

# **FREEDOM SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

***MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER, 1964***

Edited and Introduced by

**Kathy Emery, Sylvia Braselmann, and Linda Gold**

***Part 1:***

***Preface and Introduction***

***Supplementary Documents***

***The Curriculum***

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## SOURCES

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Most the documents used are from SNCC Papers.  
The original SNCC papers are at the King Library and Archives,  
The Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Atlanta, GA.

We have used the Microfilm Edition: SNCC, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982)  
We are citing the reel, file and first inclusive page number in the table below.

Some documents are from the Iris Greenberg Collection:  
Iris Greenberg / Freedom Summer Collection, 1963-1964  
Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Division,  
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture,  
The New York Public Library;  
Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations

Some case studies are papers written for SDS (Students for a Democratic Society)  
The original SDS records are at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.  
We have use the Microfilm Edition: Papers, 1958-1970 / Students for a Democratic Society (U.S.) (Glen Rock, N.J.: Microfilming Corp. of America, 1978.)  
We are citing the reel and file in the table below.

The article “The Freedom Schools; Concept and Organization” by Staughton Lynd was published in *Freedomways*, Second Quarter 1965, p302-309; and is reprinted with permission of the author.

The open letter to the President, “Triple Revolution” was published in *Liberation*, April 1964, p 9-15.

Two scenes from *In White America* by Martin Duberman; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964. (First Scene: The Klan, p43-52; Second Scene: Little Rock, p 64-69.)  
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The article “Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community” by A. J. Muste was published in *Liberation*, May 1964, p 7-12.

The case study “Behind the Cotton Curtain” is from the Ellin papers in the Digital Archives of the McCain Library and Archives, University of Southern Mississippi  
(<http://anna.lib.usm.edu/uhtbin/cgiirsi/zUw9Mc1vK7/163340015/503/612>)

Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer	SNCC; 39, 190, 1039
COFO Flyer: Freedom Summer	Iris Greenberg Collection
COFO Flyer: MFDP	Iris Greenberg Collection
COFO Flyer: Freedom Registration	Iris Greenberg Collection
Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program	SNCC; 39, 165, 75
Curriculum Conference Subgroup Report	SNCC; 67, 340, 1000
Outline for Case Studies	SNCC; 67, 340, 999
Memo to Freedom School Teachers	SNCC; 67, 340, 1183
Overview of the Freedom Schools	SNCC; 67, 340, 864
Notes on Teaching in Mississippi	SNCC; 67, 340, 1178

Non-Material Teaching Suggestions (excerpt)	Iris Greenberg Collection
Profiles of Typical Freedom Schools	SNCC; 68, 364, 552
Mississippi Freedom Schools: New Houses of Liberty	SNCC; 68, 342, 93
Freedom School Data	SNCC; 67, 321, 2007
A Report, mainly on Ruleville	SNCC; 68, 367, 582
Mississippi Freedom Schools, 1964	SNCC; 68,346,224
Student Work: What the Summer Project has meant	Iris Greenberg Collection
Student Work: Palmers' Crossing Freedom News	SNCC; 39, 166, 0129
Student Work: Freedom Carrier	SNCC; 39, 166, 0127
Student Work: Freedom Star	SNCC; 67, 345, 1287
Platform of the Freedom School Convention	SNCC; 68, 346, 255
TOC and A Note to the Teacher	Iris Greenberg Collection
Academic Curriculum: Reading and Writing Skills	SNCC; 67, 340, 1002
Mathematics (Excerpt)	SNCC; 39, 165, 122
Science	SNCC; 67, 340, 761
Citizenship Curriculum Unit I - VI	SNCC; 67, 340, 830
Citizenship Curriculum Unit VII, part 1	SNCC; 67, 340, 902
Citizenship Curriculum Unit VII, part 2	SNCC; 67, 328, 346
Statistics on Education, Housing, Income, etc.	Iris Greenberg Collection
The South as an Underdeveloped Country	SDS; 36, 4B:46
The Poor in America	SNCC; 67, 340, 815
Chester, PA.—Community Organization in the Other America	SDS; 39, 4B:392
Guide to Negro History	SNCC; 67, 340
History addendum I	SNCC; 67, 337, 641
History addendum II	SNCC; 39, 166; 140
Negro History Study Questions	SNCC; 67, 340, 1081
Development of Negro Power since 1900	SNCC; 67, 340, 830
Mississippi Power Structure	SNCC; 67, 339, 746
Power of the Dixiecrats	SDS; 37, 4B:158
Nazi Germany	SNCC; 67, 340, 1052
Hazard, KY	SNCC; 68, 382, 824
Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements	SNCC; 67, 340, 797
Readings in Nonviolence	Iris Greenberg Collection
Nonviolence in American History	SNCC; 67, 340, 365
Voter Registration Laws in Mississippi	SNCC; 67, 340, 783
Civil Rights Bill	SNCC; 67, 340, 788
Teaching Mat. Unit VII: Campaign Lit. on Mrs. Hamer	SNCC; 67, 340, 1187
Teaching Mat. Unit VII: Candidate biography	SNCC; 67, 336, 0906
Teaching Mat. Unit VII: Regular Voter Registration Form	SNCC; 39, 165, 0087
Teaching Mat. Unit VII: MFDP Voter Registration Form	SNCC; 67, 340, 1146
Teaching Mat. Unit VII: Sample Sections MS Constitution	SNCC; 67, 340,

**PREFACE: EDITORS' COMMENTS**

This manuscript contains all the curriculum material that was written for and during Mississippi Freedom Summer, as assembled on the curriculum part of the website [www.educationanddemocracy.org](http://www.educationanddemocracy.org). It includes also an introduction to put the curriculum and the schools in historical context. Embedded in the introduction are links to supporting documents about Freedom Summer and the schools.

The design for the curriculum was laid out at the curriculum planning conference in March of 1964, and the curriculum was assembled during the next few months. Some parts were written specifically for the Mississippi Freedom Schools, others were adapted for that purpose, and articles or papers from other organizations were added. Some of the sections of the curriculum were distributed directly to the Freedom School teachers, others were provided only to the local Freedom School coordinators or mailed out later during the summer. Therefore, the Freedom School curriculum has never existed in the format you find here on our website, which is probably the first attempt at collating and assembling all those materials in one place.

We think that we have been able to find nearly all of the documents, but at times we can only assume that what we have inserted was what was used. We have taken to heart Casey Hayden's advice to us, "Things changed pretty fast, and the various drafts which you have, and the papers which seem to have materialized out of previous lists, are probably beyond anyone's memory, and possibly beyond reason, so if you just make your best guesses about what turned into what on the lists, I feel pretty sure you will be providing the best guesses available" (personal correspondence with authors, 4/8/04).

During Freedom Summer, pieces of the curriculum were added in response to the need in the schools, and some of the teachers wrote their own material. One can argue that the curriculum's central premise, the importance of questioning and connecting the material to the student's life, challenged the concept of a written curriculum. The Freedom School curriculum encouraged—in fact, mandated—that the teacher improvise. Staughton Lynd suggested to "include any chunks of material that you can lay your hands on as items that were written for the Freedom Schools, and may have been used by at least some teachers" (personal communication with authors, 3/3/04). We followed that advice with one exception—we did not include the fairly extensive collections in the SNCC papers of material used in an English project in some schools.

In general, we have tried to recreate the curriculum as it was described in the *Table of Contents* on the cover page of the mimeographs distributed to the teachers. At the places that seemed appropriate to us, we have inserted curriculum material that arrived later, or was written during the summer. The "Introductory Documents" were chosen to give the reader an overview of Freedom Summer as well as the plan and concept behind the curriculum and the schools. We have also included some reports and work of students.

Our source for all documents and the curriculum itself are the SNCC and MFDP papers (located at the King Center, Atlanta, and available on Microfilm in many University Libraries); the Iris Greenberg Papers at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; and the SDS papers (located at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and also available on Microfilm.) Every part of the curriculum is annotated exactly as to where it can be found in these collections. In retyping the documents, we have corrected obvious typing errors, but have otherwise left appearance and layout as close to the original as possible.

Although this collection of curriculum material is copyrighted by us we do not claim authorship of anything but the introduction. We encourage everyone to print any part of interest

and use it for teaching, research, or nonprofit use. We intend to provide a PDF version of the complete curriculum on this website ([www.educationanddemocracy.org](http://www.educationanddemocracy.org).)

**Recommended resources:**

We are publishing the Freedom School Curriculum because we think that it is a timeless example of a progressive curriculum successfully implemented. While a superb model, the curriculum was, nevertheless, a very specific response to a unique historical period out of which its aims were generated. We provide only the briefest outline of this context in our [introduction](#). We *strongly* recommend that you read more about Freedom Summer.

We are in the process of publishing two books about the Freedom Summer and the Freedom Schools (see “Books and Articles” on the Education and Democracy website). *Lessons of Freedom Summer* puts the Freedom Schools and the curriculum in the wider context of the civil rights movement, the history of alternative education, and the current context of high-stakes testing. Its target audiences are teachers and teacher educators, but it is relevant for all those who are interested in the different aspects of, and methods employed by, the civil rights movement, especially community organizers. *People of Freedom Summer* is a text and workbook for high school and junior college students. The purpose of this book is to connect the history of the civil rights movement with the life of the student and today’s social justice and equal rights issues through questions and activities.

Some of the websites recommended below have extensive bibliographies. For a quick overview we recommend the following resources:

**Books:**

1. Dittmer, John. *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994. Dittmer’s book is a comprehensive story of the Mississippi civil rights movement and excellent in putting Freedom Summer into this context.
2. Sutherland Martinez, Elizabeth, ed. *Letters from Mississippi*. Brookline: Zephyr Press, 2002. This is a collection of letters sent by Freedom Summer volunteers, grouped and annotated by Elizabeth Sutherland Martinez, and a foreword by Julian Bond. It is a very good first person account of the events of Freedom Summer, seen through the eyes of the northern volunteers.

**Articles** A few articles have been written about the Freedom Schools specifically:

1. Perlstein, Daniel. “Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools.” *History of Education Quarterly* 30 (Fall 1990): 297-324.
2. Chilcoat, George W., and Ligon, Jerry A. “Developing Democratic Citizens: The Mississippi Freedom Schools as a Model for Social Studies Instruction,” *Theory and Research in Social Education* (XXII:2, Spring 1994, 128-175).
3. Chilcoat, George W., and Ligon, Jerry A. “‘Helping to Make Democracy a Living Reality’: The Curriculum Conference of the Mississippi Freedom Schools,” *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* (XV:1, Fall 1999, 43-68).
4. Chilcoat, George W., and Ligon, Jerry A. “We Will Teach What Democracy Really Means By Living Democratically Within Our Own Schools,” *Education and Culture* (XI:3, Spring 1995, 1-19).
5. Chilcoat, George W., and Ligon, Jerry A. “Theatre as an Emancipatory Tool: Classroom Drama in the Mississippi Freedom Schools,” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* (XXX:5, 1998, 515-543).

6. Rachal, John R. "We'll Never Turn Back: Adult Education and the Struggle for Citizenship in Mississippi's Freedom Summer." *Adult Education Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (May 2000): 166.

**Websites:**

1. Civil Rights Movement Veterans: <http://www.crmvet.org/>  
This a great resource for bibliography, links, stories of people working in the southern civil rights movement, a list of speakers, and current announcements
2. University of Southern Mississippi Digital Archives: <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~spcol/crda/>  
Under "Oral Histories" you will find, among others, those of Mississippi local people (e.g. Hamer, Moore, Henry, Blackwell, etc.,) of members of the white "power structure" (e.g. Hamilton, Harned, McDaniel, etc.,) of SNCC and CORE workers in Mississippi (e.g. Cobb, Watkins, Guyot, etc.,) and of Freedom Summer volunteers (e.g. Adickes, Handke, Rubin, Barber, etc.)  
Under "Search the Digital Collections" (click on Digital Media Archive, then Hyperion Hierarchy, then Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive) you will find, for example, Photographs of Freedom Summer and the Schools in "Randall Photographs"; and diaries of Freedom School teachers in "Shaw papers" "Adickes papers" and "Glass Diary"
3. "McComb, USA": <http://www.ed.uiuc.edu/courses/ci407ss/>  
A play written by students at the McComb Freedom School in 1964.

**Music:**

1. Voices of the Civil Rights Movement: Black American Freedom Songs 1960-1966. Smithsonian Folkways CD SF 40084. Some of the volunteers have said what they remember most vividly of Freedom Summer is the singing. This two CD set (43 songs) contains recordings of mass meetings and of the many ensembles that were created during the Southern Civil Rights movement. The enclosed booklet, written by Bernice Johnson Reagon, provides an excellent introduction into the role of African American musical culture in the civil rights movement, and explains many of the songs.
2. Freedom is a Constant Struggle: Songs of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. Folk Era Records FE1419CD. During Freedom Summer, many folk singers participated in the Mississippi Caravan of Music and gave concerts in the Freedom Schools. This two CD set (40 songs) a project of the Cultural Center of Social Change ([www.ccsocialchange.org](http://www.ccsocialchange.org)) features those artists and their songs about the movement in Mississippi.

**Photos:**

Randall, Herbert. *Faces of Freedom Summer*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2001.

**Acknowledgements:**

Lois Chaffee, co-chair of the Curriculum Planning Committee, has to be credited with the creation of this curriculum.  
Staughton Lynd (statewide Freedom School Coordinator during Freedom Summer) and Liz Aaronsohn, (previously Liz Fusco, statewide Freedom School Coordinator for the two years after Freedom Summer) gave us permission to reprint articles they have written on the Freedom Schools.

Herbert Randall gave us permission to use some of his photos of Freedom Summer on this website; Howard Zinn and Martin Duberman gave us permission to reprint excerpts of their work.

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Casey Hayden, Mendy Samstein, Jane Stembridge, Dave Dennis, Charlie Cobb, Aviva Futorian, Sandra Adickes, Chude Pam Parker Allen, Frances O'Brien, Helen Garvy, Tom Hayden, Connie Brown Egleson, and others answered questions about the curriculum and provided new information.

We were amazed at the amount of support and encouragement we received from these movement veterans. To us, a younger generation, it provided a glimpse of what the Beloved Community must have been like.

We thank George Chilcoat and Jerry Ligon for comments and support.

We also thank the librarians, Ms Cynthia Lewis at the King Center; Diana Lachatanere and Wayne Furman at the Schomburg Center; and Diane DeCesare Ross at the University of Southern Mississippi McCain Library and Archives, for their help.

Finally, we thank Shelley Adams for typing most of the documents, and John Pilgrim for designing the Freedom School Curriculum website: [www.eduactionanddemocracy.org](http://www.eduactionanddemocracy.org).

**Call for comments and corrections:**

As mentioned above, we have not been able to locate all parts of the curriculum, and we hope that those who taught in the Freedom Schools in 1964 will be kind enough to make us aware of any mistakes we have made or can provide missing material. Where we could identify the authors of the individual parts of the curriculum, we have done so. We would appreciate any information as to the identity of the other authors. Also, we think we have not infringed on any copyright, but would appreciate notification if have accidentally done so.

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## ***INTRODUCTION: FREEDOM SUMMER AND THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS***

In the summer of 1964, forty-one Freedom Schools opened in the churches, on the back porches, and under the trees of Mississippi. The students were native Mississippians, averaging fifteen years of age, but often including small children who had not yet begun school to the elderly who had spent their lives laboring in the fields. Their teachers were volunteers, for the most part still students themselves. The task of this small group of students and teachers was daunting. They set out to replace the fear of nearly two hundred years of violent control with hope and organized action. Both students and teachers faced the possibility, and in some cases, the reality, of brutal retaliation from local whites. They had little money and few supplies. Yet the Freedom Schools set out to alter forever the state of Mississippi, the stronghold of the Southern way of life.

The schools were an integral part of the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project (later known as Freedom Summer). The Summer Project was designed by an umbrella organization called the Council of Federated Organizations. COFO was an organization coordinating the efforts of representatives from the four major civil rights groups. For example, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) provided lawyers for those thrown in jail when they participated in voter registration drives and civil disobedience. The Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) helped organized community centers. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) had established the Citizen Education Program in Mississippi the year before Freedom Summer. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced “snick”) provided the field workers that went to the most dangerous parts of Mississippi to register voters. Freedom Summer was also supported the National Council of Churches, and during the summer volunteers of the Medical Committee for Human Rights, and lawyers from a variety of groups worked in Mississippi. The long-term aim of Freedom Summer was to transform the power structure of Mississippi. The short-term aim of the summer project was to challenge the legitimacy of the all white Mississippi Democratic Party at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City in August of 1964. To do this, organizers needed to create a parallel state party that was truly representative of the people of Mississippi—both blacks and whites.

To create a truly representative political party, the vast majority of disempowered African Americans would need to develop the self confidence and organizational skills required of active citizens. Freedom Summer’s three programs, distinct yet reinforcing each other, were voter registration, Freedom Schools and Community Centers (see [Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer](#).) The Freedom Schools’ major contribution to that process was to implement a curriculum based on the asking of questions whose answers were sought within the lives of the students. As the curriculum itself states:

We are going to talk about a lot of things: about Negro people and white people, about rich people and poor people, about the South and about the North, about you and what you think and feel and want. . . . And we’re going to try to be honest with each other and say what we believe. . . . We’ll also ask some questions and try to find some answers. The first thing is to look around, right here, and see how we live in Mississippi.

From Introduction to Unit I of the  
Citizenship Curriculum: *Comparison of  
Students’ Realities with Others*

Under the direction of Staughton Lynd, professor at Spelman College, the schools were established to teach confidence, voter literacy and political organization skills as well as academic

skills. The curriculum was directly linked to the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. As Edwin King, who ran for Lieutenant Governor on the MFDP ticket, stated, “Our assumption was that the parents of the Freedom School children, when we met them at night, that the Freedom Democratic Party would be the PTA.”

Both the schools and the Summer Project set about to support black Mississippians in naming the reality of their lives and then in changing that reality. The classroom and voter registration became one; both began with the lives of the people of Mississippi and, for both, “questioning (was) the vital tool.” The questions raised struck at the most fundamental assumptions white Americans held about themselves and the institutions they had created. As SNCC’s James Forman stated:

**In SNCC we had often wondered:** How do you make more people in this country share our experiences, understand what it is to look in the face of death because you’re black, feel hatred for the federal government that always makes excuses for the brutality of Southern cops and state troopers?

**We often wondered:** How do you make a fat, rich country like the United States understand that it has starving people within its own boundaries, people without land, people working on Senator Eastland’s plantation for three dollars a day or less?

**We often wondered:** How can you make the people in the United States exercise their responsibility to rid themselves of racist politicians who fight every progressive measure introduced in the halls of Congress?

**We often wondered:** How can we find the strength to continue our work in the face of the poverty of the people, to do everything that shouts to be done in the absence of so many resources?

The Mississippi Summer Project was an attempt to answer those questions.

## THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN MISSISSIPPI

QUESTION: What is COFO?

ANSWER: COFO is the Council of Federated Organizations—a federation of all the national civil rights organizations active in Mississippi, local political and action groups and some fraternal and social organizations.

QUESTION: How did COFO get started?

ANSWER: COFO has evolved through three phases in its short history. The first phase of the organization was little more than an ad hoc committee called together after the Freedom Rides of 1961 in an effort to have a meeting with Governor Ross Barnett. This committee of Mississippi civil rights leaders proved a convenient vehicle for channeling the voter registration program of the Voter Education Project, a part of the Southern Regional Council, into Mississippi. With the funds of the Voter Education Project, COFO went into a second phase. In this period, beginning in February 1962, COFO became an umbrella for voter registration drives in the Mississippi Delta and other isolated cities in Mississippi. At this time COFO added a small full-

time staff, mostly SNCC and a few CORE workers, and developed a voter registration program. The staff worked with local NAACP leaders and SCLC citizenship teachers . . . as a committee with a staff and a program until the fall of 1963.

From Unit VII, Part 2 (I),  
Freedom School Curriculum

The civil rights organizations working with COFO agreed to share resources in Mississippi. They understood that they needed to cooperate to have a chance to bring change to the bastion of the white power structure. Mississippi had long been the most repressive state in the union. In 1962, African Americans were forty two percent of the population of the state. Of the approximately 525,000 registered voters in Mississippi who were eligible to vote in 1960, about 95 percent were white, fewer than five percent were African American. Economic and physical repression was a constant threat for most black Mississippians. Black infants (under one-year old) died at twice the rate of white children of the same age. Forty-three percent of Mississippi high school students left before graduating (1962). Ninety percent of Mississippi's sharecropper force was African American.

The seeds of Freedom Summer were planted in 1961. During that year a member of a Mississippi NAACP branch office, Amzie Moore, invited Bob Moses of SNCC to come to the state to help organize a voter registration campaign. Over the next several years, Moses and other SNCC field secretaries and CORE volunteers tried to help blacks register to vote. Medgar Evers of the NAACP helped organize a boycott of white businesses in Jackson beginning in December of 1962. But retribution was swift and brutal. The efforts were met with beatings, threats of violence and economic reprisals by the white establishment. The very night she returned from an unsuccessful attempt to register to vote, Fannie Lou Hamer and her family was put off the plantation where she had lived and worked for eighteen years. Among others, Herbert Lee, a farmer who helped voter registration efforts, was murdered in 1962 and Medgar Evers was murdered in 1963.

COFO's strength was not just the cooperation between the major civil rights group, but a strong local leadership. Black Mississippians identified with COFO as their own organization.

