist in the Navy Department in DC, arranged by an aunt who was a civilian employee of the Navy. It was a boring job. I showed up at Rep. Corman's Congressional office hoping to do something interesting, and learn a thing or two, after my normal working hours. That was my first experience in "answering" mail. The office had a couple of automatic typewriters which were programmed to type specific replies to queries about specific issues. My job was to put a piece of Congressional stationery into the typewriter, adjust the platen, type the name and address plus Dear X, and push a button. The typewriter did the rest. Corman's signature was added by a different machine. Answering Dr. King's mail gave me a little more choice of content than answering Rep. Corman's, but I also had to do the typing.

I sometimes chatted with Mr. Offenburger who was just breaking into his new job on the PR side of the news business, writing press releases and taking phone calls from the press. He answered his own phone, but occasionally asked me to type a press release. The idea entered my

head that I could be his assistant and learn something about public relations. But I didn't want to be his secretary; I didn't want to be anyone's secretary. When I suggested this to him, he neither encouraged nor discouraged me. He didn't make hiring decisions and he hadn't been there long enough to ask for an assistant. The most he could expect was a secretary and no one had been hired for that job. He told me to see Randolph Blackwell, SCLC's program director, who had responsibility for overall administration of SCLC. Blackwell had been brought into SCLC in 1964 from the Atlanta Voter Education Project where he had been the field director. He moved more into administration as Andy Young moved out of it. Randolph Blackwell was willing to talk to me. He didn't leave me sitting outside his office for an entire day as Andy Young had done nine months earlier without ever explaining why he had taken me off subsistence. But that was all he was willing to do. Looking at the young woman sitting in front of him, all he could see was a potential secretary. He said SCLC didn't need any more secretaries and wasn't hiring any right now. He implied that SCLC was running out of money and couldn't hire anyone new, which was why Tom Offenburger still didn't have a secretary.

My 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was fast approaching. I wondered if there was any way I could celebrate it. In California, one became a legal adult on ones 21<sup>st</sup> birthday, able to vote and drink. To celebrate, friends escorted you to a bar on that day, where you bought your first legal drink. That wasn't going to happen in Atlanta. No one at the Freedom House even knew my 21<sup>st</sup> was near and I didn't know anyone well enough to tell them. I didn't like alcohol, so I certainly wasn't going to go to a bar by myself. Since Georgians could vote at age 18 and I had already registered to vote, turning 21 might not even mean anything special in this state. While I was pondering what to do, Cathy Deppe sent me an invitation to her wedding, on August 28<sup>th</sup> in Glen Ellyn, near Chicago. She was marrying George Touchton, a fellow student at the University of Illinois whom she had met when they both worked in Birmingham for SCLC's Christmas project. My mother had always told me that if I wanted a present, I should just give one to myself so I decided to go to Cathy's wedding as my birthday present to myself.

As I had done the Spring before, I hitchhiked to save money. It was an uneventful trip. I stayed in Cathy's home with her mother, Florence Deppe. I really loved Cathy's family. They were warm and inviting, so unlike my Mitchell relatives. They completely supported her work for civil rights. As luck would have it, George's parents lived in south Georgia so I got a ride back and didn't have to hitch. When I returned to the SCLC office, I learned that Blackwell had left SCLC to head the Southern Rural Action Project which would fund self-help ventures. Tom Offenburger still didn't have a secretary.

I soon discovered that once a week anyone in SCLC who wanted a good meal went to dinner at the Mennonite House, which was nearby. It was run by Vincent and Rosemary Freney Harding, a black couple in their 30s who began their work with the Mennonite Church in Chicago in the late 1950s and moved to Atlanta in 1961 to be part of the movement. Mennonite House was both their home and an interracial, voluntary service center. In the dining room was a very large hand-built wooden table at which were served scrumptious meals, interlaced with interesting conversation. Most of the people I met around that table were white, but not with SCLC. Most of the Negroes were SCLC subsistence workers who lived in the Freedom House and came to dinner every week. I don't remember seeing anyone from SNCC.