The emergence of the Ruleville Citizenship Group, and the Holmes County Voters League, testified to the possibility of starting strong local groups. It was felt that COFO could be the organization through which horizontal ties could develop among these groups. . . . During this second phase we began to feel more and more that the Committee could be based in a network of local adult groups sprung from the Movement as we worked the state.

From Unit VII, Part 2 (I),  
Freedom School Curriculum

In the summer of 1963, Al Lowenstein and Bob Moses came up with the idea of holding a mock election to show that blacks would indeed vote if allowed. This "Freedom Vote" officially began with a state-wide convention on October 6, 1963 at the Masonic Temple in Jackson. The delegates selected an integrated ticket of Aaron Henry (NAACP) for governor and Ed King (Tougaloo College chaplain) as his running mate. One hundred white students come down for several weeks in the fall to participate in "Freedom Registration." On election day in November, nearly 80,000 blacks voted.

The third phase representing the present functioning of the organization began in the fall of 1963 with the Freedom Vote for Governor. This marked the first state-wide effort and coincided with the establishment of a state-wide office in Jackson and a trunk line to reach into the Mississippi Delta and hill country. The staff has broadened to include more CORE and SNCC workers and more [SCLC] citizenship schools.

From Unit VII, Part 2 (I),  
Freedom School Curriculum

The success of the Freedom Vote was achieved at great cost. The process was slow and dangerous. To maintain the momentum gained in 1963, Moses and others began to contemplate a summer project for the following year but with a large number of northern white volunteers in order to draw national attention—and federal protection—to Mississippi. This idea of a Freedom Summer project was not immediately embraced by all those who had worked on the Freedom Vote. During SNCC and COFO staff meetings many expressed concern about the effect the influx of many white northerners would have on the development of local leadership. There was also concern about racial tensions. These debates led to an agreement to use white volunteers but to have their roles clearly defined and limited. Once this and other issues were settled, the decision was made to launch the Move On Mississippi. The blueprint for Freedom Summer was approved at the January COFO meeting (see Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer).

### **FREEDOM SUMMER**

QUESTION: What are the programs sponsored by COFO?

ANSWER: COFO works in two major areas. 1) Political, 2) Educational and social. The educational and social programs are the Freedom Schools, Federal Programs, Literacy, Work-study, Food and Clothing and Community Centers. Some of these are in operation; others are in the process of being developed.

Freedom Schools are planned for the summer of 1964. There are several things which hopefully will be accomplished by the Schools. 1) to provide remedial instruction in basic educational skills but more importantly 2) to implant habits of free thinking and ideas of how a free society works, and 3) to lay the groundwork for a statewide youth movement.

From Unit VII, Part 2(I),  
Freedom School Curriculum

During the deliberations about a summer project and discussions about what such a project could look like, SNCC field secretary Charles Cobb proposed to take advantage of the presence of the summer volunteers to use them as teachers, and include the issue of education in the project. “Students as well as professional educators from some of the best Universities and colleges in the North will be coming to Mississippi to lend themselves to the movement. These are some of the best minds in the country, and their academic value ought to be recognized and used to advantage.” Drawing from the ideas of the SCLC citizen’s schools and the SNCC education project in Selma Alabama, Cobb formally proposed the formation of Freedom Schools in December of 1963 (see Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program in Mississippi).

Cobb understood that, in Mississippi, “schools as institutions were part of the apparatus of oppression.”<sup>1</sup> Every aspect of traditional Mississippi schools conveyed the state’s message of racial inferiority and of the need for black children to adjust to their “place.” In the cotton lands

of the Delta, schools were closed during picking season. Libraries with books discarded from the white schools and science labs without equipment were the rule. In order to keep their jobs, African American public school teachers were often silent on political issues. In “Notes on Teaching in Mississippi,” Cobb stated:

Here, an idea of your own is a subversion that must be squelched. . . . Learning here means learning to stay in your place. Your place is to be satisfied—a “good nigger.” They have learned the learning necessary for immediate survival: that silence is safest, so volunteer nothing; that the teacher is the state, and tell them only what they want to hear; that the law and learning are white man’s law and learning.

The Freedom School concept proposed by Cobb added the school to the institutions that SNCC had set out to challenge, to transform, or, if necessary, to replace. In addition to opening the minds of the students to questioning, the schools would be an effective tool for political organizing; in the classroom, students would be trained to become local civil rights workers. “The overall theme of the school,” Cobb wrote, “would be the student as a force for social change in Mississippi.”<sup>2</sup>

What if we showed what was possible in education? We had already been approaching this through ‘literacy workshops’ within the context of organizing for voter registration. And SNCC itself had created a ‘nonviolent high school’ during the 1961 protests in McComb. . . . But we hadn’t really tackled education as an approach to community organizing in and of itself. Significantly, the model for how to do this emerged from a specific political organization that also grew out of grassroots organizing: the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.<sup>3</sup>

In Mississippi, SNCC workers found the doors to the existing institutions closed. In the Freedom Schools, as they had in the Freedom Vote and the Mississippi Democratic Party, they set about creating an alternative.

### **Origins of the Curriculum: The Curriculum Conference**

Once the decision for the summer project had been taken, a Summer Educational Program Committee was formed. The seven members of the committee, co-chaired by Lois Chaffee, a white English teacher from Tougaloo College and John O’Neal, SNCC field secretary and co-founder of the Free Southern Theatre, discussed curriculum strategy and set out to prepare a curriculum conference.

The National Council of Churches sponsored the curriculum conference on March 21-22, in New York. The organizers cast a wide net in their invitations to the conference, and the fifty three people that participated represented a wide range of educational, philosophical and civil rights expertise. The conference pulled together representatives of SNCC, CORE, SCLC, SDS (Students for a Democratic Society), the National Council of Churches, teachers unions and others. Among the participants were Ella Backer; Septima Clark, head of the SCLC citizen schools; Highlander’s Myles Horton; Noel Day, a junior-high school teacher who had organized a one-day program during the 1963 Boston school boycott; Norma Becker and Sandra Adickes, New York teachers and activist members of the United Federation of Teachers; and Staughton Lynd, political activist and professor of history at Spelman College, later state-wide director of the Freedom Schools.

The conference participants broke up into four subgroups to address the specific areas and to write curriculum (see Outline for Curriculum Planning). They were asked to keep in mind that the curriculum had to take into account the inexperience of the volunteers as teachers, their ignorance of what life was like in Mississippi, and the relative short time they would have for teaching. Thus, the curriculum had to be teacher friendly and immediately usable. The goal was a curriculum around questions and activities that would invite discussion and re-enforce the relationship between school and the life of the student.<sup>4</sup>

At the end of the two-day conference, the subgroups wrote reports that became the basis for the curriculum. Subgroup One, Leadership Training, broke up into two smaller committees. One committee developed a course in black history. Barbara Jones of SNCC's New York office wrote a Negro history outline, and Bea Young from Chicago submitted a study of the Amistad case. Staughton Lynd then used these two parts as the basis for the Guide to Negro History (see Guide to Negro History).<sup>5</sup> The other committee submitted a citizenship curriculum, written by Noel Day and Peggy Damon-Day. Noel Day had written curriculum for a number of Freedom Schools around the country. His proposal was somewhat abridged and modified by Jane Stembridge, and became the first six Units of the Citizenship Curriculum (see Citizenship Curriculum).<sup>6</sup>

Subgroup two, Remedial Academic Curriculum, again divided into two smaller working committees. One committee discussed the role of testing, and in its short report summarized the decision that testing should not be used, since "traditional evaluation and testing methods were as oppressive as traditional teaching methods—both caused fear, submissiveness and loss of self-respect among students."<sup>7</sup> The other committee report was submitted by Sandra Adickes, New York city teacher who had also taught in the summer schools in Prince Edwards county, Virginia, 1963. This report became the Reading and Writing part of the Academic Curriculum.

Subgroup four, Nonacademic Activities, recommended the use of student newspapers, drama, and creative writing, and leadership development through participation in voter registration activities. They also recommended that students should develop skills in student government and be given opportunities to meet in a state-wide convention to form networks.<sup>8</sup>

The majority of conference participants worked in subgroup three, Contemporary Issues. The group suggested to teach problem solving through a series of case studies that would relate classroom knowledge to the wider political, social and economic issues. In the first part of their report, they delineated the educational principles, and in the second part described a layout for 13 case studies to be written by conference participants and others (see Report of Contemporary Issues Subgroup of Curriculum Conference).

From the end of March to the beginning of the orientation on June 20, the curriculum committee, especially Lois Chaffee, worked furiously to collect all the promised material. Due to the short time, only some of the case studies suggested by the contemporary issues subgroup were completed. Some of those case studies included extensive lesson plans, for example the case study comparing the Nazi German power structure and the power structure of the South, which included teacher guidelines and suggestions for instructional strategies. Others merely provided information or analysis, but did not give suggestions on how to teach.

## **THE CURRICULUM**

The curriculum conference had brought together people from different groups and backgrounds. Similarly, the final curriculum distributed to the teachers consisted of material from different

origins. The Academic Curriculum and Unit VII of the Citizenship Curriculum were written for the Freedom Schools, as well as some case studies (Mississippi Power Structure; Voter Registration Laws in Mississippi; Civil Rights Bill; Nazi Germany.) Units I to VI of the Citizenship Curriculum was based on curriculum written previously, but modified for the Mississippi Freedom Schools. In addition, supporting information and teaching material was provided. COFO staff put together collections (Statistics on Education, Housing, Income and Employment and Health; Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements; Readings in Nonviolence.) Two reprints of *Liberation* magazine articles were included (Triple Revolution; Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community.) Finally, the coordinators of the schools received a copy of Martin Duberman's *In White America*, and six papers written by members of SDS, the Students for a Democratic Society (South as an Underdeveloped Area; Chester, PA; Cambridge, MD; NYC School crisis; Power of the Dixiecrats; Hazard, KY).

The Table of Contents of the curriculum assigned these supporting materials to units of the citizenship curriculum. An alternative approach of connecting and using the case studies planned by the Contemporary Issues subgroup was provided in the Outline for Case Studies that had been mailed to the teachers. That these approaches were complementary rather than exclusive is shown in the fact that the suggested case studies on Freedom Rides and Sit-Ins, and on COFO's political program, became part VII of the Citizenship Curriculum.

Part of the curriculum material was mailed to the teachers on May 16, and the rest was typed up by Alice Lynd and reproduced on a hectograph machine by the Lynds in their Atlanta apartment. Staughton Lynd and some volunteers drove the material up to the orientation in Ohio in the trunk of the Lynd's car.

The curriculum writing, however, was not over. Very quickly The Guide to Negro History became a favorite of the students, and the COFO office in Jackson sent out more teaching materials, including copies of different books on Negro History, and Robert Zangrando wrote two more papers covering the time after 1900 (see History Addendum I, History Addendum II, and Negro History Study Questions).<sup>9</sup>

The volunteer teachers did what the organizers had hoped, they drew upon the students' interests and ideas, taught what they knew and developed curriculum and wrote papers. Non-violence in American History was one response to the need they saw in the schools. Hattiesburg Freedom School teacher and Stanford Historian Otis Pease added material on The Development of Negro Power in American Politics Since 1900; and Brian Peterson in McComb wrote a discussion course "The American Negro in a World of Change."<sup>10</sup>

The materials that have since become known as the Freedom School Curriculum were intended to be used in conjunction with the knowledge and skills that the students brought to the schools in the form of their own experiences. The interaction of written curriculum with lived experiences took the form of discussion, debate, drama and ultimately political action.<sup>11</sup> All three sections of the Freedom School Curriculum—the Academic Curriculum, the Citizenship Curriculum, and a Recreational Curriculum—were intended to promote the following principles:

1. The school is an agent of social change.
2. Students must know their own history.
3. The curriculum should be linked to the student's experience.
4. Questions should be open-ended.
5. Developing academic skills is crucial.

The Academic Curriculum suggested reading, writing and verbal activities based on the students' experiences. The Citizenship Curriculum consisted of seven units that would be used to "encourage the asking of questions, and hope that society can be improved." Each of the seven units consisted of subject material (both secondary and primary), questions, readings, and activities. The introduction to the curriculum wished to "emphasize" that such materials were

only suggestions, and that individual teachers may interpret the concepts in different ways or substitute other methods. There is probably more in each unit than it will be possible to use, but it was included so that each teacher would have a range of material to choose from, and extra material if necessary.

As they studied the curriculum, teachers were told to discard it and to create, on the spot if necessary, activities and questions that responded to the needs of the students in front of them. The curriculum's central premise, the importance of questioning, challenged the concept of a written curriculum. The Freedom School curriculum encourages—in fact, mandated—that the teacher improvise. The mimeographed sheets taken by the teachers into the classroom were not intended to be memorized or "covered"; the curriculum served as a springboard to classroom activities that linked the suggested lessons to the lived experience of the students. Like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Freedom Schools were radical; their purpose was to replace an existing social institution with an institution rooted in the lived experience of those who had been exploited, oppressed, and excluded by the original system.

A necessary step in this process was to make the old system visible to the students, to help them understand how the system gained its power, and to help them challenge the system's version of reality, a version of reality which appeared externally in social structures and internally in their view of themselves, their history, and the possibilities for their future. Before the students could learn, they had to un-learn the self-negation taught by Mississippi's segregated schools. One strategy to achieve this was to replace the negative images of African Americans created by the old system with positive images generated by reclaimed history. The curriculum intended that teacher would help the students learn to trust their own voices and their own experience.

### **The Academic Curriculum**

The first part of the Academic curriculum consisted of "the presentation of conventional academic subjects." Teachers were advised to introduce these subjects "at the beginning of the school day, when students are fresh."<sup>12</sup> From the beginning, the Freedom Schools interpreted the teaching of skills as a political act. The failure of the Mississippi public schools to teach skills maintained racial boundaries and reinforced students' sense of their own inferiority. To challenge the power structure, the students needed to read, to write, and to master basic math; the Freedom Schools began the task of providing these skills. But the skills were not taught out of context; they were to be taught from an experiential and interdisciplinary approach.

If, for example, the group of students plan to canvass, the language arts phase of the program could concentrate on an appropriate verbal skill, the social studies area could be devoted to the study of the population to be canvassed in terms of economic, social, religious factors and the implications of those factors, the math area could be given over to statistical breakdowns, charts, etc.

The writers of the curriculum believed that the teachers needed to monitor the students' engagement and adjust the content and methodology to maintain the interest of the student. The student's interest depended a great deal on his and her ability to understand and learn the material. This in turn would be dependent upon:

1. developing positive relationships between teacher and student as well as among students;
2. not overwhelming the students with more information than they can learn at a given time;
3. switching activities whenever one is not engaging the students; and
4. as much as possible, using the students' own experiences as the content of the curriculum.

(See Non-Material Teaching Suggestions for Freedom Schools)

### **The Citizenship Curriculum**

The second part of the curriculum, partly an adaptation by educator Noel Day from a curriculum he had created during the Boston school boycott, taught students to see themselves as initiators of social change. The curriculum contained exercises in naming the power structure and analyzing how it worked. They were also asked to name their own reality and to contrast their reality with reality of more privileged whites. This section contained two sets of guiding questions:

***Basic Set of Questions:***

1. *Why are we (students and teachers) in Freedom Schools?*
2. *What is the freedom movement?*
3. *What alternatives does the freedom movement offer us?*

***Secondary Set of Questions:***

1. *What does the majority culture have that we want?*
2. *What does the majority culture have that we don't want?*
3. *What do we have that we want to keep?*

These organizing questions were repeated throughout the seven units of Part II, the Citizenship Curriculum.

- Unit I: The Negro in Mississippi (comparison of the student's reality with that of others)
- Unit II: The Negro in the North
- Unit III: Myths about the Negro (examining the apparent reality)
- Unit IV: The Power Structure
- Unit V: Poor whites, poor Negroes, and their fears
- Unit VI: Soul Things and Material Things
- Unit VII: The Movement:
  - Part 1: Freedom Rides and Sit-Ins
  - Part 2: COFO's Political Program

The argument being presented in the Citizenship Curriculum was something like this: Your life can be better than it is right now (Unit I) but going north will not improve it (Unit II). You need

to stay in Mississippi and fight to improve the schools, housing, and hospitals that are available to you. This fight has not been waged in the past because Negroes have internalized the myths about them (Unit III) and face a white power structure that permeates all aspects of life (Unit IV). The rich white elites that control the power structure have been able to enlist poor whites by playing on their fears—poor whites are victims as well (Unit V). As long as poor Negroes and poor whites desire “material things” over “soul things,” they can be manipulated by fear and thus effectively deprived of both material and soul things (Unit VI). Direct action and political action are instruments of social change (Unit VII). At the end of the curriculum, students were encouraged to become actively involved in the process of social change.

### Case Studies

The purpose of the case studies was to provide the teachers and students with documents and data supporting the content of the curriculum, and to provide lesson plans where possible. Their origin and quality was diverse, some were written or assembled specifically for the Freedom Schools, others were provided by different organizations. In the case studies, students were given a problem and were actively involved in the creation of a response. “Teachers were to focus not on teaching facts but on teaching students to draw upon their own experiences, to relate the case studies to current situations in Mississippi, and to derive suggestions to solving problems in their own area.”<sup>13</sup>

### Guide to Negro History

Authored by historian and Freedom School Coordinator Staughton Lynd and based on Bea Young and Barbara Jones’ work, the Guide to Negro History presented to the students previously untold stories of resistance, accomplishment, and heroism. The Guide not only challenged the status of the white version of history, it provided models for action. For the first time, students heard stories of slave rebellions aboard the Amistad and in Haiti; the heroes of the Confederacy and the myths of the Old South were discarded and were replaced with new heroes and new stories.

Once the schools had started, the importance of African American history and the great desire of students to learn more about their own place in history became very obvious. The Freedom School in Jackson organized a special Negro History program in the second half of the summer, and wrote additional teaching material covering the 20<sup>th</sup> century (see History Addendum I, History Addendum II, and Negro History Study Questions).

### **Preparations for Teaching: The Orientation**

The 280 Freedom Summer volunteers who were assigned to be teachers in the Freedom Schools took part in the second of two, one week-long orientation sessions held in June at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio. The volunteers, few of whom were professional teachers, received an introduction into the political and economic conditions of Mississippi, in the type of education their students would have received in the state’s segregated schools, and in techniques which might help open the minds of their students to new ideas and possibilities. Historian Howard Zinn described the advice the teachers were given at Oxford:

You’ll arrive in Ruleville, in the Delta. It will be 100 degrees, and you’ll be sweaty and dirty. You won’t be able to bathe often or sleep well or eat good food. The first day of school, there may be four teachers and three students. And the local Negro minister will phone to say you

can't use his church basement after all, because his life has been threatened. And the curriculum we've drawn up—Negro history and American government—may be something you know only a little about yourself. Well, you'll knock on doors all day in the hot sun to find students. You'll meet on someone's lawn under a tree. You'll tear up the curriculum and teach what you know.<sup>14</sup>

The dangers the teachers would face were communicated to them dramatically with the disappearance of CORE workers James Chaney and Michael Schwerner, and summer volunteer Andrew Goodman. The three had participated in the first orientation, Schwerner and Chaney as staff, and had left for Mississippi on the weekend before the volunteer teachers arrived for their orientation. They intended to investigate a church burning that had occurred after the congregation had voted to house a Freedom School. On their way back, they were arrested by the local sheriff, released in the late evening, and disappeared. The worry about the three civil rights workers hung over the week-long orientation, and on the last day of the orientation, Bob Moses announced that the SNCC staff was convinced that the three had been murdered. After this announcement, Staughton Lynd spent part of the evening counseling teachers who were reconsidering their decision to go to Mississippi. Kirsty Powell, as one of the volunteer teachers, questioned the emphasis at Oxford on the dangers of going (see [A Report, Mainly on Ruleville](#)). Writing after the summer was over, Powell reflected that

The main effect of Oxford (was it the main design?) was to bring each of us to the point of asking: "Do I really believe in this enough to go? Ought I go? Do I want to go? This was as it should have been, I think. At the time I felt that such emphasis was placed on preparing for the dangers . . . that we did scant justice to the job of preparing to teach or of understanding the meaning of the Freedom School concept. . . . The Freedom School sessions . . . could have been bettered. . . . The Curriculum was excellent, but . . . it was not used as well as it deserved . . . partly . . . because it wasn't really explored at Oxford. . . .<sup>15</sup>

The first Freedom School teachers arrived in Mississippi in late June, planning to open twenty schools with approximately one thousand students. Like SNCC field secretaries and other summer volunteers, the teachers stayed in the homes of local people. Classrooms were found anywhere the black community was willing to situate them—in churches, in basements, on porches, under trees. Attendance was entirely voluntary; part of a teacher's task was to canvass for students. Like voter registration workers, teachers knocked on doors, explained their purpose, and encouraged participation. Often, to establish their link with the community, they were accompanied by local teenagers who had showed up at the COFO office.

Word of the schools spread from one student to another, and gradually the classes began to fill. The anticipated enrollment of one thousand grew, day by day, student by student, to two thousand. Classes were attended not only by the teenagers for whom they were planned but by younger children and adults.

## THE SCHOOLS IN PRACTICE

It is not our purpose to impose a particularly set of conclusions. Our purpose is to encourage the asking of questions, and hope that society can be improved.