The number of women I shared the women's bedroom with in the Freedom House varied from night to night as staff and volunteers came and went. Five bunk beds meant there was room for ten. SCOPers on their way home sometimes stayed a couple nights before going to the Atlanta airport. A couple of the office workers slept there every night. I found the sheer quantity of roommates and lack of floor space to be uncomfortable. One consequence of being an only child of a single parent was that I was used to having my own space. While in college I'd never had more than one roommate and most years I had my own room. Living in the Freedom House I couldn't find any solitude. My body responded to this deprivation in its own way. I went to sleep earlier and earlier and got up earlier and earlier. At 4:00 a.m. no one else was up. I could go downstairs and type letters or read without any disturbance. No one said anything, but I had the impression that others found that a little weird. For me, a certain amount of solitude was just as necessary as food and sleep.

I slowly came to the conclusion that it was time to leave SCLC. I couldn't see myself living at the Freedom House indefinitely and SCLC wasn't going to offer me a job paying enough to get my own place elsewhere in Atlanta. I would like to have gone to a rural county and continued doing field work for a while at least, but I knew I couldn't. I would probably be "exposed" again for my FSM activities and my mention in the *SUAC Report*. I also sensed that there was no longer a place for a white "outside agitator" in a rural county. We were catalysts. We brought outside attention to undemocratic, racist practices in the South. We made local Negroes feel like someone cared. And we did a lot of work. But the next step required local Negroes to organize themselves into voting blocks and elect people who would listen to them. That was best done by people whose roots were in those local communities, not outsiders, and certainly not white outsiders.

At Hosea's request, I went to Selma but there was nothing going on there so I returned to Atlanta after five days. The Grenada project was erupting but I couldn't go back. Having been labeled a "commiesymp" and "professional agitator" in the *Jackson Daily News* editorial, my presence would just be a distraction. When Dr. King went to Grenada on September 19, joined by Joan Baez, I desperately wanted to be there. Not only was I missing all the action around desegregating the Grenada schools, but I had always wanted to meet Joan Baez. She was the only performer on my most-admired list, largely because she had stayed with the Berkeley Free Speech Movement when we occupied the administration building on December 2, 1964. She led us into the building and then sat-in with us for about eleven hours. However, she was surrounded by the radicals, who hated me because I was the organizer of the moderate faction, so I made no attempt to sit near-by or even speak to her. Grenada was my next best chance and I was missing it. (Freeman, 2004, 209)

I debated whether to go to Chicago, where there were SCLC staff I could go to for help in finding a place to stay, or back to New York, which I had enjoyed the Spring before. I also had a jail sentence to serve in California, though I wasn't ready to do that just yet. SCLC had a policy of giving retiring staff a ticket "home" so I lobbied for a ticket to California since that would give me the most money to live off of until I found a way to earn more. Hosea wasn't ready for me to leave, even though he didn't know what to do with me. I finally told Hosea my time had come, even though I knew I didn't really have enough money to go any place. He blew his top;

told me that I was a smart-assed white bitch who was finking out on the movement, etc. etc. Classic Hosea. He knew how to make you feel wanted!

SCLC's shortage of funds opened a door that I wasn't even looking for. Someone asked if I would be willing to work as Mrs. King's assistant. I had no idea what the job involved, but it sounded good to me. Mrs. King once had a full time assistant, earning a real salary paid by SCLC. However, SCLC was trying to cut costs and that was an obvious cut to make. Dr. King only received a salary of \$1 a year as president of SCLC; his "day job" as assistant minister of Ebenezer Baptist Church didn't pay enough to hire a full time aide for his wife. I was paid only \$25 week and was sleeping at the Freedom House, where I didn't pay rent. SCLC could afford me, at least for a while. I knew it wasn't meant to be a long-term job.

Coretta Scott King was raised in the rurals of Perry County, Alabama a few miles from the county seat of Marion. She took a bus to Marion to go to high school, from which she graduated in 1945 as the valedictorian. She followed her older sister to Antioch College in Ohio on a scholarship. Mrs. King was 39 when I met her, two years older than her famous husband. They had met in Boston where she was studying to be a concert singer at the New England Conservatory of Music and he was doing graduate work in theology at Boston University.

Mrs. King was the most gracious woman I had ever met – outgoing, pleasant, and constantly thinking about others. One of my jobs was to run her errands. Often that involved getting something that she wanted to give to someone else. I think my primary job was just to listen. She had many things on her mind and I was a safe person with whom to let them out. We didn't run in the same circles; nothing she told me was likely to be circulated and get back to her in an altered form. In fact, I said nothing about our conversations to anyone. Instinctively, I knew that what she told me was not meant to be shared. Besides the obvious concerns of caring for her family, she was very interested in politics, which was one of my favorite topics. She didn't say much about internal SCLC politics, but I did learn that Dr. King's inner circle consisted of his best friend, Ralph Abernathy, Bernard Lee and Andy Young. I'd never met Bernard Lee, though I had certainly seen him. He had been a student leader at Alabama State College during the Montgomery bus boycott, from which he was expelled for leading demonstrations. Lee became Dr. King's personal assistant. Dr. King used Lee's home as a quiet place to write his books. At his home or the SCLC office there would have been too many distractions.

Peace was Mrs. King's primary issue. She had joined Women's Strike for Peace years ago and spoken out against the war in Viet Nam while her husband was still thinking about it. Her anti-war statements didn't get the publicity that his would get so she didn't have to worry about a backlash. I had heard Dr. King speak against war at the 1965 SCLC convention when it was just one of many topics he covered. Mrs. King was one of the main speakers at the anti-war rally I had attended with other SCLC staff over the 1965 Thanksgiving weekend. She was pleased to learn that we were there. I'm sure she pushed him to be more outspoken against the war. He would lead his first anti-war march in Chicago in March of 1967.

What impressed me most was how she juggled the competing demands of being a minister's wife, the mother of four children, and her desire to have her own career as a

professional singer. The married women I knew in California were helpmates and extensions of their husbands. That's what white society told them they were supposed to be and, as far as I could tell, that's all they were. She was her own person. While her time was certainly eaten up with the needs of her husband, church, and family, she still did her own thing. By doing freedom concerts to raise money for SCLC she pursued her singing career as a contribution to the movement.

When I first went to her home at 234 Sunset Ave. in the Vine City section of Atlanta, it looked like a modest brick house from the front. But it was a very long house that seemed to stretch back and back and back. It had a full basement and a two car garage on what was a relatively modest lot. In the front was a large living and dining room. The four kids shared two bedrooms and a playroom. Dr. King had a study separate from his and Mrs. King's master bedroom. There were also multiple bathrooms. They had just moved there in 1965, so she was still decorating it to her taste.

One night in early October Mrs. King invited me to stay for dinner. We'd been working together most of the day and Dr. King was out of town. The kids were excited about going to the Georgia State Fair the coming weekend. I was answering Dr. King's mail, had shaken his hand a couple times and heard him preach at Ebenezer, but I had never actually conversed with him. Since I was staff, I felt that I shouldn't intrude in those occasions when we were in the same place, such as the SCLC conventions or the Meredith March. But I did want to actually talk with him before I left, so I carefully lobbied for a dinner invitation when he was home. Mrs. King did better than that. She invited me to go to the Fair on Saturday with the family. I could help her keep the kids from running all over the place and getting lost.

Harky Klinefelter was also going. Originally from New Jersey, Harcourt Klinefelter III was a student at the Yale Divinity School when he answered Dr. King's call for ministers to come to Selma. He had prior experience with recording devices, so soon went on staff as the person in charge of recording Dr. King's speeches, editing them into radio programs and sending them to radio and TV stations. I wasn't sure if Harky was bringing any recording devices to the fair with us, but I brought my camera.

The Georgia State Fair had long since desegregated so our integrated group did not evoke the hostility it might have received in Alabama or Mississippi. We still attracted some attention. The kids wanted to go on the rides, not see any of the exhibits. Dr. King was interested in the exhibits, but he went on a couple rides. I shot some photos of the family on the roller coaster, which I also rode. I could tell he was quite tired, but he still graciously shook the hands and spoke to everyone who approached him. I started keeping an informal tally of those who asked for an autograph or a photo or just a few words. The final count was 27 whites and seven Negroes. There were more whites at the fair than Negroes, but not four times more.

Watching this made me realize that I should probably get his autograph before I left SCLC. I regretted not bringing one of his books with me, but until I witnessed total strangers come up and ask him to sign something I didn't think to do it myself. Later in the afternoon, when we were all sitting and eating, I screwed up the courage to ask for an autograph. I had a



small notebook with me, which I pulled out and handed to him. He wrote: “To Jo We Shall Overcome Martin Luther King Jr.” Of course I would have liked something more personal, but those words filled the small page; he didn’t really know me well enough to write something personal. I wrote 10-8-66 in the upper right corner so I would always know the date when I finally talked with Dr. King.