Introduction,  
Citizenship Curriculum

Like the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the Freedom School was an alternative and not an imitation. Historically, Mississippi's schools for African American children had perpetuated the notion that whiteness was a norm from which all peoples of color deviated. The black child would have been at best invisible and at worst humiliated. An education which perpetuated self-rejection could not lead to significant change in the political status of African Americans. What good were the schools and libraries of Mississippi if within them the black child had no history, no voice, and no self-respect? In the Freedom School, the child was to be taught to question and to create.

Stokely Carmichael, veteran of the Freedom Rides and director of the COFO project in Greenwood, Mississippi, conducted a Freedom School class "like participatory democracy—in which leaders questioned, the mass of people guided, and any idea for change was regarded as a realistic possibility."<sup>16</sup> Using language as a means of discussing racial divisions, Carmichael wrote four sentences on the left side of the board in local black dialect and, on the right side, four in standard English.

STOKELY: Will society reject you if you don't speak like on the right side of the board? Gladys said society would reject you.

GLADYS: You might as well face it, man! What we gotta do is go out and become middle class. If you can't speak good English, you don't have a car, a job, or anything.

STOKELY: If society rejects you because you don't speak good English, should you learn to speak good English?

CLASS: No!

ALMA: I'm tired of doing what society say. . . . People ought just to accept each other. . . . If I change for society, I wouldn't be free anyway. . . . If the majority speaks on the left, then a minority must rule society? Why do we have to change to be accepted by the minority group?

STOKELY: Let's think about two questions for next time: What is society? Who makes the rules for society?<sup>17</sup>

Everything about the Freedom schools was fluid in order to link the reality of the students' lives to the goal of social and economic justice for all. The teachers taught whatever was needed and requested by the students, from typing to French. They were encouraged to modify the curriculum as needed, but to stick with the question and answer method. "The paper curriculum that Alice and I had produced was for the most part set aside as teachers improvised: writing school newspapers, typing, French, and poetry were among the most popular subjects," wrote Lynd later.<sup>18</sup> The actual experience of the Freedom Schools was created by students and teachers in active and often spontaneous collaboration. As lawyer and summer volunteer Len Holt stated:

From the beginning, the schools were a challenge to the insistent principle that everyone had talked about so much: flexibility. Where the initial plans had been for only the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades, one found sitting in the informal circles youngsters with the smooth black faces and wondering eyes of the impish faces of nine and ten who were mere fifth-graders. Flexibility. And there just behind teen-aged boys—with slender, cotton-picking muscles—were sets of gnarled hands and the care-chiseled faces of grandmothers, some of whom said they thought they were in the seventies (birth records for the old are almost non-existent). Flexibility.<sup>19</sup>

In Freedom School classes, the teachers used many of the methods—role playing, music, and open-ended discussion—that had been honed in the movement of which the schools were a crucial part. Students were taught to question, discuss and debate so they could begin to formulate their own thoughts, thoughts that would necessarily lead to action.<sup>20</sup> “The kind of teaching that was done in the Freedom Schools was, despite its departure from orthodoxy—or more likely, because of it—just about the best kind there is. . . . (The teachers) taught, not out of textbooks, but out of life, trying to link the daily headlines with the best and deepest of man’s intellectual tradition”<sup>21</sup> (see Notes on Teaching in Mississippi).

### **Supervision and Finances**

The compilers of the FSC believed that accountability needed to be incorporated into the program itself. The Basic and Secondary Questions that were to be “reintroduced periodically” were to “both permit an on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum, and to provide students with recurring opportunities for perceiving their own growth in sophistication.”<sup>22</sup> Assessment and evaluation occurred on the level and at the time that it could do the most good—both the student and teacher were the primary evaluators. A second-level evaluation occurred at the state organizational level in order to support the work at the site level. The Freedom Schools were instructed to write regular reports and send them to the COFO office in Jackson (see A Report, Mainly on Ruleville). These reports were used to create regular press releases and profiles (see Profiles of Typical Freedom Schools).

The teachers were expected not only to pay their own way but to assist in fundraising. But as much as possible, COFO attempted to fund the Freedom Schools in terms of food (for students,) rent, transportation, equipment, phone bills, if not salaries for the teachers. One early planning budget suggested (in 1964 dollars): Hattiesburg, \$2,000; Meridian, \$1,300; Holly Springs, \$1,000; Ruleville, \$700. The variety in budgets depended on the relative resources of the community as well as the money the COFO organizations were able to raise nationally. Some towns’ organizations could raise more money than others in order to pay for that which could not be acquired through donations. Some towns were able to have space and equipment donated.<sup>23</sup> In the end, the Freedom Schools ran on a shoestring budget; Staughton Lynd estimated that less than \$2000 passed through the Jackson office, and most of that was used for film rentals.<sup>24</sup>

Many supplies, especially books for the libraries of the Community Centers, were collected before the summer began. A Jackson COFO memo sent out to “Everybody working with the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project” suggested appealing to manufacturers to donate equipment such as tape recorders and movie projectors. The memo asked “everybody” to solicit libraries across the country for donations based on the specific book list provided. A Community Center brochure indicated that national unions were raising money to buy books for the Community Centers.

The reality of the Freedom Schools seemed to conform to Staughton Lynd's image of a guerrilla army which “swims in the sea” of the people among whom it lives.<sup>25</sup>

### **The Freedom School Classrooms**

The actual schedule varied from school to school, depending on the needs of the students and the local public school schedule. The Ruleville Freedom School, for example, was scheduled as follows:

9:00-9:15                      Civil rights songs

9:30-10:30	Core classes: Negro history and Citizenship curriculum
10:30-11:30	Choice of dance, drama, art, auto mechanics, guitar and folksinging, or sports
12:00-2:00	School closed
2:00-4:00	Classes in French, religion, crafts, music, playwriting, journalism
4:00	Seminar on non-violence <sup>26</sup>

### Discussion

The Purpose of the freedom schools is to help [the students] begin to question

*Notes on Teaching in Mississippi*

At the center of the curriculum was education's most powerful tool: the question. The questions were not meant to be answered by the individual student, but by the group. The basic and secondary set of questions did not ask: "What alternatives does the Freedom Movement offer me?" or "What does the majority culture have that I want?" The questions asked: "What does it offer us?" And: ". . .that we want?" Group discussion was the tool that made this community building approach possible.

To students accustomed to memorization and rote learning, discussion was crucial in creating voice and teaching them to value themselves and their classmates. Chairs were arranged in a circle to alter the concept of the teacher as an authority who could not be challenged. Teachers began with introductory questions and then followed up with probing questions. Frequently the teachers asked the students, "How do you feel about this?" Students were encouraged to ask questions as well.

Anything could serve as the basis for a discussion—local events, history, personal experience. "The teachers asked questions and the students talked," wrote Len Holt. "The students could and did say what they thought to be important, and no idea was ridiculed or forbidden—an immeasurably traumatic joy for the souls of young black folk."<sup>27</sup> A teacher from the Vicksburg Freedom School wrote:

I read to them from Thomas Wolfe's Look Homeward Angel and from Martin Luther King's I Have a Dream, then had them write speeches as if they were Senators urging passage of the civil rights bill. I tried to extend the idea of oppression beyond race. If you pick on a small kid with glasses and beat him up, aren't you acting the same as the white segregationists? I asked them.<sup>28</sup>

Another teacher helped his students define the word "skeptical." "We should feel free to think as we want, question whomever we like, whether it's our parents, our minister, our teachers, yes, me, right here. Don't take my word for things. Check up on them. Be *skeptical*."<sup>29</sup>

### Plays

The viewing and creation of plays was an important part of the experience of many Freedom School students. In attending a production of *In White America*, many students saw live theater for the first time. Martin Duberman's documents-based drama inspired students and teachers to dramatize African American history for themselves. At the Holly Springs Freedom School, students created a play based on the life and death of Medgar Evers. In a discussion of the events of Evers's life, one student remarked, "I don't think of him as really dead. I feel that from his grave is growing a huge tree which is spreading seeds of freedom all over."<sup>30</sup> The child's

metaphor became the title of the play: “Seeds of Freedom.” At the end of the drama, the narrator states:

And this is a play about freedom . . . about us! Yes, us, because every step we take along the freedom road, every time we act, every time we do something to move forward . . . we plant a seed. And seeds are blowing in the wind today.<sup>31</sup>

In Milestone, Mississippi, the Freedom School play was presented at the end of a local community meeting. The play dramatized events in African American history, from slavery to the present, and ended with an exhortation to the audience:

I am the American Negro.  
 You have seen my past; you have known my past.  
 And you have seen the trouble I’ve seen.  
 Today we have seen many men die  
 Because they stood for their rights.  
 Today we have seen three men disappear  
 For joining our fight.  
 Tomorrow many more will die.  
 And many more will suffer,  
 But we’ve begun and we are not turning back  
 And someday, somehow, we shall overcome!<sup>32</sup>

The Ruleville Freedom School created a puppet play in which the knight Bob Moses fought a wicked witch named Segregation. In some schools, the students used their own experience as the basis for drama. At the Ruleville Freedom School, a play was created from a protest staged by the students; in Gulfport, students composed a short play entitled *Memories of Freedom School* (see Notes on Teaching, Noel Day, “Remarks about Method”).

### Role Playing

Role playing was used not only to help students understand concepts but to prepare them for direct action. “Kids that age are natural actors,” explained a Freedom School teacher. “And it puts them in other people’s shoes. We don’t want to win easy arguments over straw foes. They have got to be tough thinkers, tough arguers.”<sup>33</sup> In one classroom, students debated the arguments against the Civil Rights bill offered by conservative presidential candidate Barry Goldwater. Goldwater’s arguments were listed on the board, and one student as Goldwater defended them against counter-arguments from the class. As it had been in the movement, role playing was also used to prepare students for the direct action of canvassing and picketing.

### Music

As it was in the movement, music was a significant part of the curriculum in each of the Freedom School. Most schedules included a daily session of the singing of Freedom songs. The Mississippi Caravan of Music paid several visits to Freedom School classrooms; in these visits, folksingers like Pete Seeger introduced students to songs of the movement and linked the students’ experiences, through folk music, to the experiences of people in other countries. In Gulfport, the school day ended with the singing of “We Shall Overcome.”

There was one special song, a very solemn song. It requires everyone to gather in a circle and join hands for a time, each thinking in his own mind about the meaning of freedom and about people like Medgar Evers, Herbert Lee, and the three civil rights workers in Neshoba County, and all the others who have died fighting for freedom in Mississippi. . . . The song lets students and teachers know the pattern of their lives, that all the great number of years which comprise a life is not so many after all when there is freedom to be fought for.<sup>34</sup>

### Poetry

Poetry was seen as a crucial means of expression, a means by which students long silenced gave form and shape to their feelings and aspirations. A poem by a twelve-year-old girl in the Biloxi Freedom School was a response to the question “What is wrong?”

What is wrong with me everywhere I go  
No one seems to look at me.  
Sometimes I cry.

I walk through woods and sit on a stone.  
I look at the stars and I sometimes wish.

Probably if my wish ever comes true,  
Everyone will look at me.<sup>35</sup>

The poetry, shared with the class, was part of the process of unsilencing, as well as a means of linking their personal pain to the oppression they faced as blacks in Mississippi. In Harmony, Mississippi, thirteen-year-old Ida Ruth Griffith, read a poem to a class held under the trees:

I am Mississippi-fed,  
I am Mississippi-bred,  
Nothing but a poor, black boy.

I am a Mississippi slave,  
I shall be buried in a Mississippi grave,  
Nothing but a poor, dead boy.

Some students angrily challenged the poet’s use of the word “slave”; others defended it. “She’s right,” one student argued. “We are. Can your poppa vote? Can mine? Can our folks eat anywhere they want to?”<sup>36</sup> Students also read the works of many other poets—Langston Hughes, Gertrude Stein, Robert Frost, and e. e. cummings, for example—and often used these works as models for their own.

### Newspapers

Almost every one of the Freedom Schools published a newspaper. This action was in itself radical in a state whose press was controlled by the interests of the white power structure; in many communities, these student newspapers were the first alternative presses. Freedom School newspapers contained student poetry, announcements about political demonstrations, editorials, and reports of local events (see Excerpts of Student Work and Freedom School Data).

### Political Action

The direct link between the classroom and the community encouraged by the Citizenship Curriculum often occurred in the Freedom School Classrooms. The Freedom School was in many cases literally a school without walls, and passers-by could be drawn into the discussions. “One day three Negro ladies trudged by, looking angry and forlorn, on their way back from the courthouse, where they had just learned that their applications for voter registration had been rejected. The teacher called them over to tell what had happened. Thus the students learned of the registration procedures and how to help their parents pass the exams.”<sup>37</sup> In Jackson, Mississippi, Freedom School students and teachers organized a response to an announcement that African American parents would be allowed to register their children at a previously all-white public school. In classroom discussions and role playing, students explored their apprehensions about the consequences for parents who registered to vote; a teacher and student volunteers visited over seventy families and encouraged them to attend a prayer meeting organized by local ministers to support registration. When only one mother attended the meeting, students returned to the seventy families to urge them to register. Eleven of the forty-three eligible children were registered; this number represented progress for Mississippi. After realizing that black public school teachers were afraid to jeopardize their jobs by registering to vote, students at the Ruleville Freedom School performed role plays to encourage their teachers to vote and practiced picketing. With the support of their teacher, students wrote a letter announcing their intention to the principal and faculty, and successfully picketed the local high school. In many Freedom Schools, students shared the work of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. “It’s what the school was about—educating students for involvement in changing social conditions,” wrote teacher Pam Allen of the Holly Springs Freedom School. “[The] main work was registering people into the MFDP” (see Report, Mainly on Ruleville (excerpt) and New Houses of Liberty).

### **The Freedom School Convention**

Throughout Freedom Summer, Freedom School students had been educated for political empowerment. While the voting-age adults attended the MFDP state convention in Jackson, the students held their own convention in Meridian on August 6-8, and addressed many of the same issues. The students held a parallel convention, rather than leaving politics to their elders. Just as the students were asked to do voter registration work, they participated in the convention process as well. Edwin King described the MFDP as the PTA of the Freedom Schools. The Freedom Schools and the MFDP were, in many ways, the same organization.

*Freedom Schools—Final Report, 1964*, suggested that the best way to evaluate the effectiveness of the Freedom Schools was to read the *Program* from the Freedom School Convention in Meridian. The *Report* wanted the reader to “Note particularly the proposal for a state-wide school boycott. School boycotts are already in progress in Shaw and Harmony. A boycott is about to begin in Indianola. There will be many such boycotts during the winter.” If the primary purpose of the Freedom Schools was to empower students to take direct action, the existence of school boycotts was evidence of the success of the curriculum.

In an article he wrote for *Freedomways* in 1965, Staughton Lynd proposed “If I were to start a Freedom School now (and we are about to start one in New Haven), I would suggest: Begin with a Freedom School Convention and let that provide your curriculum” (see The Freedom Schools: Concept and Organization). He began to come to this conclusion during the second day of the Freedom School Convention during which the students had begun to reject the advice of

the adults. They had discovered that they could do everything themselves. What came out of this convention was a political program. Lynd believed at that time that “it would have been better if the schools had begun with such a convention, and if the statewide program brought back to each school by its delegates had then become the curriculum for the summer.” Lynd worried that the Civil Rights movement was being “strangely neglectful of program.” The Freedom School Convention delegates, on the other hand, were not being so neglectful. Lynd anticipated that the Freedom Schools could provide future political candidates who would be able “to declare themselves intelligently on a variety of issues” if the Freedom School Platform became the new curriculum of the Freedom Schools (see Platform of the Freedom School Convention).

### **FREEDOM SCHOOLS BEYOND FREEDOM SUMMER**

QUESTION: Even with all this, how can we hope to win in Mississippi?

ANSWER: We won't win, at least not for a very long time, unless the federal government throws its weight behind us.

QUESTION: What can we do to force the federal government to help us?

ANSWER: We can continue working constantly to show the world how horrible Mississippi is, and continue trying to change it.

From Unit VII, Part I,

The MFDP's attempt to challenge the seating of the regular Democrats at the Democratic National Convention was unsuccessful. However, the bitterness of defeat of at the convention was only the bitterness of losing a battle and not the war. Challenging the MDP in Atlantic City was only one of the goals of Freedom Summer. A sea change in consciousness was the other. And there was evidence that such a change had occurred, as Liz Fusco described in her report at the end of the summer (see Freedom Schools in Mississippi, 1964).

Many remained committed to continuing to work hard to change things in Mississippi. Freedom Schools continued to operate in the fall of 1964. The Mississippi Freedom Labor Union was organized in January of 1965 at a Freedom School Discussion. Federal funds became available through the federal Economic Opportunity Act of 1964. In 1965, a group of Freedom Summer workers used federal funding to establish day care centers for preschoolers and the FDP continued to register voters.

Once the summer ended, most volunteers returned to their homes but some stayed. Liz Fusco, who had been the head of the Indianola Freedom School, became coordinator for the fall program. In a report entitled “Freedom Centers—What's Happening,” dated September, 1964, Liz Fusco described some progress and some discouragement. Some Freedom Schools suspended daytime classes and held adult classes in the evening to support voter registration; other schools continued with daytime classes for children whose regular public school classes had been suspended for cotton picking. Many places maintained community centers which housed libraries and sponsored after-school tutoring. The Mississippi Student Union (MSU), an organization of teenagers, offered support for the continuing Freedom Schools. In Ruleville, “Kindergarten in the daytime, high school and adults in the evenings. Extensive use of library. . . . The adults meet two nights a week for reading and discussion. The MSU kids hold Sunday-afternoon meetings instead of Saturday-night dances, then refreshments.” In Cleveland, the “MSU is active in school, refusing by letter to raise money by the campus queen drive. Talking about eating in public places

and boycotting stores.” In Tchula, Fusco reported, “In process of building new community center. Freedom School staff mostly in jail” (see [Freedom School Data](#)).

Charles Cobb wrote that the Freedom School program, like the Movement, was “a victim of its success.” Freedom Summer had focused the attention of the country on Mississippi, and some change followed. “We had in one sense accomplished what we set out to do: a public accommodations law had been passed; a voting rights law seemed certain. Mississippi was now prominently on the political map. New organizations, like the Mississippi Child Development Group, with deeper financial pockets, were establishing themselves.” Federal programs like Head Start turned the problems of compensatory education over to government.

Cobb wrote, “Perhaps the fact that the schools existed at all was their greatest success. As Freedom School Director Staughton Lynd noted in a report to COFO that summer, the schools ‘helped to loosen the hard knot of fear and to organize the Negro community.’”<sup>38</sup> Lynd stated in a 1964 newspaper interview that the schools may have sown the seeds of future social change by briefly providing an alternative to Mississippi rigid caste system. “Mississippi is never going to be the same. There are 2,000 youngsters who now know that they can relate to whites on a basis of equality. These kids want to be educated; they reach out for it. If the Negro gets the vote, these are the people who will be in the legislature in future years.”<sup>39</sup>

But the Freedom Schools were neither the beginning nor the end of the process of linking education to social change. Their antecedents were many: the Highlander Folk School, the Citizens Education Program of the SCLC, the classes in nonviolent resistance held by James Lawson in Nashville, the role plays in Montgomery churches in preparation for the bus boycott, and Nonviolent High, to name only a few examples. Certain principles of education for social transformation were embedded in the Freedom School Curricula:

- The creation of an honest and egalitarian relationship between teacher and student
- The valuing and naming of the students’ own experience
- The asking of open-ended questions
- The presentation to students of an authentic and empowering view of themselves and their history
- The vision of the arts as a transformative force
- The emphasis on skills necessary for action and effective participation in the world
- The establishment of a direct line from classroom to community

In applying these principles, the Freedom Schools experienced some success and some frustration. There were some immediate victories and other victories more subtle and impossible to measure. The experience of these small and determined groups of teachers and students raised as many questions as it answered. The questions raised by the Freedom Schools and their predecessors are profound. Are schools servants of the existing social system, no matter how unjust that system might be, and is the task of teachers to modify student aspiration to ensure their students a place in the world as it is? Or is the classroom a place for transformation?

After visiting the Freedom Schools in 1964, educator and historian Howard Zinn reflected about their importance beyond Mississippi.

The Freedom Schools’ challenge to the social structure of Mississippi was obvious from the start. Its challenge to American education as a whole is more subtle. There is, to begin with, the provocative suggestion that an entire school system can be created in any community outside the

official order and critical of its suppositions. But beyond that, other questions were posed by the Mississippi experiment. . . . Can we, somehow, bring teachers and students together, not through the artificial sieve of certification and examination but on the basis of their common attraction to an exciting social goal? Can we solve the old educational problem of teaching children crucial values, while avoiding a blanket imposition of the teacher's ideas? Can this be done by honestly accepting as an educational goal that we want better human beings in the rising generation than we had in the last, and that this requires a forthright declaration that the educational process cherishes equality, justice, compassion and world brotherhood? . . . And cannot the schools have a running, no-holds-barred exchange of views about alternative ways to these goals? . . . Would it be possible to declare boldly that the aim of the schools is to find solutions for poverty, for injustice, for race and national hatred, and to turn all educational efforts into a national striving for those solutions?

Perhaps people can begin, here and there (not waiting for the government, but leading it) to set up other pilot ventures, imperfect but suggestive, like the one last summer in Mississippi. Education can, and should, be dangerous.<sup>40</sup>

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## ***TEACHING MATERIAL: QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES***

to be used with the Mississippi Freedom School Curriculum

**By Kathy Emery and Linda Gold**

Editors' Note: These questions and activities, taken together, are not intended to elicit a thorough understanding of the Curriculum. Our hope is that these suggestions give teachers and students some help in developing their own questions and activities.

### **Personal Writing (Journal writing, essays, autobiographies):**

Items 1-3 can be used particularly for journal writing. As students read the Curriculum, they can write about what they are reading from a personal and non-structured fashion as the basis for more analytical writing or in preparation for discussion.

1. Select **quotations** from the curriculum and use it as a basis for reflecting on your own experience. Choose a quotation which moves you, for example, one with which you strongly agree or disagree.
2. For each "**Concept**" introduced by the Freedom School Curriculum, write a response, e.g., a personal reflection, related experience, idea for a new program or vision of . . .
3. Select "**Questions**" from the Curriculum and respond to them personally. For example, "To what extent do we confer power on others? To what extent is that power real? What wouldn't you sell?"
4. What is the relationship of ignorance to fear? guilt to fear? fear to hate? Use your own personal experiences to illustrate your answer (See Unit V).

### **Unit III Questions and Activities**

1. What is assimilation? Do the three secondary questions advocate assimilation for African Americans? What is the difference between assimilation and integration. How do your answers to the questions in Unit III affect your position on the resegregation and unequal funding of US public schools today?
2. How can the Freedom School lesson on examining social myths be applied to your experience? (Select an advertisement, a newspaper article, a work of literature which you've read in school, or a lesson from your history text. Apply to it the questions raised by the Freedom School curriculum: What is taught in the schools and through other media? What are the myths of our society? What or whose purposes do these myths serve?)
3. "Concept. What education is." How would you answer the questions in this section if applied to you and your school? What do people learn in school besides reading, writing an arithmetic?"
4. Compare the "Mississippi Plan" (in Guide to Negro History, Part III, Reconstruction in Mississippi) to the situation in Mississippi the early 1960s. What are the essential

beliefs/tactics/ideas of the Mississippi Plan? Do you see any of these tactics in your interactions with authority?

5. Guide to Negro History: Are there any parallels between the presence of Federal Troops in Reconstruction and the presence of Federal Troops in the South during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s (e.g., Little Rock or Oxford)?

### **Historiography exercise I**

The Guide to Negro History contains the following sections:

Brief Synopsis of the Amistad Incident

Part I: Origins of Prejudice

Part II: Negro Resistance to Oppression

Part III: Reconstruction and the Beginning of Segregation

Divide the class into four groups. Each group reads one section of the *Guide*. After reading one's section, look at the American History textbook (or curriculum) that is used by your school (if there are several, borrow copies of each one. If this is problematic, your local library should have copies of various textbooks). Compare the content, style and organization of the material in your section of the *Guide* with the comparable section in the American History text (or curriculum) used by your school. Write a report to present to the rest of the class (preferably with visual aids) that reveals the results of your comparative analysis. For example, if there is no mention of the Amistad Incident, is there mention of similar incidents? What kinds of slave revolts are mentioned in the text? What role are Presidents given by the textbook(s) in relationship to slavery? How is J.Q. Adams portrayed in general by the text? Van Buren? When does slavery appear in your textbook/curriculum? How would one's understanding of slavery be different if the *Guide* were incorporated into your textbook/curriculum?

Keep in mind the following issues when doing your research and analysis:

1. What are the criteria for selection of the details in both the *Guide* and the textbook used at your school? What does the *Guide* suggest the criteria may be?
2. What is the purpose of the textbook; according to its authors (read preface or intro); according to the teacher (interview teacher) who uses the text or, according to those responsible (interview these people) for selecting the textbook for use in your school.
3. Does the textbook version of history inspire political activity on your part, does it discourage it? How so?

Some considerations when doing a comparative analysis: What information is the same in each text? What information is in one but not in the other? Which text promotes the purposes of the Freedom School Curriculum the best? How does your comparative analysis suggest what might be the purposes of the curriculum as defined by the textbook?

## Historiography exercise II

The Guide to Negro History suggests that teachers use the structure of the Amistad Lesson Plan as a guide. This lesson is structured thematically as opposed to many history lessons that are structured chronologically. The center of the lesson plan is a chronologically story of the specific incident that Spielberg has now made famous in his movie *Amistad*. But the lesson plan identifies several issues that “spin off” like spokes from the hub of a wheel. These issues – Slave Revolts, The Case in the Courts, Abolitionism, African Background and Slave Trade – become topics of study in their own right. The theory behind this part of the Freedom School Curriculum seems to be that the students’ interest in these topics is generated by the Amistad story.

1. Using the Amistad Unit as a model, construct a similar lesson plan for an historical incident of your choice. You may want to take a story from your own ethnic, religious, gender, national background or sexual orientation. For gays and lesbians, the story of Harvey Milk might come to mind. Try to pick a story that you are interested in. Then see what issues/topics can be “spun off” from it—i.e. issues and topics that are also of interest because of their connections to the “hub” issue.
2. Contrast the story/theme approach of the Amistad model with those experiences you have had in past history courses.
3. Do history textbooks in your school or in other schools use the story/theme approach? Can you make a guess as to why they do or don’t?
4. Why does the Freedom School Curriculum place such a high priority on “student interest”? Does your school place an equally high priority on student interest? Why or why not?

## Unit IV

### 1. **Research/Activity:**

- a. Each student bring in at least one newspaper article concerning the global economy (anything that has to do with goods made in one country and sold in another, or about changes in one country affecting the economic condition of another).
- b. In class, in groups of 4 or 5, each student explains the contents of his or her articles to others. As each student explains or reads his or her article the rest of the group takes notes trying to answer the following questions: (1) Who are the winners? the losers? (2) How do they win? lose?
- c. After discussing and taking notes on all the articles, the group writes a joint paper guided by the following questions: (1) Who is making money off of the global economy? (2) What are the explanations for this? (3) Do the explanations justify the money making?

3. **Research:** After reading the Mississippi Power Structure, research comparable statistics for your state today. For example, what the major job categories and their pay scales in your state? Which racial/ethnic, sex and age groups dominate each category? Much of this can be found on the web.

4. Create a power chart of any of the following: school district, town, county, state, or nation Do you know anyone who has challenged authority? What happened to them when they did? Can you create a composite example from the real life examples that you know of people who have challenged authority? Does this composite example illustrate the power structure chart of your school? town/city? state? the nation?

5. Who were the Dixiecrats? What powers did they have? Does William Greider in *Who Will Tell the People ?* (PBS video or in book form) make an argument that a similar power structure operates today? What myths support such a power structure?

6. **Research Activity:** This unit includes the case study on Nazi Germany. One purpose of this study was to study the Nazi methods of control so they “might be applied to a comparative analysis of the Negro in the South in order to gain greater insight into . . . [the] means by which this system can be resisted successfully and overcome.” Does this differ from Alinsky’s following assertion?

In other words, use the Case study of *Nazi Germany* to evaluate Saul Alinsky’s claim that “Ghandi’s passive resistance would never had had a chance against a totalitarian state such as that of the Nazis . . . George Orwell, in his essay *Reflection on Gandhi*, made some pertinent observations on this point: ‘he believed in arousing the world, which is only possible if the world gets a change to hear what you are doing.’ It is difficult to see how Gandhi’s methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the regime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly it is impossible, not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being or even to make your intentions known to your adversary” (pp. 41-42, *Rules for Radicals*, Vintage Books, New York, 1972)

7. If you were a student in a Freedom School, how would you answer the “Secondary Questions” after having gone through Units I - IV? How would you answer them as a student today?

8. **Historiography:** Compare the descriptions in the Power of the Dixiecrats with comparable passages in the U. S. history texts used in your school. You may have to be a bit creative in your analysis. For example, if your school text has no mention of the 1948 Democratic nominating convention and the States Rights party, then look at the history of the Democratic Party from 1944-64 and compare that to the History section in the case study. You are looking for different versions or emphasis of the same events or what details are included what are left out. Do such differences lead to different interpretations of the past? What is the significance of these interpretations?

## Unit V

1. Read A.S. Neill’s *Summerhill*. What role did fear play in Summerhill? What role does fear play in your school? What happened to those students who choose not to attend classes at Summerhill? Do you like to learn? Under what circumstances have you learned the best? If TV and cinemas didn’t exist, how might people spend their leisure time? What did students at Summerhill do when they become bored?

2. How do the purposes of this unit “train people to be active agents of change”? Are you and your fellow students being trained to be “active agents of social change? Do you think you should be?

3. **ACTIVITY.** As a class, re-enact the stick figure exercise. Is it an effective teaching technique? Write a stick figure exercise that would apply to your life today.

4. The truth shall make you free. How does Unit V support this statement. Are you persuaded?

### **Unit VI**

1. What is the relationship between the structure of an organization and the behavior of people within that organization? (Does a town meeting political structure promote different behavior than one person rule?)

2. What is the relationship between values and behavior? Does one behave according to one’s values? Do we need help in behaving according to one’s values, according to how one believes he or she should act?

3. While this statistic varies depending on the definition of the terms of the statement, it is fair to say that the United States has 5 percent of the world’s population but consumes 30 percent of the world’s resources. Using the principles and concepts of Unit VI, what questions would you ask of this materially unequal situation? What questions can you ask that addresses a different and more just distribution of the world’s resources? Are the world’s resources (forests, minerals, drinking water) dwindling? Is the world’s population growing? How will the United States middle class maintain its material condition in the face of future changes in resources and population should it choose to do so?

4. What current evidence that material well being doesn’t guarantee spiritual well being? What is the evidence today that poverty undermines spiritual well being?

5. Is there an ethical system implicit or explicit in the Freedom School Curriculum (Is there a list of commandments that forbids or demands certain behavior of all human beings)?

6. After reading the Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements, how would you answer the given questions?

Was “the movement the germ of a new society?”

“Would we want a whole society in which people related to each other as they do in the movement?”

### **Unit VII**

#### *Part I*

1. Why is Part I of this unit organized differently from the other units? (What are the “basic concepts” of Part I?)

2. Create subcategories to Part I. Decide how many there are and what titles to give to each sub-categories.

3. What does Part I reveal about the theory behind “the movement”? the strategy? the tactics?

4. How does the movement define success? failure?

*Part 2, I. COFO*

5. How does a federation of organizations create “unity”, “continuity” and “identity”?

6. Do any of the projects of the COFO programs strike you as particularly radical or surprising? (What does “radical” mean?)

7. What are the four “phases” of the COFO program?

*Part 2, II. Miss Hamer’s Campaign*

8. Why should poor whites have voted for Fannie Lou Hamer and not Jamie Whitten?

9. Why is Hamer and not another MFDP candidate (e.g. Aaron Henry) featured by the curriculum?

10. Why did Hamer run for office if she and her supporters knew that they were going to lose?

*Part 2, III. Other COFO Political Programs*

11. Why is COFO encouraging blacks to participate in the Democratic Party’s precinct, county and district elections when COFO also plans to create a separate Freedom Democratic Party?

*Part 2, IV. Voting in Mississippi*

12. What is the purpose of precinct meetings? How are they democratic in theory but not democratic in practice?

13. At which level is the most power exercised - precinct, county, district, state convention, state primary, state general election, or the National nominating convention?

14. How can the voting laws so effectively discriminate while being so immune to legal accusations of discrimination?

15. Why might the degree of white violence against black voters in a county be proportionate to the ratio of whites to blacks in that county?

16. Were Freedom Days successful? effective? strategic?

*Part 2, V. The Historical Development of white, one party politics*

17. Why was the Compromise of 1877 a pivotal moment for black civil rights?
18. Why would “the small town rich man” contribute money to each of the opposing sides in an election?
19. Why might blacks benefit from the establishment of a Republican Party in the South. Why might they not benefit?

**QUESTIONS for class discussion based on the author’s Introduction, the Curriculum and Supplemental Documents**

1. “To train people to be active agents in bringing about social change.” This is a primary purpose of the Freedom School Curriculum. To what degree is your own study of this curriculum moving you to become an active agent of social change? What are the obstacles in the way of such a change? Must there be a “movement” for individuals to be agents of change? Do individuals start movements (how do movements start)?
2. How did Kirsty Powell (A Report, mainly on Ruleville) alter the “on paper” version of the Freedom School Curriculum? To what degree did Kirsty Powell implement Noel Day’s advice (Notes on Teaching)? Emerson’s (Non Material Teaching Suggestions)? Did she follow each unit’s directives? To what degree was the “reality” of her experience in Ruleville responsible for this? What implications can be drawn from the difference between curriculum on paper and in practice?
3. Can Ruth Emerson’s teaching theory (Non Material Teaching Suggestions) be accurately described as process rather than goal oriented? Is her approach consistent with the purpose of the Freedom Schools? For example, if the students don’t complete the Citizenship Curriculum, will the students be as effective canvassers as they might be upon completion of the curriculum? Are Emerson and Stembridge (Notes on Teaching) in perfect agreement? fundamental agreement?
4. How does the dominant culture today and the Freedom School Curriculum differ in their use of the following terms: Question, Test, Discussion, Drama.
5. Explain the direct connection between the Freedom Schools and political action. Have you ever experienced this direct connection in your own education?
6. African American culture and traditions were maintained through an oral tradition. The oral tradition is characterized by:
  - a. a strong sense of community, as community is the “library” of the oral tradition.
  - b. A respect for elders as containers of history and story.
  - c. An emphasis on gatherings or rituals as a means of affirming community and sharing stories.
  - d. An emphasis on the strongly felt, immediate experience.

e. An emphasis on song, music, and rhythm as a means of creating an immediate feeling of connection and of sharing history.

How does the Freedom School Curriculum use the strengths of the oral tradition? How are these strengths evident in the Freedom Movement in Mississippi? In the Civil Rights Movement in general?

### **ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE WEBSITE INTRODUCTION, SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS AND THE CURRICULUM**

**Debate Resolution:** The basic and secondary questions of the Freedom School Curriculum provide the only effective means of evaluating the Curriculum. (see teaching materials in Howard Zinn's *People's History of the United States*, teaching edition, for a description of how to conduct debates)

**For the teacher to share with his or her students:** Compare your philosophy of teaching with that contained within the Freedom School Curriculum. Consider the following issues:

- How do people learn?
- What are optimal learning conditions?
- What are the external as well as internal constraints/obstacles that an individual teacher faces when trying to teach in a public or private school today?

#### **Exercise A - Lesson Plans (research, analysis)**

1. Identify where in your school's curriculum, if at all, the "concepts" of the Freedom School Curriculum are taught.
  - a. If taught in a course at your school, are there specific "lesson plans" devoted to the concept(s)?
  - b. If not taught specifically or explicitly at your school, why not? Does the school believe that such concepts are taught elsewhere? What is the evidence that they are or are not?
2. Write Lesson Plans with the "concepts" of the Freedom School Curriculum but replace the content with that which pertains to your life. Your lesson plan should include the following: statement of purpose; list of materials; introduction; questions; myths that the lesson will destroy. After choosing a concept, you might want to begin by thinking about myths associated with such a concept.
3. What conclusions can you draw about the role "curriculum" plays in the construction of your reality?

#### **Exercise B - Teaching Empowerment (Drama, role-play)**

1. Divide the class into groups of four.

2. Each group chooses two people from the following list of roles: a student at your school (present time); the principal of your school (present time); a teacher at your school (present time); a student's parent (present time); a poor white Mississippi 16 year old (1964); a 16 year old Freedom School student (1964); a white northern Freedom School teacher (1964); a black northern Freedom School teacher (1964); a black southern Freedom school teacher (1964); and the sheriff of Hattiesburg (1964).
3. The group writes an imagined dialogue about education and power between the two persons chosen from the list above. Some of the issues you may want to address in the dialogue are: empowerment; talking about one's feelings; class discussion; knowing how power is exercised; what should teachers know before they teach a class at your school; degree of freedom in asking questions; the kind of transformation that occurs when students are allowed to ask questions; connection of history to what is happening now; and role models in history class.
4. Each group chooses two of its members to act out the dialogue in front of the rest of the class. The entire class can discuss each presentation after it is made.

### **Exercise C - Guidelines for a New Teacher (research, analysis)**

In groups or individually: Compose an introduction for a new teacher at a school.

1. Identify a school other than your own. Arrange permission to interview several students at that school.
2. Write an interview schedule in advance of the actual interviews. When writing the schedule (list of questions in the order you wish to ask them during the interview) keep the following in mind:
  - a. Avoid writing questions to which a "yes" or "no" answer may be given.
  - b. Have several follow up questions prepared to encourage your interviewee to elaborate upon his or her answers to your questions.
  - c. Ask questions that will elicit answers that can be used to fulfill your goal of writing "Notes" for new teachers entering that school. The topics that the interview schedule must address are the following: What are the students like? What do the students demand of their teachers? What are the conditions under which teachers teach?
3. Use the data collected (notes and recorded answers) to write Guidelines for New Teachers in the manner of Stembridge's "Introduction to the Summer" (Notes on Teaching in Mississippi)
4. Ask the principal (or some administrator) of the school for which you wrote your "Introduction" to read it and give you his or her responses to what you wrote. Write up the principal's response.
5. Write an analysis of your experience in this exercise. Base your analysis on a comparison of the school you studied with that of the Freedom Schools in Mississippi in 1964. How and why

does your "Introduction" differ from Stembridge's? Was the principal's reaction to your "Introduction" predictable? Why or why not? Present results to your class.

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## SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTS

### *PROSPECTIUS FOR THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER*

“It can be argued that in the history of the United States democracy has produced great leaders in great crises. Sad as it may be, the opposite has been true in Mississippi. As yet there is little evidence that the society of the closed mind will ever process the moral resources to reform itself, or the capacity for self-examination, or even the tolerance of self-examination.”

From *Mississippi: The Closed Society*

By James W. Silver

It has become evident to the civil rights groups involved in the struggle for freedom in Mississippi that political and social justice cannot be won without the massive aid of the country as a whole, backed by the power and authority of the federal government. Little hope exists that the political leaders of Mississippi will steer even a moderate course in the near future (Governor Johnson’s inaugural speech notwithstanding); in fact, the contrary seems true: as the winds of change grow stronger, the threatened political elite of Mississippi becomes more intransigent and fanatical in its support of the status quo. The closed society of Mississippi is, as Professor Silver asserts, without the moral resources to reform itself. And Negro efforts to win the right to vote cannot succeed against the extensive legal weapons and police powers of local and state officials without a nationwide mobilization of support.

A program is planned for this summer which will involve the massive participation of Americans dedicated to the elimination of racial oppression. Scores of college students, law students, medical students, teachers, professors, ministers, technicians, folk artists and lawyers from all over the country have already volunteered to work in Mississippi this summer—and hundreds more are being recruited.

Why a project of this size?

1. Projects of the size of those of the last three summers (100 to 150 workers) are rendered ineffective quickly by police threats and detention of members.
2. Previous projects have gotten no national publicity on the crucial issue of voting rights and, hence, have little national support either from public opinion or from the federal government. A large number of students from the North making the necessary sacrifices to go South would make abundantly clear to the government and the public that this is not a situation which can be ignored any longer, and would project an image of cooperation between Northern and white people and Southern Negro people to the nation which will reduce fears of an impending race war.
3. Because of the lack of numbers in the past, all workers in Mississippi have had to devote themselves to voter registration, leaving no manpower for stopgap community education projects which can reduce illiteracy as well as raise the level of education of Negroes. Both of these activities are, naturally, essential to the project’s emphasis on voting.
4. Bail money cannot be provided for jailed workers; hence, a large number of people going South would prevent the project from being halted in its initial stages by immediate arrests. Indeed, what will probably happen in some communities is the filling of jails with civil

rights workers to overflowing, forcing the community to realize that it cannot dispense with the problem of Negroes' attempting to register simply by jailing "outsiders".

Why this summer?

Mississippi at this juncture in the movement has received too little attention—that is, attention to what the state's attitude really is—and has presented COFO with a major policy decision. Either the civil rights struggle has to continue, as it has in the past few years, with small projects in selected communities with no real progress on any fronts, or there must be a task force of such a size as to force either the state and the municipal governments to change their social and legal structures, or the federal government to intervene on behalf of the constitutional rights of its citizens.

Since 1964 is an election year, the clear-cut issue of voting rights should be brought out in the open. Many SNCC and CORE workers in Mississippi hold the view that Negroes will never vote in large numbers until federal marshals intervene. At any rate, many Americans must be made to realize that the voting rights they so often take for granted involve considerable risk for Negroes in the South. In the larger context of the national civil rights movement, enough progress has been made during the last year that there can be no turning back. Major victories in Mississippi, recognized as the stronghold of racial intolerance in the South, would speed immeasurably the breaking down of legal and social discrimination in both North and South.

The project is seen as a response to the Washington March and an attempt to assure that in the Presidential election year of 1964 all American citizens are given the franchise. The people at work on the project are neither working at odds with the federal government nor at war with the State of Mississippi. The impetus is *not against* Mississippi but for the right to vote, the ability to read, the aspirations and the training to work.

Direction of the Project:

This summer's work in Mississippi is sponsored by COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations, which includes the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the NAACP, as well as Mississippi community groups. Within the state COFO has made extensive preparations since mid-January to develop structured programs which will put to creative use the talents and energies of the hundreds of expected summer volunteers.