I gave my roll of film to Bob Fitch, expecting him to develop it and give me the negatives and a contact sheet, as he had done with my other rolls. I never saw that film again or any photos from it. When I found Bob living in California fifty years later, I asked him, via e-mail, what happened to that film. He didn’t reply to that question, no matter how many times I asked, though he did tell me other things. I hope those photos of the King family at the Georgia State Fair did not meet an untimely demise. Now, they would be classics.

While lobbying for a ticket to California, I had a conversation with SCLC’s Al Lingo, who was now living in a religious commune called the Ecumenical Institute on the west side of Chicago. He said that I could stay there until I got my bearings. I decided that Chicago would be my first stop; if it didn’t work out I’d go back to San Francisco to serve my sentence and then figure out what to do next. Or maybe I’d go to New York. I also discovered that the airlines had something new called “youth fare.” Those under 22 could buy a youth fare pass and use it to fly stand-by for half price anywhere in the country. SCLC finally gave me \$70 for a bus ticket to California. On Oct. 18 I went to the airport with my two suitcases, bought a youth fare pass for \$3 from Eastern Airlines and a plane ticket to Chicago for \$21.53. I was finally leaving SCLC – or so I thought at the time.

## The Georgia Primary

One benefit of being run out of Mississippi in August was that I was in Georgia for the September 14 primary. Negroes in the rural counties were making their first efforts since Reconstruction to run for office. As in Alabama, they ran into lots of hurdles and traps. In Taliaferro County, Calvin Turner and five other Negroes tried to qualify as candidates for the county's Democratic Executive Committee (DEC). Four failed because party officials wouldn't give them the correct information about the deadline to file qualifying papers. Their appeal to the state DEC resulted in a hearing, but no relief. Turner also complained that the county DEC appointed only three Negroes out of 20 people to run the polls in a county where Negroes were 62 percent of the population and a majority of registered voters. There were similar complaints in other Georgia counties. (USCCR, 1968, 49-52, 111-14, 137)

Atlanta was tense, having endured several days of rioting only a week earlier. As in other cities, it started when the police shot and wounded a Negro suspected of robbery who was trying to avoid arrest. Sentiments were inflamed when SNCC staffers called for a neighborhood rally to protest the shooting. The police arrested two SNCCers for making incendiary statements. Someone in the crowd threw rocks at the cops, who proceeded to teargas the neighborhood. Gov. Sanders sent in a hundred Georgia State Patrolmen to quell the riot. (Carson, 1981, 225-5; *CT* 9-7-66, 1; *LAT* 9-7-66, 1; *NYT* 9-7-66, 1, 38; 9-11-66, 56) Two days later, Stokely was arrested and charged with inciting a riot. On Saturday a Negro youth was shot by two whites. More disturbances led to 58 arrests, including Hosea, Ben, and Junius Griffin, who said they were trying to quell the disturbance. (*LAT* 9-9-66, 5; 9-11-66, 1; 9-13-66, 25) These disturbances left a lot of angry Negroes and a lot of frightened whites. That fear may have led to more votes for the outspoken segregationists among the candidates.

Julian Bond won his second Democratic primary for the Georgia House of Representatives. His opponent was the dean of students at Atlanta University, whom he had trounced once before, on June 16, 1965, by 2,305 to 486. Denied his seat when the Georgia legislature convened in January because of statements he made opposing the war in Viet Nam, the resulting legal case was still awaiting a decision by the Supreme Court. Bond then won a special election called for February 23, as the only candidate in the race. Still denied his seat, he ran again in the regular Democratic primary and won 1,317 to 1,267. The riots probably suppressed the turnout. The next day Bond resigned from SNCC, but refused to say why. (*NYT* 6-17-65, 20; 9-16-66, 22; *BAA* 9-17-66, 8; 9-24-66, 13)

There were six candidates for Governor in the Democratic primary: Lester Maddox, Ellis Arnall, Jimmy Carter, James H. Gray, Garland T. Byrd, and Hoke O'Kelley. As a former Governor of Georgia (1943-1947), Arnall was the only one who stood a chance against Maddox. During his first term he had been about as moderate on race as a Deep South governor could be. When a federal district court followed the lead of the Supreme Court and abolished Georgia's white primary in 1945, Arnall had not encouraged evasive measures to keep Negroes out as had other governors. He had called for repeal of the poll tax and seen it enacted into law. But he defended segregation, which was necessary to get elected, at least in the 1940s. (*King v. Chapman*, 1945, 1946; McDonald, 2003, 50-51, 85)