*Voter Registration:* This will be the most concentrated level of activity. Voter registration workers will be involved in an intensive summer drive to encourage as many Negroes as possible to register. They will participate in COFO's Freedom Registration, launched in early February, to register over 400,000 Negroes on Freedom Registration books. These books will be set up in local Negro establishments and will have simplified standards of registration (literacy test and the requirement demanding an interpretation of a section of the Mississippi Constitution will be eliminated). Freedom Registration books will serve as the basis of a challenge of the official books of the state and the validity of "official" elections this fall. Finally, registration workers will assist in the campaigns of Freedom candidates, who are expected to run for seats in all five of the State's Congressional districts and for the seat of Senator John Stennis, who is up for re-election.

*Freedom Schools:*

1. *General Description.* About 25 Freedom Schools are planned, of two varieties: day schools in about 20-25 towns (commitments still pending in some communities) and one or two

boarding, or residential, schools on college campuses. Although the local communities can provide school buildings, some furnishings, and staff housing (and, for residential schools, student housing), all equipment, supplies and staff will have to come from outside. A nationwide recruitment program is underway to find and train the people and solicit the equipment needed. In the schools, the typical day will be hard study in the morning, an afternoon break (because it's too hot for an academic program) and less formal evening activities. Because the afternoons are free, students will have an opportunity to work with the COFO staff in other areas of the Mississippi Freedom Summer program, and the additional experience will enrich their contribution to the Freedom School sessions.

a. *Day Schools*. The day schools will accommodate about 50 students, with a staff of 15. There are 20 communities, located in all five Congressional districts of the state, where the people in the community have indicated that they want a Freedom School and are cooperating in finding facilities and housing. These are the towns of some size, where the local Negro communities can provide housing for the staff, and where a suitable building can be located and safely leased. The day schools will attract high-school students from the immediate area only, since there are no provisions planned for living in, but there will be organized contacts—exchanges, sports events, etc.—between day Freedom Schools across the State. The sessions will present similar but not identical material, so the students can profitably attend one or both sessions. This will allow some adjustment for students who must work during the cotton-picking season, and faculty people who are unable to stay six weeks.

b. *Boarding Schools*. The one or two boarding schools will accommodate 150 to 200 students apiece, in a college-campus atmosphere. There will be one six-week session of the boarding schools. The curriculum will be similar to that of the day schools, but on a more intensive level, and with an additional goal of bringing together and training high-quality student leadership. The boarding schools will recruit students who have displayed some leadership potential and can profit from the more intensive approach.

c. *Curriculum*. The aim of the Freedom Schools' curriculum will be to challenge the student's curiosity about the world, introduce him to his particularly "Negro" cultural background, and teach him basic literacy skills in one integrated problem. That is, the students will study problem areas in the world, such as the administration of justice or the relation between state and federal authority. Each problem area will be built around a specific episode which is close to the experience of Mississippi students. The whole question of the court system, and the place of law in our lives, with many relevant ramifications, can be dealt with in connection with the study of how one civil rights case went through the courts and was ultimately decided in favor of the defendant. The episode of Congressman Jamie Whitten's tractor deal, where Whitten quashed a federal program to train over 2,000 tractor drivers in the Mississippi Delta (because it would have been integrated), can lead one into the whole area of state and federal relations. The campaign of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer for Congress (running against Jamie Whitten) provides a basis for studying all the forces which are against her, and which have worked against a Negro's even attempting to run for Congress in Mississippi. Planning the COFO project to challenge the regular Mississippi delegation at the Democratic National Convention provides the starting-point for a study of the whole Presidential nomination and election procedures. These and other "case studies" which are used to explore larger problem areas in society will be offered to the students. The Negro history outline, as presently planned, will be divided into sections to be coordinated with the problem-area presentation. In this context, students will be given practice activities to improve their skills with reading and writing. Writing press releases, leaflets, etc., for the political

campaigns is one example. Writing affidavits and reports of arrests, demonstrations, trials, etc., which occur during the summer in their towns, will be another. Using the telephone as a campaign tool will both help the political candidates and help students to improve their techniques in speaking effectively in a somewhat formal situation. By using a multidimensional, integrated program, the curriculum can be more easily absorbed into the direct experience of the students.

d. *Students.* Students for the Freedom Schools will be recruited through established contacts with ministers, educators, and other organizational contacts in the state. Around a hundred applications have already been returned, and we do not anticipate that written applications will form the bulk of the students selected. A statewide student organization, the Mississippi Student Union, has recently been formed, and will be important to the recruitment of students. Students who have shown evidence of leadership potential will be encouraged to attend the state-wide boarding schools, to meet students from other parts of the state, and lay the foundation of a much broader student movement.

e. *Staff.* Both professional and nonprofessional teachers will participate in the staffing of the schools. Professional teachers will be sponsored by the professional teachers' associations, the National Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church and other institutions with educational resources. The nonprofessional teachers will be selected from among the applicants for the summer project. A special delegation of Chicago high-school students, who have taught Negro history to other students their own age under the auspices of Chicago's Amistad Society, will work as student teachers in the Negro history program.

f. *Schedule.* The boarding-school staff and staff for the first session of the day schools will go through a general orientation program with the community center staff, probably held at Mt. Beulah. This orientation will run July 8-12. On July 13, the boarding schools and the first session of the day schools will receive students. Orientation for the teaching staff of the second session of the day schools will be held August 5-9. On August 10, the second session of the day schools will start classes. The sessions will end on August 22 for the boarding school and August 30 for the second-session day school.

*Community Centers:* The community centers program projects a network of community centers across the state. Conceived as along-range institution, these centers will provide a structure for a sweeping range of recreational and educational programs. In doing this, they will not only serve basic needs of Negro communities now ignored by the social service provisions of the State, but will form a dynamic focus for the development of community organization. The educational features of centers will include job-training programs for the unskilled and unemployed, literacy and remedial programs for adults as well as young people, public health programs such as prenatal and infant care, basic nutrition, etc., to alleviate some of the serious health problems of Negro Mississippians, adult education workshops which would deal with family relations, federal service programs, home improvement and other information vital to the needs of Negro communities, and also extracurricular programs for grade-school and high-school students to supplement educational deficiencies and provide opportunity for critical thought and creative expression. Each center would have a well-rounded library because Negroes in many communities now have no access to an adequate library.

Though the community centers program is primarily educational, some of each center's resources would be used to provide much-needed recreational facilities for the Negro community. In most communities in Mississippi the only recreation outside of taverns is the movies, and for Negroes this means segregated movies. If there is a movie theater in the Negro community, it is

old, run-down, and shows mostly out of date, third-rate Hollywood films. The film program of the centers will not only provide a more agreeable atmosphere for movies; it will bring films of serious content which are almost never shown in Mississippi, where ideas are rigidly controlled. Other recreational offerings will be music appreciation classes, arts and crafts workshops, drama groups, discussion clubs on current events, literature and Negro achievement, etc., pen-pal clubs, organized sports (where equipment allows), and occasional special performances by outside entertainers, such as folk festivals, jazz concerts, etc.; organized storytelling for young children will be entertaining, and will introduce them to the resources of the center's library and to reading for pleasure in general.

*Special Projects:*

a. Research Project—A number of summer workers will devote themselves to research on the economic and political life of Mississippi. Some of this work can be done outside the state, but much will need resources which can be found only in Mississippi. In addition, a number of people will be asked to live in white communities to survey attitudes and record reactions to summer happenings.

b. Legal Projects—A team of lawyers and at least 100 law students are expected to come to Mississippi to launch a massive legal offensive against the official tyranny of the State of Mississippi. Law students will be dispersed to projects around the State to serve as legal advisers to voter registration workers and to local people. Others will be concentrated in key areas where they will engage in legal research and begin to prepare suits against the State and local officials and to challenge every law that deprives Negroes of the freedom.

c. White Communities—Until now there has been no systematic attempt by people interested in the elimination of hate and bigotry to work within the white communities of the Deep South. It is the intention of the Mississippi Summer Projects to do just that. In the past year, a significant number of Southern white students have been drawn into the movement. Using students from upper Southern states such as Tennessee, and occasionally native Mississippians, SNCC hopes to develop programs within Mississippi's white community. These programs will deal directly with the problems of the white people. While almost all Negroes in Mississippi are denied the right to vote, statistics clearly indicate that a majority of whites are excluded as well. In addition, poverty and illiteracy can be found in abundance among Mississippi whites. There is in fact a clear area for Southern white students to work in, for in many ways Mississippi has imprisoned her white people along with her blacks. This project will be pilot and experimental and the results are unpredictable. But the effort to organize and educate whites in the direction of democracy and decency can no longer be delayed.

d. The Theater Project—Sponsored by the Tougaloo Drama Department, this summer will also mark the beginning of a repertory theater in Jackson, Mississippi. The actors will be Negro Mississippians; the plays will dramatize the experience of the Negro in Mississippi and in America; the stage will be the churches, community centers and fields of rural Mississippi.

Using the theater as an instrument of education as well as a source of entertainment, a new area of protest will be opened.

**PROSPECTUS FOR A  
SUMMER FREEDOM SCHOOL PROGRAM IN MISSISSIPPI**

The Proposal (originally submitted by Charles Cobb, Dec 1963)

(Although this original proposal was submitted for the Mississippi Summer Project, it is relative to all Black Belt communities where the conditions are deplorably similar, and the prospectus is pertinent to the Freedom School programs that can operate all year round.)

It is, I think, just about universally recognized that Mississippi education, for black or white, is grossly inadequate in comparison with education around the country. Negro education in Mississippi is the most inadequate and inferior in the state. Mississippi's impoverished educational system is also burdened with virtually a complete absence of academic freedom, and students are forced to live in an environment that is geared to squash intellectual curiosity, and different thinking. University of Mississippi Professor James Silver, in a recent speech, talked of "social paralysis . . . where nonconformity is forbidden, where the white man is not free, where he does not dare express a deviating opinion without looking over his shoulder." This "social paralysis" is not limited to the white community, however. There are Negro students who have been thrown out of classes for asking about the freedom rides, or voting. Negro teachers have been fired for saying the wrong thing. The State of Mississippi destroys "smart niggers" and its classrooms remain intellectual waste lands.

In our work, we have several concerns oriented around Mississippi Negro students:

1. The need to get into the schools around the state and organize the students, with the possibility of a statewide coordinated student movement developing.
2. A student force to work with us in our efforts around the state.
3. The responsibility to fill an intellectual and creative vacuum in the lives of young Negro Mississippians, and to get them to articulate their own desires, demands and questions. More students need to stand up in classrooms around the state, and ask their teachers a real question.

As the summer program for Mississippi now shapes up, it seems as if hundreds of students as well as professional educators from some of the best universities and colleges in the North will be coming to Mississippi to lend themselves to the movement. These are some of the best minds in the country, and their academic value ought to be recognized, and taken advantage of.

I would like to propose summer Freedom Schools during the months of July and August, for tenth and eleventh-grade high school students, in order to:

1. supplement what they aren't learning in high schools around the state.
2. give them a broad intellectual and academic experience during the summer to bring back to fellow students in classrooms in the state, and
3. form the basis for statewide student action such as school boycotts, based on their increased awareness.

I emphasize tenth and eleventh-grade students, because of the need to be assured of having a working force that remains in the state high schools putting to use what it has learned.

The curriculum of this school would fall into several groupings:

1. supplementary education, such as basic grammar, reading, math, typing, history, etc.
- Some of the already-developed programmed educational materials might be used experimentally.

2. Cultural programs such as art and music appreciation, dance (both folk and modern), music (both folk and classical), drama, possibly creative writing workshops, for it is important that the art of effective communication through the written word be developed in Mississippi students.

3. Political and social science, relating their studies to their society. This should be a prominent part of the curriculum.

4. Literature

5. Film programs.

Special projects, such as a student newspaper, voicing student opinion, or the laying of plans for a statewide student conference, could play a vital role in the program. Special attention should be given to the development of a close student-teacher relationship. Four or five students to one teacher might be good, as it offers a chance of dialogue. The overall theme of the school would be the student as a force for social change in Mississippi.

If we are concerned with breaking the power structure, then we have to be concerned with building up our own institutions to replace the old, unjust, decadent ones which make up the existing power structure. Education in Mississippi is an institution which can be validly replaced, as much of the educational institutions in the state are not recognized around the country anyway.

### The Program

1. General Description: About 25 Freedom Schools are planned, of two varieties: day schools in about 20 to 25 towns (commitment still pending) and one or two boarding, or residential, schools on college campuses. Although the local communities can provide schools buildings and staff housing, all equipment, supplies and staff will have to come from the outside. Students should have an opportunity to work with the staff in other areas of the project, so that the additional experience will enrich their contribution to the Freedom School sessions.

2. Curriculum: On the weekend of March 21, and 22, the National Council of Churches sponsored a conference in N.Y.C. to develop a curriculum for the Freedom Schools. This conference brought together a group of well-qualified educators and many of the more perceptive minds presently engaged in studying our society. The conference participants worked from a preliminary outline which laid out the basic skills which the students need to improve, divided into four areas:

#### I. Leadership development

a. to give students the perspective of being in a long line of protest and pressure for social and economic justice (i.e. to teach Negro history and the history of the movement.)

b. to educate students in the general goals of the movement, give them wider perspectives (enlarged social objectives, nonviolence, etc.)

c. to train students in the specific organizational skills that they need to develop Southern Negro communities:

1. public speaking

2. handling of press and publicity

3. getting other people to work

4. organizing mass meetings and workshops, getting speakers, etc.

5. keeping financial records, affidavits, reports, etc.
  6. developing skill in dealing with people in the community
  7. canvassing
  8. duplicating techniques, typing, etc.
- d. to plan with each other further action of the student movement.

## II. Remedial Academic Program

- a. to improve comprehension in reading, fluency and expressiveness in writing.
- b. to improve mathematical skill (general arithmetic and basic algebra and geometry.)
- c. to fill the gaps in knowledge of basic history and sociology, especially American.
- d. to give a general picture of the American economic and political system.
- e. to introduce students to art, music and literature of various classical periods, emphasizing distinctive features of each style.
- f. to generate knowledge of and ability to use the scientific method.

## III. Contemporary Issues

- a. to give students more sophisticated views of some current issues.
- b. to introduce students to thinking of local difficulties in a context of national problems.
- c. to acquaint students with procedures of investigating a problem-rudimentary research.

## IV. Non-academic Curriculum

- a. to allow students to meet each other as completely as possible, in order to form a network of student leaders who know each other.
- b. to give students experience in organization and leadership
  1. field work— voter registration
  2. student publications
  3. student government
- c. to improve their ability to express themselves formally (through creative writing, drama, talent shows, semi-spontaneous discussions, etc.)

As a result of the curriculum conference, the curriculum planning took the following direction:

The aim of the Freedom School curriculum will be to challenge the student's curiosity about the world, introduce him to his particularly "Negro" cultural background, and teach him basic literacy skills in one integrated program. That is, the students will study problem areas in their world, such as the administration of justice, or the relation between state and federal authority. Each problem area will be built around a specific episode which is close to the experience of the students. The whole question of the court systems, and the place of law in our lives, with many relevant ramifications, can be dealt with in connection with the study of how one civil rights case went through the courts and was ultimately decided in favor of the defendant. The campaign of a Negro for Congress provides a basis for studying all the forces that which are against the Negro candidate, and which have worked against a Negro's even attempting to run for Congress. The challenge of the regular Mississippi delegation at the Democratic National Convention provides the starting-point for a study of the whole presidential nomination and the election procedure. These and other "case studies" which can be used to explore larger problem areas in the society will be offered to students. The Negro history outline, as presently planned, will be divided into

sections to be coordinated with the problem area presentation. In this context, students will be given practice activities to improve their skill with reading and writing. Writing press releases, leaflets, etc. for the political campaign is one example. Writing affidavits and reports of arrests, demonstrations, and trials, etc. which occur during the summer in their towns will be another. Using the telephone as a campaign tool will both help the political candidates and help students to improve their technique in speaking effectively in a somewhat formal situation. By using the multi-dimensional, integrated program, the curriculum can be more easily absorbed into the direct experience of the student, and thus overcome some of the academic problems of concentration and retention.

***CURRICULUM CONFERENCE SUBGROUP REPORT***

Report of a subgroup of the Leadership Development and Current Issues Committee at the Mississippi Summer Project Curriculum Conference. March 21-22

The group reporting dealt with political, economic, and social issues.

Approach: Problem-Solving through a series of case studies.

To develop in the future leaders of Mississippi an ability to deal with the problems of their state. Problem solving, as the committee views it, will be developed through a series of case studies dealing with the relevant political, economic, and social issues.

Advantages of approach:

1. Each problem or “case” will be related to the experiences and life situation of the students in Mississippi. It was felt that the academic disciplines of economics, politics, etc. could be best presented in the form that they present themselves in one’s life. For example, economics can be presented not as a graph but rather in the form of a loan not made or a job lost to a machine.

2. We will be able to enact new educational values by practicing more creative methods which will stimulate latent talents and interests that have been submerged too long. It is felt that one of the things which can be accomplished in such a short period of time is a “whetting of appetites” for further reading and educational experiences.

3. This approach allows for acquainting the participants with an awareness of the forces at work in our society and at the same time drawing on the experiences of the students and teachers involved. It demands very active participation from those who are to be introduced to new concepts. Most important, it seeks to draw on new kinds of creative abilities which are unfortunately not valued and remain untapped by the standard and presently accepted methods of teaching. These methods rely heavily upon tests and other methods of evaluation which are geared to particular cultural background.

4. The case study approach compensates for the obvious lack of training and standard cultural values of many of the teachers by focusing on those being taught and the method of teaching rather than the teacher himself.

5. We feel that such a curriculum will result in a creative experience for both the students and the teachers. It is hoped that both will come away with a new awareness of themselves and the movement. Perhaps, the children will be able to develop a new way of thinking and be awoken to their powers of analytic reasoning. In short we feel that the Freedom Schools can accomplish the vital task of causing high school youth in Mississippi to QUESTION.

6. The approach is not geared to a particular educational level but can be used successfully with any group since what happens in the classroom situation will be determined by the classes’ participation.

Preliminary working plan:

1. Fourteen “case-studies” or problems will be farmed out to various interested individuals to be researched.

2. Such research will require more imagination than diligence since we are not so interested in quantity of facts but concerned mainly with connections and associations which will be able to cross-cut the political, economic, and social elements of a given problem. We hope that the creativity of the class sessions will be mirrored by the creativity of the research as the students associate and pull incidents from their own experiences which are called to mind by the discussions which in turn, are centred around the case studies.

3. Perhaps the most imaginative part of the researchers work will be required as he devises audio and visual techniques for illustrating otherwise meaningless and unrelated facts. He will try to remember photographs and pictures, tapes and records, newspaper articles, movies, plays, songs and many more pertinent materials which are not usually thought of as educational tools.

Topics: The following will be a description of the cases with some suggestions as to the directions of the topics. These directions are only initial suggestions for it will be the task of the researcher to thoroughly work out all the implications of a given problem.

#### 1. Issue: Jamie Whitten and the Tractors

Description: This involves a decision by Congressman Jamie Whitten of Mississippi to introduce a tractor training program into an area of the state. The program would have relied upon Negro laborers but since the political stakes were very high, the situation has become extremely involved.

Ramifications: Automation—Mrs. Hamer’s campaign (She is a Negro citizen of Miss. who is running against Mr. Whitten in the forthcoming congressional elections in the state)—political power and interest groups—intrastate politics—federal programs, their use and misuse.

Researcher: Robert Moses

#### 2. Issue: Mrs. Hamer’s Campaign

Ramifications: National politics—Political parties and the National Conventions—The Miss. Delegations—Voter registration and Freedom Registration—COFO:—its development and value; its relationship to power in politics—Mrs. Hamer’s platform.

Researchers: Work-study group, Dona Richards Moses, Mendy Samstein, Jesse Morris

#### 3. School Boycotts in Mississippi (Hattiesburg, Canton)

Ramifications: School boycotts in Northern cities—Techniques of the movement in the north i.e. rent strike—Chicago’s relationship to Miss.—Slum ghetto areas in the north i.e. how do the ghettos of Chicago compare with Miss.—evaluation of Miss. Schools and other segregated schools.

Materials: Textbooks covering the same topic can be compared (northern—southern): tapes are available from Haryou and Peggy and Noel Day in Boston.

Researcher: Rochelle Horowitz

#### 4. Hattiesburg Demonstrations with respect to Communications and Public Relations

Ramifications: Press Releases: how to write them, where to send them—comparison of northern and southern account of the same incident—freedom of the press north and south:

what are its powers and how does it operate— what is the need for ministers and students from the north— what are the effects of these northerners upon demonstrations and police action.

Researcher: Sandy Leigh

#### 5. How the Power Structure Works

Ramifications: Interlocking power—how the establishment gets established— sovereignty commission—corporate structure northern businesses and corporation in the south—the effect of northern sympathy demonstrations i.e. Wall St. Picket

Researcher: Jack Minnis (he has been doing research already in the area of corporate structure in the south, and should be able to choose an appropriate case study).

#### 6. John Hardy's Case

Ramifications: Appeals and the Court—legal precedents—Intervention and the power of the federal government

Researcher : Tim Jenkins

#### 7. Civil Rights Bill

Ramifications: Where do they originate, how do they get passed. Forces which produced the present bill—The effect of the bill for Mississippians if it is passed— comparison of speeches for the bill with speeches against the bill—What is the significance of the filibuster, a lobby, the cloture—What are the implications of Sen. Russell's Relocation Speech—What are the non-racial implications of the bill.