Part of the task of preparing for the Georgia primary wasn't just getting Negroes to

register to vote, but getting those who were registered to switch to the Democratic Party so they could vote in the primary to keep Maddox from getting the nomination. Many were still registered Republicans who did not, traditionally, vote for Democrats. Daddy King had voted Republican and made sure that his sons did so as well, until 1960 when JFK phoned Dr. King's wife to express sympathy when he was in jail. (Branch, 1988, 366) Many Negroes followed suit that November while staying registered as Republicans. To vote in the Democratic primary they needed to become registered Democrats.

Voting in Atlanta was a very different procedure than I was accustomed to in California.<sup>1</sup> Instead of a paper ballot, we were handed IBM cards with the candidates' names on them. Voters had to punch holes in the appropriate spots which would be counted by machines. Having been a poll watcher in California (even though I was too young to vote), I wondered how one prevented fraud if representatives of the various candidates couldn't watch the counting. I didn't trust computers or the people who ran them. Nor was there an obvious way to cast a write-in ballot. When I told the election clerk that I wanted to write in a name she didn't know what to do. It took me ten minutes of arguing to persuade her that I was serious, fifteen minutes for the collective clerks to figure out how to do it, five minutes to find the special envelope required, and another fifteen minutes of waiting in line at another polling booth.

Ellis Arnall won a plurality of 45,000 votes that day, but not a majority, thanks to the votes given to Jimmy Carter and James Gray. Lester Maddox came in second. Georgia law required a run-off where the winner did not receive a majority of the vote in the primary. When it was held on September 28, both sides pulled out all the stops to generate a heavy turnout. The radio in the Freedom House was turned to a local Negro station all day long, which blared out that everyone who voted would receive a free ticket to a festival, but only those who voted. The Freedom House was in an all-Negro precinct; I'm sure the poll officials knew that the few whites voting there that day worked for SCLC. This time I didn't try to buck the system by casting a write-in vote, I played it safe by voting for Arnall. As I dropped my IBM card into the box the polling clerk gave me a ticket to the festival in the City Auditorium. Upon reading it I learned that the whole affair was sponsored by St. Sen. Leroy Johnson, who was also chairman of the Georgia Democratic Conference. This was a Negro Democratic Party organization which was in disfavor with SCLC.

Mine was one of a sprinkling of white faces at a packed City Auditorium that night. The crowd listened to a 7-man white combo and a succession of all-Negro performers as the election results poured in. Sen. Johnson was introduced as the benefactor and sponsor of the whole affair. However, no one left happy. When the votes were counted, Lester Maddox had won. He would be the nominee of the Democratic Party on the November ballot.

Usually the winner of the Democratic primary faced only token opposition from the Republican candidate in November. But the South was changing, and the Republicans were the beneficiaries of white flight from the Democratic Party. Hollis Howard "Bo" Callaway was the

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<sup>1</sup> I wasn't old enough to vote when I lived in California, but I had worked the polls at several elections. When I was a child, my mother took me into the polling booth with her to show me how to mark a ballot. Thus I was quite knowledgeable about the process even if I hadn't voted myself.

first Republican Congressman from Georgia since Reconstruction and he almost became the first Republican Governor. Elected in 1964, he had switched parties as had many other Democrats because he did not support Lyndon Johnson's progressive program or his civil rights policies. He won by a substantial margin even though he was a political novice but gave up running for re-election to run for Governor. Right after the Democratic primary he launched his campaign with a "Go Bo" parade where candidates and celebrities rode in vintage cars and wore 1890s outfits. That decade had been the last hurrah of the Republican Party in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

Almost seventy years later, a more conservative Republican Party was coming back, populated by conservative former Democrats who wouldn't have graced the 1890s Republican Party with their spit. I wasn't around in November so didn't know that Hosea and two other Georgia Negro leaders were asking Negroes to cast a write-in vote for Arnall rather than choose between the old Democratic reactionary or the new Republican one. Callaway won the popular vote but by less than half a percent. However, he too didn't get a majority since a little over 6% of the voters wrote in Arnall's name. This threw the election into the state legislature, still dominated by the Democratic Party. It chose stalwart segregationist Lester Maddox to be the next Governor of Georgia. Eleven members of the legislature refused to vote for either Callaway or Maddox. One of those was Julian Bond, who took his oath on January 9 without challenge. The Supreme Court had ruled on December 6 that the Georgia House could not exclude him because of his publicly stated views on the Viet Nam war and the military draft. (*WP* 11-6-66, A5; 1-10-67, A2; *NYT* 1-14-67, 29; McDonald, 2003, 140; *Bond v. Floyd*)

## School Desegregation in Grenada, Mississippi

When Inc. Fund attorney Henry Aronson was shot at outside Belle Flower church on July 9, he was there to talk to potential plaintiffs about a class action lawsuit against the Grenada School District demanding that it desegregate its schools. He found six parents willing to file for their eleven children. The named plaintiffs in *Cunningham v. Grenada School District* were the son and daughter of our local leader, the Rev. Sharper T. Cunningham. The complaint asked the federal court to enjoin the school district from “operating a compulsory biracial school district.” It said that the school district maintained four schools restricted to Negroes and four restricted to whites. The former were distinctly inferior to the latter. The Negro schools were not accredited, they used worn-out books handed down from the white schools, they had no library or gymnasium, they were overcrowded with a high pupil/teacher ratio, and the buildings were small and inadequate. There was more, but it was essentially the same litany as was true of schools all over the South. Plaintiffs’ attorneys asked for a quick hearing and a quick injunction in time for the start of the school year.

Judge Claude Feemster Clayton issued a preliminary injunction on July 26, ordering desegregation to proceed with “all deliberate speed.” He gave the school district *one school year*, from September 1966 to September 1967. Students could change schools in 1966. Teachers could remain in their assigned school in 1966-67. The school district was required to produce a program designed to eliminate race discrimination among teachers and staff by the beginning of the 1967 school year. He ordered the defendant school district to submit its desegregation plan by August 2 and plaintiffs to submit objections by August 10. On August 26, Judge Clayton ordered that beginning with the current school year, “all grades of all schools ... shall be operated on a completely racially, non-discriminatory basis.” Since the Freedom of Choice system would be used, this required Negro students and their parents to take the initiative to integrate the schools. (quote in *Cunningham v. Grenada School Dist.*, 1966, 1779)

On Monday, August 29, 300 students and their parents went to the Negro high school to pick up the forms. By Thursday, 450 Negro children had registered to attend two white schools in the middle of town. This was an unprecedented number for a small school district, reflecting the fact that the GCFM was still going strong. Classes were supposed to start the following week, but were postponed supposedly to get ready. In fact, employers and landlords put pressure on the parents to pull their children out of the white schools and enroll them in the Negro schools. About half did so.

The first day of class was marred by violence. On Monday, September 12, state troopers escorted about 90 Negro children to the two formerly white schools in the middle of town. One of them was Melzenia’s younger brother. They were met by a couple hundred whites armed with the same pipes and chains they used to threaten our marchers. While the escorted children got into the schools, latecomers did not. When school ended at noon, several dozen small groups of white men were still roaming the streets looking for Negroes. The children were chased and bashed as they tried to leave the school grounds. White men used their fists and feet. White women used their voices, cursing the Negroes and urging on their men. The state troopers were

nowhere in sight and the city police just watched. The Negro students, and the parents who had come to take them home, retreated into the school, where they stayed for two hours until the sheriff agreed to escort them to the Belle Flower church, only a few blocks away. They left in groups of 25, accompanied by patrol cars. Whites went to city square to wait for the usual afternoon march. SCLC estimated that 33 people had been beaten by the end of the day. Three Negro children had been hospitalized, one with a cracked cranium and another with a broken leg. Whites also attacked anyone who looked like a journalist, especially photographers, downing and beating three of them. (*NYT* 9-13-66, 1; *Sun* 9-13-66, A5; *WP* 9-13-66, A1; *CD* 9-13-66, 4; 9-15-66, 3; 9-17-66, 5; *BAA* 9-24-66, 1) That night 400 whites held a rally in the city auditorium from which press were ejected. They demanded that the MSHP be withdrawn “so we can take care of our niggers.” They applauded the forced resignation of City Manager John McEachern, a moderate segregationist who had asked the state to send in the troopers. (quote in *NYT* 9-13-66, 27)