Researcher: Bill Higgs, Oscar Chase

#### 8. Evaluation of the Freedom Rides and Sit-ins

Ramifications: Why were the Freedom Rides a failure in Mississippi: federal intervention and the ICC ruling.— Were the freedom rides successful anywhere? — Legal Defense Fund's project—the sit-in—philosophy of the sit-in—could they work in Miss. Early history of techniques and objectives of SNCC—The significance of economic pressure

Researcher: Jane Stembridge

Materials: Records, Songs, pictures, personal accounts.

#### 9. New Laws in Mississippi

Ramifications: Evaluation—Origins—Comparison with laws of South Africa— description and comparison of conditions in South Africa—practicality of non-violence in South Africa—Sharpeville incident—emergent nations: an evaluation.

Researcher: Bayard Rustin, Al Lowenstein

#### 10. Hazard, Kentucky

Ramifications: The existence of poor whites—economic problems to all lower class people—Fayette County (Forman's participation) Miners interested in coming to the Delta—organized labor—the labor movement to be compared with the civil rights movement: the meaning of Freedom Songs and Union songs—Students Negro Youth Conference (see Freedomways)—Birmingham labor organization

Researcher: Michael Harrington, Miles Horton, Hamie Sinclair

11. News coverage of the racial incident such as Medgar Evers death or the Monroe “kissing case”

Ramifications: International implication of racial discrimination in this country by comparison of coverage of American and Foreign newspapers of the same incident— Adlai Stevenson’s speech and others who appeal to an end to racial discrimination on the grounds of concern for our image abroad—US failure to sign UN Genocide Pact (NY Times article)

Materials: Foreign and domestic newspapers, actual speeches, visiting foreigners

Researcher: Bobbi Yanci

12. Cassius Clay’s Attitude Towards the Movement

Ramifications: Nationalist movements: Garvey—Black Muslims—Implications of Brother Malcolm’s new move—criticism of philosophy of black nationalism— pragmatic value of black nationalism—conditions of black nationalism

Researcher:

13. Canton—Economic Boycott

Ramifications: Implicit economics—economics and power—dependency on whites—Mississippi financial situation—Delta Economy

Researchers: Jack Minnis and Jesse Morris

*[Editors’ Note: Although the Preliminary Working Plan mentions plans for fourteen case studies, only thirteen are described. However, another version of the report does describe fourteen case studies.]*

**OUTLINE FOR CASE STUDIES****I. How the Power Structure works**

- A. Interlocking power—how the establishment gets established.  
Political power and interest groups (White Citizen's Councils) Enforcement and perpetuation of power—police, sovereignty commission, etc. (briefly)
- B. Economic Basis  
Corporate structure—Northern businesses and corporations in the South.  
Dependence on whites of poorer Negroes (Delta sharecroppers, school teachers, etc.)  
Mississippi financial situation—vulnerable point.
- C. Relationship with federal government  
Rel. is often favorable (e.g. Eastland's committee—influence of federal judiciary)  
Fed. power is frustrated if it does not act favorably (e.g. Jamie Whitten's tractor deal.)  
Business of federal program in general.  
Limits of such use of federal govt.
- D. Use of power to meet challenges (cf. South Africa and Nazi Germany)
  - Political:
    - new state laws
    - fight against the national civil rights bill
    - freedom rides and sit-ins—use of police power
  - Informal, social pressure (local white terror tactics)
    - McComb bus station
    - murder of Medgar Evers
    - shooting of Jimmy Travis, etc.
  - Economic
    - Fayette County
    - welfare
    - mass reprisals in canton

**II. Study of the provisions of the Civil Rights bill—in view of the above, what are the prospects for it? What will its effects be in Miss.?**

- Opposition to bill:
  - intrastate politics—Wallace's "presidential campaign"
  - Interest groups—Miss. Sovereignty Commission, Fundamental American Freedoms group.
  - Opposition in Congress itself—role of public opinion on that

**III. COFO Political Programs—for study of political system**

- A. COFO convention challenge—political parties, national conventions.  
Platform—cf. Democratic and COFO platforms.
- B. Freedom Registration and Freedom Days—role and meaning of voting. Power of bloc voting.
- C. CR bill—whole legislative process—committee system, seniority system, party system, lobbies, rules (filibuster, cloture, etc.)
- D. Freedom candidates (Mrs. Hamer's campaign)—What politicians are like—how to tell a good one from a bad one (quotes from CR debate—excerpts from Miss.

Delegation speeches, Russell's relocation plan, etc.) cf. good congressmen and COFO Freedom Candidates.

IV John Hardy case—case for study of Court system

injustices in Miss. law enforcement

federal versus state courts—aspect of federal intervention

appellate processes

importance of precedent

What is legislation good for? What not?

V. Hazard, KY,—case for study of economic problems

Automation—two kinds (Hazard and the Miss. Delta)

Poverty—poor whites (Hazard) poor Southern rural Negroes (Fayette and delta), Poor Northern urban dwellers (ghettoes). Chances of Coalition. Problem of other minorities in cities.

Organized labor (Birmingham labor organization (?)) cf. CR and labor movements—historical parallels, songs, etc.

VI. Education

A. Schools

School boycotts in Hattiesburg and Canton—segregated schools

Northern schools boycotts—problems of Northern ghettoes, de facto segregation, etc. Chicago's relationship to Miss.—comparison

Evaluation of Mississippi schools—kid's own textbooks, example of Steptoe's son (?)

B. Mass media—news coverage of the movement

Publicity skills—how bias works (Local and national press coverage of local demonstrations)

Press releases—how to write, where to release

Freedom of the Press, north and south

Power of the Press. Importance of ministers and students from North

International implications of racial discrimination—Monroe “kissing case”, Medgar Evers.

VII. Opposition to the Power structure—Movement stuff

**MEMORANDUM TO FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS**Memorandum

COFO  
 1017 Lynch St  
 Jackson, Miss.  
 May 5

To: MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS  
 FROM: Miss. Summer Project Staff  
 RE: SUBJECT: Overview of the Freedom Schools

The purpose of the Freedom schools is to provide an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives, and ultimately, new directions for action.

Just what forms this educational experience will take will vary from school to school and from teacher to teacher. We will not be able to provide all the facilities, materials and personnel we would like. This is a fact of our whole operation, and we are used to it. But we hope the curriculum will be flexible enough to overcome them.

The Freedom Schools will consist of from 5 to 15 teachers and 25 to 50 students. It does not now appear that we will be able to secure buildings for residential schools, so you will be working in day churches, store fronts, homes, etc.

The kinds of activities you will be developing will fall into three general areas: 1) academic work, 2) recreation and cultural activities, 3) leadership development. It is our hope that these three will be integrated into one learning experience, rather than being the kind of fragmented learning and living that characterizes much of contemporary education. How this integration can occur will be suggested by the materials we will be sending you and by the orientation period.

Since the students' academic experiences should relate directly to their real life in Mississippi, and since learning that involved real life experiences is, we think, most meaningful, we hope that the students will be involved in the political life of the communities. As the day's schedule below indicates, the students will work in various kinds of political activity in the evenings. The way students can participate in local voter registration should be worked out by the teachers and local COFO voter registration staff at a meeting before the opening of school. The teachers will be free to participate in these activities with the students, although you may need the time to prepare lessons, etc., and thus will want the local staff to supervise the students' canvassing, etc. It may also be the case that on some evenings the teachers or students will plan a special event and thus the students will not do political work that night. Or it may happen that the need for canvassing for a special event will cause local staff to ask for part of the students' day for this purpose. It is important that voter registration staff and teachers stay in close touch with each other so these things can be worked out. An average day's schedule might look like this: Early morning (7-9): Concentrated individual work on areas of the students' particular interest or need. Morning (9-12 or 1): Academic curriculum. Afternoon (2-4 or 5): Non-academic curriculum (recreation, cultural activities and some tutoring.) You will have to bear in mind that it is too hot in the afternoon for much concentrated work. Evening (7-9 or so): Work with voter registration activities, or special events (like a visiting folk singer) on evenings when no political work is needed.

The development of a weekly schedule and a daily lesson plan will be left to the teachers and students of the school. All teachers will be at their school's site at least a week before the schools

open July 7. This week should be used primarily for planning by the teaching group, as well as recruiting students and making community contacts. We will try to balance the schools' personnel so that various skills will be represented by different members of the teaching team.

The fact that you will do the actual development of a plan for each day means that you will have to be creative, resourceful and flexible. To aid you in your task, we will be supplying you with the following material, either in the mail or at orientation:

1. Curriculum Guide for Freedom Schools, by Noel Day. This document will be your basic teaching material. It contains six units of study centered around values and social change. Each unit contains suggested content materials and teaching methods. It will be possible for you to center some of the writing and reading teaching around the subject matter of the units, and discussion will help students grow in public speaking ability.

2. Case studies are being prepared by various people. Some of these will relate directly to the curriculum suggested by the Curriculum Guide, some can be used as supplementary material. The Case Study Outline will explain how to use these studies of various problems related to civil rights and political change.

3. Papers on the teaching of science, math and remedial reading and writing (also short papers on teaching arts and crafts, dramatics, etc.)

Science will not relate directly to the subject matter of the curriculum guide, but it is important that students receive both a feeling for what real science is (which they do not receive in school) and tutorial help in specific scientific areas of study if they show interest. Any teacher who know this area should come prepared to do some special work with a few students and to handle a class session or two on a general "Wonders of Science" theme. The paper you will receive will give you further ideas.

Math is an area of real difficulty for many students. Try to secure 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> (and earlier) math texts for use in tutoring. It will be difficult to develop class sessions around this subject, since students' abilities will vary greatly. The paper on teaching this subject will help you see an approach for a classroom situation.

Remedial reading and writing work will be needed by nearly all students. Reading aloud is suggested in the Curriculum Guide as are some theme topics. Students should be encouraged and guided in doing outside reading. Writing should be discussed with students individually with tutorial help directed toward writing improvement.

4. A paper on Leadership Development by Charlie Cobb will contain suggestions of the kinds of skills students should develop and suggest how these can be integrated into daily activities.

5. A paper suggesting recreational and cultural activities for students will be available.

**IT IS ABSOLUTELY ESSENTIAL THAT YOU STUDY THESE MATERIALS CAREFULLY AND BRING THEM SOUTH WITH YOU. THEY WILL BE YOUR GUIDE FOR THE SUMMER. YOUR TIME HERE IS LIMITED AND YOU MUST PREPARE AHEAD OF TIME AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE. We will NOT be able to replace curriculum materials if you fail to bring them with you.**

We are glad you will be with the Mississippi movement and hope that you share our excitement about the possibilities that the summer holds for real growth for you and Mississippi's young people.

*[Editors' Note: 'Curriculum Guide for Freedom Schools' became the 'Citizenship Curriculum, Units I to VI']*

**OVERVIEW OF THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS—II**

COFO

1017 Lynch – Jackson, Miss.

The purpose of the Freedom Schools is to create an educational experience for students which will make it possible for them to challenge the myths of our society, to perceive more clearly its realities, and to find alternatives—ultimately new directions for action.

The Freedom Schools will consist of from 5 to 15 teachers and 35 to 50 students. They will be informal day schools, meeting in churches, store fronts, homes, etc. They will avoid the “academic” classroom atmosphere which characterizes their regular schools, but the Freedom Schools will present an intensive curriculum designed to meet several different needs:

I. An academic curriculum which will, insofar as possible in 6 short weeks, sharpen the students’ abilities to read, write, work mathematical problems, etc., but will concentrate more on stimulating a student’s interest in learning, finding his special abilities, so that when he returns to the state schools in the fall he can take maximum advantage of the public education which is offered to him.

II. The Citizenship curriculum which will concentrate on a study of the social institutions which affect the students, and the background of the social system which has produced us all at this time. The various sections will be: the Negro in Mississippi, the Negro in the North, Myths about the Negro, the Power Structure, the Poor Negro and the Poor White, Material Things versus Soul Things, and the Movement. In these sections, the students will be encouraged to form opinions about the various social phenomena which touch him, to learn about his own particular heritage as a Negro, and to explore possible avenues for his future. Special attention at the end of the unit will be devoted to the civil rights Movement—the historical development to this point, the philosophical assumptions underlying pressure for social change, and the issues which are currently before the civil rights Movement.

III. Recreational and cultural curriculum, which will be a large part of the day will try to provide the students with relaxation from their more intensive studies and also an opportunity to express themselves in new ways. The program will include dancing and sports, arts and crafts, dramatics, music, etc.

The schools will run for six weeks, with a short break in the middle for orderly staff turnover and some student changes. The school day will concentrate on the morning and afternoon; in the evening the students will be free, and will be encouraged to join the local COFO project, helping with the Freedom Registration, voter registration, the precinct meetings, etc. The Freedom School teachers, too, will participate in these programs as far as their academic responsibilities allow them to. The Freedom School teachers and the COFO voter registrations workers should meet to plan together the most useful participation of the Freedom School students, so that the total program will contribute both intensive intellectual development and practical experience to make them better potential leaders of the community.

**NOTES ON TEACHING IN MISSISSIPPI**

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

COFO 1017 Lynch St., Jackson, Mississippi

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SUMMER—Jane Stembridge

*This is the situation:* You will be teaching young people who have lived in Mississippi all their lives. That means that they have been deprived of decent education, from the first grade through high school. It means that they have been denied free expression and free thought. Most of all—it means that they have been denied the right to question.

The purpose of the Freedom Schools is to help them begin to question.

*What will they be like?* They will all be different—but they will have in common the scars of the system. Some will be cynical. Some will be distrustful. All of them will have a serious lack of preparation both with regard to academic subjects and contemporary issues—but all of them will have knowledge far beyond their years. This knowledge is the knowledge of how to survive in a society that is out to destroy you . . . and the knowledge of the extent of evil in the world.

Because these young people possess such knowledge, they will be ahead of you in many ways. But this knowledge is purely negative; it is only *half* of the picture and, so far as the Negro is concerned, it is the first half. It has, in a sense, already been lived through. The old institutions are crumbling and there is great reason to hope for the first time. You will help them to see there is hope and inspire them to go after it.

*What will they demand of you?* They will demand that you be honest. Honesty is an attitude toward life which is communicated by everything you do. Since you, too, will be in a learning situation—honesty means that you will *ask* questions as well as answer them. It means that if you don't know something you will say so. It means that you will not “act” a part in the attempt to compensate for all they've endured in Mississippi. You can't compensate for that, and they don't want you to try. It would not be *real*, and the greatest contribution that you can make to them is to be real.

Remember this: These young people have been taught by the system not to trust. You have to be *trust-worthy*. It's that simple. Secondly, there is very little if anything that you can teach them about prejudice and segregation. They know. What you can and must do is help them develop ideas and associations and tools with which they can do something *about* segregation and prejudice.

How? We can say that the key to your teaching will be honesty and creativity. We can prepare materials for you and suggest teaching methods. Beyond that, it is your classroom. We will be happy to assist whenever we can.

How? You will discover the way—because that is why you have come.

## THIS IS THE SITUATION—Charlie Cobb

Repression is the law; oppression, a way of life—regimented by the judicial and executive branches of the state government, rigidly enforced by state police machinery, with veering from the path of “our way of life” not tolerated at all. Here, an idea of your own is a subversion that must be squelched; for each bit of intellectual initiative represents the threat of a probe into the why of denial. Learning here means only learning to stay in your place. Your place is to be satisfied—a “good nigger.”

They have learned the learning necessary for immediate survival: that silence is safest, so volunteer nothing; that the teacher is the state, and tell them only what they want to hear; that the law and learning are white man's law and learning.

There is hope and there is dissatisfaction—feebly articulated—both born out of the desperation of needed alternatives not given. This is the generation that has silently made the vow of no more raped mothers—no more castrated fathers; that looks for an alternative to a lifetime of bent, burnt and broken backs, minds, and souls. Where creativity must be molded from the rhythm of a muttered “white son-of-a-bitch”; from the roar of hunger-bloated belly; and from the stench of rain and mud washed shacks.

There is the waiting, not to be taught, but to reach out and meet and join together, and to change. The tiredness of being told it must be, ‘cause that’s white folks’ business, must be met with the insistence that it’s their business. They know that anyway. It’s because their parents didn’t make it their business that they’re being so systematically destroyed. What they must see is the link between a rotting shack and a rotting America.

#### PROBLEMS OF FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHING—Mendy Samstein

The Freedom Schools will not operate out of schoolhouses. There will rarely be classrooms, certainly no bells, and blackboards only if they can be scrounged. Freedom Schools in Mississippi will be a low-cost operation since funds will be very limited. Furthermore, the community will have little to offer in the way of resources. In many places, particularly in rural towns, there are no really suitable facilities available either in the white or in the Negro communities. As a result, most Freedom Schools will have to be held in church basements, homes, back yards, etc.

In some towns in the state, the students are waiting with great excitement in anticipation of the Freedom Schools. In other areas, however, special interest will have to be created—the teachers themselves will have to recruit students before the Freedom Schools begin. In these places, you will find that you are almost the first civil rights worker to be there, and if you are white, you will almost certainly be the first white civil rights workers to come to the town to stay. You will need to deal with the problem of your novelty as well as with the educational challenge.

There will be some advantages which will, we hope, overcome some of the material shortcomings. If you go to a town where COFO has had an active project for some time, you will probably be greeted warmly because there is a great deal of support for the Freedom School program. However, even if you go to a relatively new place, you can count on some things: In no community will there be a Freedom School unless the people of that community have expressed a desire for one, have shown their support by finding housing for staff at low cost (typically \$10 a week for room and board), and have scouted out a place for a Freedom School.

The greatest advantage, however, will be the students and, we hope, your approach. In the final analysis, the effectiveness of the Freedom Schools this summer will depend upon the resourcefulness and honesty of the individual teachers—on their ability to relate sympathetically to the students, to discover their needs, and to create an exciting “learning” atmosphere. The informal surroundings, the lack of formal “school” trappings, will probably benefit the creation of this atmosphere more than the shortage of expensive equipment will discourage it. Attendance will not be required, so if the teacher is to have regular attendance from his students, he must offer them a program which continues to attract; this means that he must be a human and interesting person.

It is important to recognize that these communities are in the process of rapid social change and our Freedom School program, along with the rest of the summer activities, will be in the middle of this ferment. The students will be involved in a number of political activities which will be relatively new in Negro communities in Mississippi. They will be encouraging people to register to vote, organizing political rallies, campaigning for Negro candidates for high public offices, and preparing to challenge the Mississippi Democratic Party. These activities will be a large part of the experience which the students will bring to your classes. In most instances, we believe that this will help the Freedom School program and you should capitalize on these experiences by relating it to classroom work. You will need to know something about these experiences, so you will have the opportunity to share them by canvassing, campaigning, distributing leaflets, etc., with the students. You will define your role more precisely when you arrive by consulting with COFO voter registration people in the area. It will probably be important to the students that you show willingness to work with them but you will have to balance this against your own need to prepare for classes, recreation and tutoring.

In some communities, however, the situation may go beyond this. The community may embark upon more direct kinds of protest, resulting in mass demonstrations, jail, and any number of eventualities. We have no specific suggestions to make if this situation arises. You will have to play it by ear. We can only say that if you are teaching in a Freedom School in Mississippi, you *must* keep a sensitive ear to the ground so that if this should happen, you will be aware of what is happening in the community. You will have to decide if a continuing educational program is possible, and, if it is not, what modification of the program you can arrange to make this summer as constructive a period for the community as possible.

REMARKS TO THE FREEDOM SCHOOL TEACHERS ABOUT METHOD—Noel Day  
TEACHING TECHNIQUES AND METHOD: The curriculum is flexible enough to provide for the use of a wide range of methods in transmitting the material. The basic suggested method is discussion (both as a class and in small groups) because of the opportunities this method provides for:

1. Encouraging expression.
2. Exposing feelings (bringing them into the open where they may be dealt with productively).
3. Permitting the participation of students on various levels.
4. Developing group loyalties and responsibility.
5. Permitting the sharing of strengths and weaknesses of individual group members.

However, presentation lectures, reading aloud (by students), the use of drama, art, and singing can be utilized in many sections of the curriculum. We recommend, however, that discussion be used as a follow up in each instance in order to make certain that the material has been learned.

TEACHING HINTS:

1. Material should be related whenever possible to the experience of students.
2. No expression of feelings (hostility, aggression, submission, etc.) should ever be passed over, no matter how uncomfortable the subject or the situation is. Both the students and the teacher can learn something about themselves and each other if it is dealt with honestly and with compassion.
3. The classroom atmosphere should not be formal (it is not a public school). Ways of accomplishing an informal atmosphere might be arrangement of seats in a circle, discussions with

individuals or small groups before and after sessions, use of first names between teachers and students, shared field-work experiences, letting students lead occasionally, etc.

4. Prepare ahead of time for each session.
5. When using visual materials, make certain they are easily visible to all students and large enough to be seen. (When smaller materials must be used, pass them around after pointing out significant details.)
6. Let students help develop visual materials wherever possible (perhaps after class for the next session).
7. At the end of each session, summarize what has been covered and indicate briefly what will be done in the next session.
8. At the beginning of each session, summarize the material that was covered the day before (or ask a student to do it).
9. Keep language simple.
10. Don't be too critical at first; hold criticism until a sound rapport has been established. Praise accomplishments wherever possible.
11. Give individual help to small groups, or when students are reading aloud or drawing.
12. A limit of one hour (an hour and a half at most) is probably desirable for any one session. This limit can be extended, however, by changing activities and methods within a session.