The different levels of government responded differently, each to a different audience. Local government responded to the whites who met Monday night. One city official pointed out that none of those who had attacked the children had been arrested and there was no intention to do so. State government had the feds and national publicity in mind when Gov. Paul Johnson denounced the attacking whites as “hoodlums.” He sent in one of his assistants. Herman Glazier announced that those engaging in violence would be arrested and no outside interference was needed. Glazier told the press that far from being withdrawn, the troopers would patrol the town. Gov. Johnson said that the MSHP would remain in Grenada. On the federal level, HEW Secretary John Gardner announced that the Grenada School District was one of those about to lose its federal funds. The DoJ requested an injunction from Judge Clayton charging local officials and law enforcement with “willfully refusing to protect Negro children from a crowd of armed whites.” (*NYT* 9-13-66, 27; 9-16-66, 34; *BAA* 9-3-66, 3; *CD* 9-3-66, 29; quote in 9-14-66, 3)

Tuesday morning about a hundred students assembled at Belle Flower Church. The plan was to drive them to the schools a few blocks away. As the cars entered a white section of town, they were hit with rocks and pipes. Jeering whites screamed and yelled at the Negro children inside. When car windows broke, several children were hurt by the glass. Others were hit by pipes through the shattered windows. Some whites rocked a car, trying to turn it over. About 30 students made it to the school. The mob had already attacked attorney Henry Aronson as he waited just outside the school for the Negro children to arrive. He was talking to Constable Grady Carroll, who watched impassively and ignored his cries for help. Only after the assaults, did the troopers move in. The only one arrested was SCLC staffer Major Wright as he escorted two mothers and eight children to the elementary school. (*NYT* 9-14-66, 1; *CD* 9-15-66, 3; *WP* 9-15-66, A2) When school let out at 3:00 p.m., our staff and some parents walked to the school to escort the children to Belle Flower church from where they could go home. By then, the troopers had set up a security perimeter around the two schools. They wouldn’t let anyone through, whether marauding whites or our escorts. When the children were let out, they met their parents at the perimeter who took them safely back to the Negro neighborhoods.

Judge Clayton issued a TRO telling law enforcement to protect the students. He

scheduled the hearing for an injunction for Thursday, September 15, and ordered the schools to close that day because too many personnel involved in protection would have to be in his Oxford courtroom at the hearing. (*Cunningham v. Grenada School Dist.*, 1966, 1781; *U. S. v. City of Grenada*, 1966, 1782; *Sun* 9-14-66, A3; *CD* 9-15-66, 3; *WP* 9-15-66, A2) All was quiet on Wednesday. Fewer than one hundred students went to the two schools, escorted by 150 troopers. No mob was present; no UFOs were thrown.

At the hearing, students, parents, reporters, and FBI agents all testified to the violence of the first two days the schools were open and the lackadaisical attitude of law enforcement. There were too many witnesses for one day, so the hearing was continued to the next day. After consulting with law enforcement, the court let the schools open on Friday. Teachers, pupils and parents were escorted to the barricades by the MSHP; there were no incidents. (*WP* 9-17-66, A4) Judge Clayton issued first a preliminary injunction and then a permanent one. (*U. S. v. City of Grenada*, 1966, 1783) He said the attacks by “thugs and hoodlums” were “savage, senseless and futile.” He was even more astonished by the failure of authorities to prevent the beatings of the Negro students. He sentenced Grady Carroll to four months in prison for contempt of court. This was an old charge, stemming from the previous July when he had punched Peter Eikenberry of the Lawyers’ Committee as he tried to serve a subpoena on Carroll. (*Sun* 9-16-66, A8; quotes in *NYT* 9-17-66, 26; *BAA* 9-24-66,1; Eikenberry, 2009) Grady Carroll would begin his sentence September 24. (*Sun* 9-18-66, 3)

The day after the hearing the FBI arrested 13 of the men who had beaten the Negro students on Monday. One of these was Constable Carroll’s son, Wilbur Ray, 24. Another was Justice of the Peace Richard Ayers, 48, who had jurisdiction over a lot of our arrests. They were released on \$1,000 bonds after being charged with violating the civil rights of the Negro students, who were entering the schools under a federal court order. These were the men who had been dismissed as “hoodlums” by state and local authorities to differentiate them from responsible white citizens who believed in law and order. (*NYT* 9-18-66, 1; *CD* 09-19-66, 3; *Sun* 9-18-66, 3; 18 U.S.C. 241) Fourteen Members of Congress sent a telegram to A.G. Katzenbach urging federal indictments. (*CD* 9-24-66, 10) On October 11, a federal grand jury met in Greenville, over a hundred miles from Grenada, and indicted five of the 13, including the Justice of the Peace. The indictment was later dismissed on a technicality. In April eight of the men were indicted. At their trial in May/June of 1967, the defendants were identified by the students they had kicked and beaten, by some of the police who watched them, and by the white principal. Nonetheless, all were acquitted by an all-white, all-male jury after a little over three hours of deliberation. Mississippi was still Mississippi. (*NYT* 10-5-66, 25; *BAA* 10-15-66, 13; *CD* 5-29-65, 1; 6-1-67, 6; 6-8-67, 7)

On September 17, SCLC announced that Dr. King would visit Grenada the following week joined by folksinger Joan Baez. He arrived Monday night, accompanied by Andy Young. Dr. King told 1,000 people at New Hope Baptist Church that “whether we want it or not, whites and blacks in this country are tied together inseparably.” Afterwards, 600 people walked two miles to city square. Our people had marched most of the month, even during the violence, but not that many or that far. Everyone wanted to march with Dr. King. He said that he wanted to meet with city leaders, but they rejected his request. Baez and her mentor, Ira Sandperl, had

flown in from San Francisco the night before; they stayed in Grenada with local families. They marched downtown with Hosea Williams in the morning. They tried to go to the schools, but were stopped by the police because they were neither teachers, students nor parents. The next morning Baez accompanied Dr. King as he led 160 children from Belle Flower to the Grenada schools. At the barricades, he hugged two children and told them goodbye. Bob Fitch photographed it all for SCLC. (quote in *NYT* 9-20-66, 34; *WP* 9-18-66, A8; 9-21-66, 2; FBI-LBJ 9-20-66)

As Dr. King escorted the “young pioneers of freedom,” 291 prominent whites issued a statement in “support of law and order.” We had long heard that there were “responsible” whites in Grenada, but hadn’t heard *from* them. State Treasurer William Winter, a Grenada native, had composed a letter that he was asking whites to sign committing themselves to talking with the black community. Some ministers and members of the power structure signed it, but many did not. Those who did sign, did so only after crucial sections were removed. By the time Mayor J.D. Quinn signed, it said that the signatories “are unalterably opposed to the use of violence.” There was nothing about communication across the racial divide. The Mayor had refused to meet with Dr. King or local Negro leaders about Grenada’s many racial problems. In reply to a telegram sent by Rev. Cunningham asking for a meeting, the city council replied that “every citizen of Grenada ... will be afforded ... all the rights provided by law....” (*NYT* 9-18-66, 1; 9-20-66, 34; quotes in 9-21-66, 1; *WP* 9-21-66, 2; Jaffe, 1966, 25)

The GCFM continued to meet every night and again in the morning to walk the kids to school. The original 450 who signed forms to go to the white schools decreased to a stable 150 – which was still more than in other Mississippi schools. White harassment shifted from outside the schools to inside. White students repeatedly called black students names and bullied them. Whenever there was a conflict between a black and a white student, only the former was disciplined. In class, the Negro students were usually ignored by the white teachers; they could sit and listen, but couldn’t really participate. When a teacher saw a white student being friendly to a black student, she split them up. On October 21, over two hundred students walked out of both the formerly white and currently black schools to protest harassment. The Superintendent of Schools sent their parents a letter suspending 287 children until November 1. (FBI-LBJ 10-24-66; *NYT* 10-28-66, 27)

The boycott accelerated. As many as 2,200 of the 2,600 Negro students in the entire Grenada school system stayed away for eight days. The School Board petitioned Judge Clayton for an injunction forbidding interference with the schools as small groups of students marched every day both to protest harassment and the suspension. Sometimes they were arrested; sometimes they turned back. By the end of October over 250 young people were in jail, plus half a dozen SCLC staff. They were put into jails all over northern Mississippi, including the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman. The students returned to school on November 2. Judge Clayton granted the injunction and declined a *habeas corpus* motion to release those in jail. By the end of the month, all those under 18 were released without bail; charges against those 13 and under were dropped. Most of the adults were bailed out. Negro leaders and SCLC staff remained in jail. (*NYT* 10-28-66, 27; *WP* 11-3-66, A16)