#### DISCUSSION-LEADING TECHNIQUES

1. The leader must always be aware of his role: that he is, on the one hand, only the leader and not the dominant participant, and, on the other hand, that he is in fact the leader and responsible for providing direction and keeping the discussion going.
2. The use of questions is probably the best way to start and keep a discussion going. The questions should be:
  - a. simple and clearly phrased
  - b. in language understood by the discussants.
  - c. not answerable by "yes" or "no".
3. The best types of questions fall into three categories:
  - a. Those investigating emotional response (e.g., how did you feel when? Or how would you feel if?)
  - b. Those investigating motivation (e.g., why did you feel that way? Why would you do that? Why do you think that?, etc.)
  - c. Those in response to others' reactions (e.g., what do you think about what Bob said?)
4. The physical arrangements can affect the quality of discussion. The best arrangement has everyone in view of everyone else. The leader then stands to introduce a visual aid so that it is visible to all.
5. The leader should be careful to be adroit at keeping the discussion on the track.
6. The leader should occasionally summarize what has been said:
  - a. to provide continued direction.
  - b. to provide smooth transitions from one major topic to another.
  - c. to emphasize important points (and by exclusion to de-emphasize irrelevant points).
  - d. to re-stimulate the group if discussion has lagged.
7. The leader should encourage participation by everyone. Some techniques for this are:
  - a. direct question to silent participants (do not press if they continue to be reticent).

- b. use of small groups with the usually silent members as reporters.
  - c. praise when the usually silent members participate.
  - d. relating topics to their personal interests and experiences.
  - e. re-stating inarticulate statements for them (e.g., Do you mean? etc.)
8. The leader should be sensitive to lagging interests and overextended attention spans. (The form of activity can be changed after a brief summary of the discussion to that point. A change of activity form is often restful—particularly when it requires some physical movement, such as breaking one large group into smaller groups scattered throughout the room, or putting review in the form of a TV quiz game, or asking that a particular point be dramatized, or a picture drawn, etc.)
9. The leader should have all resource materials, visual aids, etc., at hand.
10. The leader should always leave time for the students to ask him questions.
11. The leader should be willing to share his experiences and feelings, too.
12. The leader should not insist that words be pronounced in any particular way. Respect regional variations (e.g., Southern pronunciation of “bomb” is typically “bum”). The basic point is communication—if it gets the idea across it is good.
13. The leader should not be critical—particularly at the start. For many of the students, **JUST BEING ABLE TO VERBALIZE IN THIS SITUATION IS PROGRESS** that can easily be inhibited by a disapproving remark or facial expression.
14. Learn the students’ slang. It can often be used to ease tensions or to express tones of feeling and certain meanings more succinctly than more academic language.
15. Protect students from each other’s verbal attacks and downgrading (ranking, etc.)—particularly the slower or less articulate students.

**USING DRAMA:** Probably the best way of using the dramatic method is the extemporaneous approach. In this approach, learning lines in a formal way is avoided. A story is told, or a “let us suppose that” or a “Pretend that...” situation is structured, and then parts assigned. The actors are encouraged to use their own language to interpret the story or situation and some participants are assigned to act the part of nonhuman objects as well (e.g., trees, a table, a mirror, the wind, the sun, etc.). Each actor is asked to demonstrate how he thinks the character he is portraying looks, what expression, what kind of voice, how he walks, what body posture, etc. As soon as each actor has determined the characteristics of his part, the story outlined is reviewed again, and then dramatized. This method can permit the expression of a wide range of feelings by the students, involve their total selves, stimulate creativity, provide the teacher with insights about the students, and, at the same time get across the content material.

**USING SPECIAL RESOURCE PEOPLE:** there will be many talented people in Mississippi this summer. Some of them will be attached to projects in voter registration, community centers and freedom schools (you). There will be other professional people who will not be staying long enough to follow one project through from beginning to end, but they are eager to make what contribution they can. Included in this category are physicians, attorneys, ministers, and, most notably, entertainers. In the group of entertainers will be some very eminent folk singers and comedians. (Folk singers are being recruited on a formal basis. Lawyers are too. Physicians and ministers may or may not be attached to specific programs.) Whatever their formal status, these people will represent a great advantage to your program. You, however will have to make the best use of them. You should try to make their contribution as great, and as well-coordinated with the

regular program, as you and they can make it. This will require creative thinking and prior planning for both guests and the freedom school personnel.

**NON-MATERIAL TEACHING SUGGESTIONS**

(but plenty of paper and pencils) FOR FREEDOM SCHOOLS (excerpt)

My preference is for de-emphasizing the teaching of reading (spelling and grammar) as a separate skill unless a student, of his own volition, specially requests it. In general, a high school student will probably learn more from speaking, reading, and writing about his own thoughts or a particular subject he himself is interested in. Two students working together can often teach and learn more from each other than you can teach either of them separately. But you should always be available to answer questions (if you can) or act as umpire if needed. Specifically, a student or students might be asked to do any of the following:

1. Write up reactions to, or a summary of, a class discussion.
2. Report to the class on something he, or they, have studied on their own or worked on specially with you or a specialist (e.g. in math, science, art or politics).
3. teach games or reading, or anything needed, to younger children in a Community Center and report this in detail for the class.
4. Report for, and edit, a newspaper to exchange with other Freedom Schools.
5. Report or exchange information in any form on any subject that may occur to you or them (e.g. their work on Voter Reg.)

You will want to fit the form of the presentation to the particular student—a written report for him to read to the class, or which you or another student might read to the class, or an oral report to the class, with or without demonstration (or a scientific experiment, an artistic creation or anything else.)

I would suggest not correcting grammar or spelling for the first few days unless a student asks you to (and means it). Students will probably criticize each other on these mechanics, and this is better. You will have to judge which students need to be protected, by you, from too much fellow-student criticism too soon.

Some students will not be able to bring themselves to read aloud or speak before the class. You should judge when, if ever, it is time to push them a little to make a try at it. Try never to embarrass a student before his fellows.

Some students will be unable to express their thoughts adequately in writing if you insist upon proper spelling. Others will be uncomfortable if you do not enable them to spell everything properly as they write it down. For these students, you should be ever-present to furnish them with the words they need. Such a student might have a notebook in which he could copy and keep track of any word you furnished for him. (You could write it on a slip of paper as he asked for it.) Generally speaking, I would not say “Go look it up in the dictionary” if a student asks how to spell a word. (Try looking up a word like colosal? calosel? collasol? if you don’t know its spelling, and you’ll see what I mean.)

We are really more concerned with content and clarity of thought (in the student’s own meaningful language) than with grammar and spelling. I think this point has a particular importance in areas where the public school teachers have been hesitant to deal in ideas—because then there is a tendency for the teacher to fall back on stressing mechanics. (By the same token, if you are fresh from the halls of ivy, watch to keep yourself from falling back on jargon or vague, abstract terms when the ideas get hot or you’re not sure exactly what you want to say.)

If you feel that a particular student is free enough in expressing his ideas that you can afford to push him in the areas of spelling and grammar, the newspaper might be a good place for him to practice it. I think the newspaper would be one place where you can require precision in spelling

and grammar, and perhaps (?) a more formal style of writing. Students who were not up to this could write newspaper stories which could be edited by other students.

I think the rule of thumb for this whole area of written (and oral) expression might be: Help your student to use his language for clear communication, but hesitate to change matters of style—unless it's your student who's working on style.

#### READING MATERIALS AT VARIOUS LEVELS:

If you do not have reading material which matches your (each) student—and content is at least as important as reading level—I would suggest your having the students write their own material. Your labor is likely to bear more fruit if they, rather than you, do the writing. If you want to study a difficult novel, read it aloud to them, or have a student who enjoys reading aloud and does it well do part of the reading. As you read, encourage interruptions for questions and discussion. Then you can have a, some, or all students write summaries or critiques or whatever you want. Read then aloud in class (each his own, perhaps) and discuss content. If it turns out to be something great, you can have the students edit the material and perhaps exchange a volume with another freedom school. (It doesn't have to be mimeographed, it could be a single handwritten and illustrated volume.)

For non-literary subjects, it is usually much better if you study the material in advance and tell it rather than reading it to the students. Then go on with the writing and discussion, as above, if you want to. Your telling, with your own comments and asides, is a thousand times more captivating to a student than reading the material aloud.

You can modify the above for math as well as history, science, etc. Students making up math problems for other students to solve will often make up more difficult ones than you or the book would have dared—and if the problem-maker has gotten too fancy, you can always pull the dirty trick of making him solve his own! (But do it friendly-like!) These things need to be done by the whole class. Two or three students might do them separately or together—and if it turned out well they might present the results to the class.

All of this working over and over on the same material (talk, write, read, discuss, etc.) may seem hard to you at first, but I think you will not find it a waste of time. One of the very important parts of the process of learning is to approach the same material from many angles and in many media. You may not (will not, I should say) get through the whole of the citizenship curriculum if you work this way, but you'll leave your students with something real to hang onto when you're gone.

**HOMEWORK:** I'm against it—unless a student asks for it. These kids may be working at home or at a job or on voter registration. What they can't do in school hours is probably better left undone. And your own time is better spent in preparing particular material for a particular student, or for all your students, than in correcting old, dead homework. The beauty of in school work is that you can work over it with a student as he goes along and guide him or support him so he won't make mistakes.

**TESTING:** I'm against it—even if the students ask for it!! Naturally, nothing can be a flat rule, but testing, generally, is at best, a waste of time. At worst it is likely to discourage the very student who needs most to be encouraged. It is rarely a teaching device. In a class of 30 children, a teacher may be forced to resort to testing to find out how the students are progressing. But why use a second-class crutch when you have two good legs? With only five students, you will be able to work closely enough with each, that you will be able to know where he stands and

what the next steps should be. And you will know it with much more accuracy and detail than any written test can reveal.

#### IN GENERAL:

Try to give your students as much a feeling of power as you can—not the phony class-meeting type but power over materials, words, songs, thoughts. If you really let them choose what they want to learn, it will be a much more important lesson in freedom than the Civil Rights Bill or the Mississippi Power Structure. And your attitude of genuine respect for your students and their ideas will give them much more courage to stand up to a policeman, than any words you can say.

Cultivate this attitude of respect and real listening and honest answering right down to the bone. It's very hard to listen—practice it over the lunch table. But listen actively, not passively

If you ask a question, make it a real question, not an implied pressure or rebuke.

There is no need for fulsome praise if you can show real appreciation for each student at his level. Heavy praise may discourage someone else.

Don't do a lot of preparation on a subject until you find out what your students want to know. If you learn something special, you'll be burning to teach it and they may have to sit and politely listen the way they have to in regular school.

If possible, spend your time making the schoolroom full of the physical conditions for learning—reference books and materials in inviting and handy places—getting to know some of your students beforehand if possible so it won't be so hard to get things going the first day, perhaps finding out what some of your students have in mind to learn so you can begin thinking and preparing and scrounging materials and specialists, and don't forget the important constant dialogue with your fellow teachers and coordinators.

Teaching can be an exhausting job if it's properly done, so try yourself out on it before you volunteer for all sorts of other jobs in the evening. Many evenings you'll probably need to be preparing material for the next day or helping one of your students with something. Of course if voter registration is a big interest of your students, you will automatically be there with them, I guess, getting your life material ready for the next day.

Be frank and honest at all times, but remember that you are the adult and your students are your students. Don't impose your problems on them. It's your job to support them, and your satisfactions, and their respect for you, will come from that. You must be patient and reasonable and strong and good natured and sensitive and mature. The students don't have to be. If they will show you what really bothers them, you've achieved something, but what you must give in return is what will help them, not yourself.

ADDENDA: Another of the ways you can work over some of the material of the type on pp.1-2, above, is to act out parts of the material informally before writing about it but probably after some discussion.

As often as possible, provide an active learning situation where the students can do something and you will not have to do much talking.

Example: Instead of explaining Socratic method, let the class play the Socrates Game—

One student leaves the room and the others decide upon something they want to get him to say. When he returns to the room, they take turns asking questions and see how long it takes to get him to express the statement or point of view they are trying to elicit. (He should be fairly cooperative.)

**SOME SIMPLE SPELLING CLUES:**

. . . I hope you'll have a good dictionary in your classroom—to settle arguments between your students and to refer to generally. If a student picks you up on an exception or a mistake—let him prove it to you with the dictionary—and be glad. That particular spelling (or fact or whatever), he will remember—and in addition he will have begun to learn that the authorities (you, for the moment) are often wrong!

Despite all this stuff on spelling, let me remind us both that the more important things are the not-spelling ideas laid out on pp. 1-2.

If some or all of this has sounded like talking-down to you, please forgive me for not taking my own advice, and let that be a lesson to you!

Go Well,  
Ruth Emerson

*[Editors' Note: the complete document is in the Ellin Papers in the Digital Archive; see Preface.]*

**PROFILES OF TYPICAL FREEDOM SCHOOLS**

COFO,  
1017 Lynch St.  
Jackson, Mississippi

**I. Hattiesburg**

Hattiesburg, Mississippi is a town of around 30,000—which makes it one of the five or six largest cities in Mississippi. It is near the gulf coast cities which are the “moderate” part of the state, but Hattiesburg itself is a deep-dyed conservative town. It is Governor Paul B. (Stand Tall with Paul) Johnson’s hometown. It is the site of Mississippi Southern University, whose law school faculty has engineered the so-far successful defiance of Ross Barnett in the James Meredith case (also acts as consultants for the State of Miss. In other civil rights cases). Mississippi Southern also is the school where Clyde Kennard, a Negro, applied in the late 1950’s. He was subsequently sent to Parchman penitentiary on a flimsy burglary conspiracy charge, contracted cancer in prison and died. Mississippi Southern has since rejected the application of another Negro, John Frazier, five times. Hattiesburg is the seat of Forrest County. Despite its large (by Mississippi standards) university and a fairly firm economic base in commerce and manufacturing, Hattiesburg “feels” like a small, agrarian-oriented community.

Hattiesburg has had a long, tough history of civil rights activity, primarily centered on the denial of the right to vote. The Circuit Clerk of the County (registrar of voters), one Theron Lynd, has made himself the test case for all recalcitrant Mississippi registrars. As early as 1961, the Department of Justice instituted proceedings against him, charging discrimination against Negroes. After much litigation, the federal government won its case and Lynd was ordered to register 43 persons whose applications a U.S. District Judge had processed and found acceptable. Lynd consistently refused to obey these court orders, was convicted of civil contempt and STILL would not register the persons in question. The Department of Justice then instituted criminal contempt proceedings against him which are still pending. At this point, however, the civil rights groups moved independently. On January 22, designated Freedom Day in Hattiesburg, COFO people from all over the state, national civil rights leaders, but mostly the people of Hattiesburg, started a picket line around the Forrest County courthouse which, with some interruptions, is still going on. This picket line represented a breakthrough for civil rights demonstrations in Mississippi, because it was the first to last more than 10 minutes—the police did not arrest everybody. Later, after the State legislature passed a special statute outlawing picketing of public buildings, the picketers were arrested, but that passed, too, and the picketing has resumed.

The COFO project in Hattiesburg is one of the largest and most active in the state, with a high proportion of adult participation and leadership. The town is organized, with 100 block captains, 15 citizenship teachers, and uncountable canvassers, picketers and ministers from outside the state. Two candidates for national office (one for Congress and one for Senate) have come out of the movement in Hattiesburg. The atmosphere is enthusiastic and the people work very hard.

Because the project is so active, there is a lot of demand for the Freedom Schools, and the Hattiesburg people have, therefore planned a series of Freedom Schools. The facilities are presently planned for Sunday School rooms in churches around town and in surrounding counties. Project leaders in Hattiesburg are especially interested in supplementary classes for local adults and staff members in basic literacy and current issues. The project has found housing for 110

summer workers (all of which will not work in the city of Hattiesburg, however). The project has also laid hands on a movie projector and a tape recorder for the summer project. Since the community is able to support the program better than in other areas of the state, the needs are not proportionately as great, even though it is a large Freedom School project. The main needs are for equipment and transportation to outlying schools and schools in other counties. The total budget is for \$2,000 to pay for food, transportation, equipment, and inescapable expenses such as phone bills.

## II. Meridian

Meridian is a city of 50,000, the second largest in the state. It is the seat of Lauderdale county. It is in the eastern part of the state, near the Alabama border, and has a history of moderation on the racial issue. At the present time, the only Republican in the State Legislature is from Meridian. Registration is as easy as anywhere in the state, and there is an informal (and inactive) "biracial committee", which, if it qualifies, is the only one in the state.

Voter registration work in Meridian began in the summer of 1963 (for COFO staff people, that is), and by autumn, when Aaron Henry ran in the Freedom Vote for Governor campaign, there was a permanent staff of two people in the city. In January, 1964, Mike and Rita Schwerner, a married couple from New York City, started a community center. In Meridian's mild political climate, the community center there has functioned more smoothly than either of the two community centers which COFO has organized in tougher areas. The center has recreation programs for children and teenagers, a sewing class and citizenship classes. It also has a library of slightly over 10,000 volumes, and ambitious plans for expansion if more staff were available. The COFO staff in Meridian uses Meridian as a base for working six other adjoining counties.

The Freedom School planned for Meridian will have a fairly large facility, in contrast to most places in the state. The Baptist Seminary is a large, 3-story building with classroom capacity for 100 students and sleeping accommodations for staff up to about 20. Besides this, there is a ballpark available for recreation. The school has running water, blackboards and a telephone. The center has a movie projector and screen which it probably would lend. The library lends books to anyone for two-week periods. The question of rent has not been decided for the school. Even if there is no rent, however, we can count on a budget of around \$1300, for food for students, utilities, telephone and supplies.

## III. Holly Springs

Holly Springs is a small town, the seat of Marshall County. The Methodist Negro College, Rust College, is located in the town. It's a very attractive campus, and the students and faculty have been very active recently (since it's a church-operated school, one can expect somewhat more cooperation of Rust than the state schools). Holly Springs is currently acting as the clearinghouse for all our library books and Freedom School materials. There has been no permanently-based COFO project with a full-time staff worker in Holly Springs; all the action has been the work of the local people. The roots in this community are somewhat recent, reflecting the fact that in the Northern, hilly part of the state, intensive civil rights work is just beginning.

In Holly Springs there are two houses available for a total of 75 students (and housing for 15 teachers). The rent will be \$400, a major expense. The houses will go if we can't raise the rent money. Besides rent, the normal expenses and food will make the project cost about \$1,000.

## IV. Ruleville

Ruleville is a small Delta cotton town in Senator Eastland's home county (Sunflower County). The sheriff in Ruleville is the brother of the man believed to have killed little Emmett Till in 1954—a man with a great reputation in his own right for brutality toward Negroes. By any standard, Ruleville is a tough Delta Town. Its main attraction for us is that it is the home of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's candidate for Congress in the Second Congressional District. Mrs. Hamer's own history is typical of much of the harassment of Negroes in the Miss. Delta: When Mrs. Hamer tried to register to vote in 1962, she was fired from her job. She and her family were run off the plantation where they had worked for years. She persisted, and became one of the great leaders of the Mississippi movement, but in the meantime she was arrested, beaten, her home shot into, her husband fired.

Voter registration activity began in Ruleville in 1962. The project is well established in the community, even though the town is so small. Because it is an area of desperate poverty, even for the Delta, COFO has sponsored a food and clothing project in Ruleville for several months, with Mrs. Hamer and other local ladies in charge of the distribution.

For Freedom School project in Ruleville, the local people have found a house which can serve 40 students, and have housing for 8 teachers. For the rent, and a few necessary supplies, we estimate that this Freedom School needs \$200. Lunches for students would probably be another \$500, but this is a service which is needed in the area.

**MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOLS:***New Houses of Liberty*

I asked for your churches, and you turned me down,  
 But I'll do my work if I have to do it on the ground,  
 You will not speak for fear of being heard,  
 So you crawl in your shell and say, "Do not disturb,"  
 You've protected yourself for another day.

But tomorrow surely will come,  
 And your enemy will still be there with the rising sun,  
 He'll be there tomorrow as all tomorrows in the past,  
 And he'll follow you into the future if you let him pass.

—from a poem by Joyce Brown, 16  
 Freedom School pupil in McComb, Mississippi

This poem was written by a 16-year old Negro girl in McComb, Mississippi. She and approximately 1,825 other Negroes—children, teen-agers and adults—are attending the 39 Freedom Schools of the Mississippi Summer Project, sponsored by the council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a statewide organization of local groups aided by field secretaries of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), CORE, NAACP, and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

These students—going to "school" in churches, private homes, and backyards—are learning Negro history, civics, American history, arts and crafts, drama, music, English, arithmetic, algebra and chemistry. They are being taught by 250 Negro and white summer volunteers from 40 states in schools which have been set up in every Mississippi city or town of considerable size, as well as in rural counties where Negroes have been shot to death for attempting to register to vote.

Project coordinators state that the Freedom School program is an unqualified success. Rev. Thomas Wahman, a coordinator of religious activities at New York University, and a Freedom School coordinator, terms the project a "completely unexpected phenomenon." Despite the fear which prevails in most Negro communities throughout the state, "several are demanding that COFO come in and set up schools," says Wahman.

Ralph Featherstone, a 25-year old Negro speech teacher from Washington, D.C., is director of the McComb Freedom School. Featherstone explains that the opening of the school was delayed for two weeks after three civil rights workers disappeared in Philadelphia, Mississippi and advance scouts prepared the way in the dangerous Southwest area of Mississippi.

But Featherstone found the students ready and waiting. In fact, Featherstone says, "they'd heard about the school and they felt left out because we didn't arrive on time."

Now the registration in McComb is up to 105, with a daily attendance of 75. Many of the students are the younger brothers and sisters of the 110 high school students who walked out of school when four of their number were arrested on a sit-in charge at the Greyhound bus station in 1961.

“I think the Freedom School is inspiring the people to lend a hand in the fight,” Featherstone reports. “The older people are looking to the young people, and their courage is rubbing off. The school makes the kids feel they haven’t been forgotten. It makes them feel that at last something is coming down to help them. They feel the school is for them.”

The McComb school started in the backyard of the SNCC Freedom House a week after it was bombed. For one week, students conducted classes in the blistering heat only yards away from the spot where three explosions ripped away one wall. Now they are in a church.

The Hattiesburg Freedom School system (there are five) has the highest registration and the most varied curricula in the state. Some 575 young people and adults attend morning and evening classes in the usual academic subjects, plus music programs, discussion groups, slide exhibitions, and art classes. Three of the five schools are putting out a newspaper, and Mrs. Carolyn Reese, a Negro Detroit school teacher and administrator of the Hattiesburg Freedom Schools, reports that the other two will begin putting theirs out soon.

To understand what the Freedom Schools mean to those attending them, it is first necessary to understand several facts about the regular system of education in Mississippi.

The Mississippi educational system is geared to teach the Mississippi Educational Way of Life: Dissent is heresy. Ignorance is safer than inquiry. Fear pervades the academic atmosphere.

Example: in the spring of 1961, a number of Negro students in Jackson were expelled from (Negro) high school because they stood up in their classrooms and inquired pointedly about the Freedom Rides and their significance.

Example: More than 800 students at Alcorn A & M College (Negro) in Southwest Mississippi were tossed out of school in the spring of 1964 by the college president because they protested social conditions on the campus. The President enlisted the aid of the much-feared Mississippi Highway patrol to load the students into buses so that they could be sent home without even the opportunity to collect their belongings.

Example: also during this spring, an issue of the student newspaper at the University of Southern Mississippi (white) was confiscated by campus police under the direction of the school president W.D. McCain because it carried an article about the school administration’s refusal to grant admission to a Negro applicant. (McCain is a strong supporter of the White Citizen’s Council, and an advisory board member of the Patriotic American Youth, a campus youth organization which shares space with the John Birch Society in a Jackson bookstore. He also received a special commendation from the state legislature for refusing admittance for the fifth time to John Frazier, a student at predominantly Negro Tougaloo College.)

There are many other such examples of suppression of student rights, and even of faculty rights, e.g., the constant persecution of Ole Miss Professor James W. Silver. However, what is even more chilling is the economy of school segregation in Mississippi.

Despite the fact that Alabama spends less per pupil, black and white, than any state in the nation, the expenditure in the Mississippi Delta is even less. More important, the disparity between funds spent per white student and funds spent per black student is even greater.

In Mississippi, the county appropriates funds for education—in addition to the funds contributed by the state. The following is the county appropriation, above the state minimum, for instruction per pupil in 1960-61:

North Pike County (43% non-white)\*

(McComb)

white.....\$30.89

Negro..... .76

South Pike County

(Magnolia)

white.....\$59.55

Negro..... 1.35

Forrest County (28% non-white)\*

white.....\$67.76

Negro..... 34.19

Hattiesburg Separate

white.....\$115.96

Negro..... 61.69

\*U.S. Civil Rights Commission Report on Voting, 1960.

Whites who control Mississippi have little respect for education, but use it unscrupulously to prevent Negroes from obtaining the basic democratic right, the right to vote.

For instance, while the State Penitentiary Reform Bill was still in the Senate, Sen. Howard McDonnell of Biloxi proposed an amendment which would require that the Superintendent of the penitentiary have two years of college education. Foes of the amendment said the requirement would force the ouster of the present superintendent, C.E. Breazeale. The amendment failed. McDonnell then asked that the Superintendent be required to have a high school education. That amendment was also defeated.

In April, 1964 a bill was introduced into the Senate Education Committee which would have required a high school education for the members of the county boards of education. The bill was eventually sent back to committee where lobbying took place to exclude certain counties from the provisions of the bill.

Yet, the Mississippi legislature has established voter registration requirements which lawyers contend would be extremely difficult for anyone without a law degree to pass, if the tests are honestly administered.

The Freedom Schools are a war against this academic poverty. It is not just the courses provided, but the fact that the schools are a focal point for personal expression against the oppression, on the one hand, and for personal growth and creativity, on the other. The regular Mississippi schools are fundamentally opposed to this approach.

Mrs. Reese says, "The Freedom Schools mean an exposure to a totally new field of learning, new attitudes about people, new attitudes about self, and about the right to be dissatisfied with the status quo. The children have had no conception that Mississippi is a part of the United States; their view of American history is history with no Negroes in it. It's like making a cake with no butter."

Mrs. Reese explains that “Mississippi has sold itself short. There are many good minds here which are being used as sacrificial lambs. The children are alert and eager to learn. If they had something to learn, they’d be happy to learn it.”

Both Mrs. Reese and Featherstone find themselves faced with the unexpected problem of a pupil-teacher ratio which is growing too large. Mrs. Reese tells of one teacher who is so popular that her class has increased from 15 to 27 students—who come every day. Wahman is now recruiting an additional 100 teachers for the month of August, and expects that schools in five new communities will be opened then.

Both Featherstone and Wahman point to the Negro history curriculum as possibly the most valuable legacy of the Freedom Schools this summer. “The only thing our kids knew about Negro history,” Featherstone says, “is about Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver and his peanuts.”

But subjects like chemistry and algebra are also popular. Featherstone was told by pupils in the McComb School that Negro children are taught algebra in high school, but white children begin the subject in the sixth grade. Wahman says that when the chemistry teacher left the Gulfport Freedom School, his 15 students also left in protest, and returned only when another was sent into the school.

Mrs. Reese gives an idea what the Hattiesburg schools are accomplishing: “The children are learning that somebody is supposed to listen to them. They are writing letters to the editor of Hattiesburg newspapers, and learning where to direct their complaints. At first, the children were somewhat awe-stricken with the white teachers, at their whiteness, their hair, but many are learning to appreciate them as human beings. When you get an appreciation of yourself, then you can put the other individual into his proper focus.”

But maybe Joyce Brown sums it up best:

#### THE HOUSE OF LIBERTY

I come not for fortune, nor for fame,  
 I seek not to add glory to an unknown name,  
 I did not come under the shadow of night,  
 I came by day to fight for what’s right,  
 I shan’t let fear, my monstrous foe,  
 Conquer my soul with threat and woe,  
 Here I have come and here I will stay,  
 And no amount of fear my determination can sway.

I asked for your churches, and you turned me down,  
 But I’ll do my work if I have to do it on the ground,  
 You will not speak for fear of being heard,  
 So you crawl in your shell and say, “Do not disturb,”  
 You think because you’ve turned me away,  
 You’ve protected yourself for another day.

But tomorrow surely will come,

And your enemy will still be there with the rising sun,  
He'll be there tomorrow as all tomorrows in the past,  
And he'll follow you into the future if you let him pass.

You've turned me down to humor him,  
Ah! Your fate is sad and grim,  
For even though your help I ask,  
Even without it, I'll finish my task.

In a bombed house I have to teach school  
Because I believe all men should live by the Golden Rule.  
To a bombed house your children must come,  
Because of your fear of a bomb,  
And because you've let your fear conquer your soul,  
In this bombed house these minds I must try to mold.  
I must try to teach them to stand tall and be a man,  
When you their parents have cowered down and refused to take a stand.

**FREEDOM SCHOOL DATA**

Council of Federated Organizations  
 1017 Lynch Street  
 Jackson, Mississippi  
 Press phone: 385-3276

a.) *Background on Freedom Schools:* the Freedom Schools were proposed late in 1963 by Charles Cobb, a Howard University student until he joined the SNCC staff and “a gifted creative writer,” according to Freedom School Director Professor Staughton Lynd. That “help from outside Mississippi is needed if the Negro youngster were to have any chance of access to a larger world” was an obvious fact, according to Lynd, after preliminary studies of the Mississippi educational system. In *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, James Silver noted that the per capita expenditure of the Mississippi local schools boards for the white child is almost four times the figure for the Negro child. More than the statistics, the limited subject matter available for study to Mississippi Negro students, the fear of dismissal that restrains their teachers from exploring controversial topics demonstrated that if Mississippi’s Negroes were to take part in an academic process it would have to be in a context supplemental to the schooling available through the state.

b.) *Freedom Schools Operation:* As of July 26, there were 41 functioning Freedom Schools in twenty communities across the state with an enrolment of 2,135 students—twice the figure projected in planning for the summer. There are approximately 175 teaching full-time in the Freedom Schools, with recruitment of 50 to 100 more in process.

The typical Freedom School has an enrollment of 25 to 100 and a staff of five to six teachers, and is held in a church basement or sometimes the church itself, often using the outdoor area as well. Typically, the morning will be taken up with a “core curriculum” build around Negro History and citizenship. The late morning or afternoon is taken up with special classes (such as French or typing—both very popular) or projects (such as drama or the school newspaper). In the evening classes are held for adults or teen-agers who work during the day.

The idea of the school is centered on discussion of the group. One suggested guide distributed by COFO to Freedom School teachers noted, “In the matter of classroom procedure, questioning is the vital tool. It is meaningless to flood the student with information he cannot understand; questioning is the path to enlightenment. It requires a great deal of skill and tact to pose the question that will stimulate but not offend, lead to unself-consciousness and the desire to express thought. . . . The value of the Freedom Schools will derive mainly from what the teachers are able to elicit from the students in terms of comprehension and expression of their experiences.”

At a time when the nation’s educators have become concerned—and stymied—by bringing to children of the non-verbal “culturally deprived” community the ability to formulate questions and articulate perceptions, the daily pedagogical revolutions that are the basis of any success in a Freedom School classroom become overwhelming upon considering that the students are Mississippi Negroes—possibly the single most deprived group in the nation—and the teachers are culturally alien products of the much-maligned liberal arts undergraduate education. An indication of what is happening among the students and their young teachers in the Freedom Schools is given by a single line of COFO advice given to the teachers: “The formal classroom approach is to be avoided; the teacher is encouraged to use all the resources of his imagination.”

According to Director Lynd, the Freedom Schools may be dealt with in the context of three general situations: a) rural areas; b) urban areas where the civil rights movement has been strong; c) urban areas where the movement has been weak. "In the first and third situations," analyzes Lynd, "the Freedom Schools have been most successful, not just in numbers, but in what is going on there."

In the rural areas where there is little recreation or diversion available to the Negro community, the Freedom School becomes the center of teen-age social activities, according to Lynd. Lynd draws upon the Holmes County and Carthage Freedom Schools as examples of this rural success. When the Freedom School staff arrived in Carthage, the entire Negro community was assembled at the church to greet them; when, two days later, the staff was evicted from its school, the community again appeared with pickup trucks to help move the library to a new school site. As this is being written, the Carthage Community, with the help of summer volunteers and a National Council of Churches minister, is building its own community center which will be staffed by civil rights workers and local volunteers.

An example of the second situation, the urban success, is the Hattiesburg Freedom School system, which Lynd refers to as the "Mecca of the Freedom School world." In Hattiesburg there are more than 600 students in five schools. Each teacher has been told to find a person from the community to be trained to take over his teaching job at the end of the summer. Much of the second session in Hattiesburg will be devoted to the training of local Freedom School teachers. "Here, as in Canton," states Lynd, "there can be no doubt that the success of the schools stemmed from the intensive civil rights campaign in the community during the months of late winter and spring."

In Gulfport and Greenville, urban environments with alternative attractions, the movement has not been strong enough in the past to counteract traditional time-passing activities. Lynd notes, however, that the generalization has exceptions. Holly Springs, an urban area in which the movement has not been strong in the past, has a highly successful Freedom School.

It should also be noted that in Holly Springs, Carthage, and Shaw, the Freedom Schools are competing against the regular public school which are currently in session as public schools close in early spring to allow students to chop cotton.

In Mississippi's stronghold of organized terror, the Southwest, the McComb Freedom School has proven the political value of the schools as an instrument for building confidence in the Negro community when canvassing is impractical. Lynd cites the instance of Miss Joyce Brown's poem concerning the Freedom School held at a bombed home which moved the community to provide a meeting place for the school. "Thus", notes Lynd, "the presence of a Freedom School helped to loosen the hard knot of fear and to organize the Negro community." There are 108 students at the McComb Freedom School.

c) *The Future of the Freedom Schools*: The Freedom Schools will continue beyond the end of the Summer Project in August. Freedom Schools in several areas are already running jointly with the regular public school session. The Freedom Schools offer subjects—such as foreign languages—not offered in the regular schools, and students are attracted to the informal questioning spirit of the Freedom Schools and academics based around their experiences as Mississippi Negroes. In situations like McComb, the Freedom School has proven its value to the over-all COFO political program as an organizing instrument. Also, among the various COFO programs, the Freedom School project is the one which holds out a particular hope of communication with the white community. In at least two situations, Vicksburg and Holly

Springs, white children have attended for short periods. Another factor in the decision to continue the Freedom Schools is the possibility-turned-probability that the Mississippi legislature will offer private school legislation designed to sidestep public school integration (already ordered for the fall of 1964 in Jackson, Biloxi, and Leake County). One is faced by situations such as that in Issaquena County, where there are no Negro public schools and children must be transported into other counties. The backwardness of Mississippi's educational system in the context of racial discrimination is demonstrated by the fact that in many areas the impact of the 1954 Supreme Court decision that separate cannot be equal was to have separate schools erected for the first time; the step previous to school segregation is concluding that Negro Children should be educated. The rural hard-core area of Issaquena County is an example of a prolonged holdout. A final but not secondary factor is the "widespread apprehension among Mississippi Negroes as to what will happen to them when the Summer Project volunteers leave." Staughton Lynd adds, "We want to be able to tell them that the program will *not* end, that momentum cumulated during the summer months will not be permitted to slack off."

The long-range Freedom School program will be carried on through evening classes in local community centers. "Already in many communities Freedom School and Community Center programs are combined and often in the same building," according to Lynd. One source of teachers for the continuing Freedom School program will be volunteers who decide to stay beyond the summer; if only one in five stayed, fifty teachers would remain in the state. Another source would be Southern Negro students coming in under the work-study program which provides them with a one-year scholarship to Tougaloo College after one year's full-time work for SNCC. Other teachers would come through the local communities, under programs of training such as that which has already begun in Hattiesburg. Teachers could also be provided from the ranks of full-time SNCC staff members; in areas such as McComb where the movement can't register American citizens as voters, civil rights workers can teach in Freedom Schools. There is no doubt but that, in Professor Lynd's words, "It is a political decision for any parent to let his child come to a Freedom School."

The Freedom School program can develop as an aid in enabling Mississippi Negro students to make the transition from a Mississippi Negro high school to higher education. Standardized tests will be administered to the most promising Freedom School students under the direction of the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB) in mid-August. Evaluation of these scores and other data by the National Scholarship Service Fund for Negro Students will lead some of the Freedom School students to a program involving a) a transitional educational experience during the summer after high school, b) a reduced load during the freshman year at college, and c) financial aid. Others can be helped by the already-existing work-study program.

d) *Free Southern Theater*: As the second Freedom School session (August 3-21) begins, a tour of the Freedom Schools throughout the state is scheduled for the Free Southern theater production of *In White America*. The Free Southern Theater was organized early this year by SNCC with the assistance of COFO and Tougaloo College as an attempt to "stimulate thought and a new awareness among Negroes in the deep South," and "will work toward the establishment of permanent stock and repertory companies, with mobile touring units, in major population centers throughout the South, staging plays that reflect the struggles of the American Negro . . . before Negro and, in time, integrated audiences," according to a Free Southern Theater prospectus. An apprenticeship program is planned which will send a number of promising participants to New

York for more intensive study. The company will include both professional and amateur participants.

The development of the Free Southern Theater was sparked by the “cultural desert” resulting from the closed society’s restriction of the patterns of reflective and creative thought.

Each performance of *In White America* will be accompanied by theater workshops in the Freedom Schools designed to introduce students to the experience of theater through participation. As the classroom methods of the Freedom School are revolutionary in the context of traditional American patterns of education, so the Free Southern Theater brings a new concept of drama to these Mississippi students. Dr. Lynd comments that the aim of the Theater “is the creation of a fresh theatrical style which will combine the highest standards of craftsmanship with a more intimate audience rapport than modern theater usually achieves.”

Segregated school, controlled textbooks, lack of discussion of controversial topics, the nature of the mass media in Mississippi demand the development of a cultural program, to be viewed in the context of education, among an entire people.

Among the objectives listed for the Free Southern Theater by its originators are “to acquaint Southern peoples with a breadth of experience with the theater and related art forms; to liberate and explore the creative talent and potential that is here as well as to promote the production of art; to bring in artists from outside the state as well as to provide the opportunity for local people with creative ability to have experience with the theater; to emphasize the universality of the problems of the Negro people; to strengthen communication between Southern Negroes; to assert that self-knowledge and creativity are the foundations of human dignity.”

Among the sponsors of the Free Southern Theater are singer Harry Belafonte, authors James Baldwin and Langston Hughes, performers Ossie Davis, Ruby Dee, and Theodore Bikel, and Lincoln Kirstein, general director of the New York City Ballet.

The proposal for the Free Southern Theater originated with SNCC workers Doris Derby, Gilbert Moses, and John O’Neal, and Tougaloo drama instructor William Hutchinson.

e) Mississippi Summer Caravan of Music: Approximately 25 performing artists, including Pete Seeger, the Chad Mitchell Trio, Theodore Bikel, and SNCC’s Freedom Singers, will have toured the Mississippi Summer Project Freedom Schools and Community Centers before the close of the summer. During the day they will teach in Freedom School workshops, and perform in community concerts in the evening. Communities throughout the state have already been visited by the Caravan.

The Caravan is sponsored by the New York Council of Performing Artists (Gil Turner, Chairman) and is directed by Bob Cohen at the Mississippi Summer Project Headquarters.

f) *Excerpts from Freedom School Newspapers*: The first ones to insist upon connecting the Freedom Schools to the opening of the closed society of segregated Mississippi are the young students of the Freedom Schools. The average author of a Freedom School newspaper article is between 13 and 15 years of age.

The cover of the first issue of the McComb Freedom School’s “Freedom Journal” depicts a Negro in chains with a scroll below him reading, “Am I not a man and a brother?” One girl, in the same paper, remarks, “. . . too long others have done our speaking for us. . . .” Her mother is a domestic who fears for what will happen to the family due to her child’s attendance at the Freedom School. One 15-year-old student there remarked that the Freedom School “enables me to know that I can get along with the whites and they can get along with me without feeling inferior to each other.”

Two young students in the Holly Springs Freedom School describe their hometown: “The working conditions are bad. The wages are very low. The amount paid for plowing a tractor all day is three dollars. . . . The white man buys most of the supplies used for the annual crops, but the Negro contributes all the labor. In the fall of the year when the crop is harvested and the cotton is sold to market, the white man gives the Negro what he thinks he needs, without showing the Negro a record of the income the white man has collected from the year. This process of farming has become a custom. This way of livelihood is not much different from slavery.”

A student describes her life in the “Benton County Freedom Train:” “We work eight to nine hours each day and are paid daily after work is over. We get only \$3.00 per day . . . and . . . chop cotton 8 1/2 hours to 9 hours each day. . . . The man whom we worked for is responsible for having fresh cold water handy in the field for the workers to drink. The whites also fail to take us to the store in time to eat dinner. . . . When it’s harvest Negroes pick cotton by hand at \$2.00 for a hundred pounds and some places \$3.00 per hundred.”

In the Mt. Zion Freedom School’s “Freedom Press,” a girl states she comes to the Freedom School because “I want to become a part of history also.”

Joyce Brown, the 15-year-old author of “The House of Liberty” will be a senior next year at McComb’s Negro Burgland High School. When she was 12 years of age she was doing voter registration canvassing when Bob Moses, director of the Mississippi Summer Project, first began voter activities in Mississippi for SNCC in 1961.

***A REPORT, MAINLY ON RULEVILLE FREEDOM SCHOOL***

A Report, Mainly on Ruleville Freedom School, Summer Project, 1964

by Kirsty Powell

Orientation, Oxford Beginning June 21. The main effect of Oxford (Was it the main design?) was to bring each of us to the point of asking: “Do I really believe in this enough to go? Ought I to go? Do I want to go?” This was as it should have been, I think. At the time I felt that such emphasis was placed on preparing for the dangers, even in our local project group, that we did scant justice to the job of preparing to teach, or of understanding the meaning of the Freedom School concept. I still think this. I think we could have left Oxford with a much more positive understanding of what we were setting out to do, danger or no danger, than we did. I think the general sessions at Oxford were excellent and could hardly have been bettered. In the Freedom School sessions I think there were many useful things done—some of the sessions on reading, the Laubach session, the African songs, Negro History (I believe though I didn’t get to it)—but I think they could have been bettered. Next year I think it will be easier to use the history and experience of this summer to explore the Freedom School concept and I think it will be important to do this. It might even be interesting to discuss some profiles of 1964 Freedom Schools as case histories for criticism and evaluation. The curriculum was excellent, but, if Ruleville is typical it was not used as well as it deserved. This was partly because it was rather late (it would have been good to get it before Oxford) and also because it wasn’t really explored at Oxford, and perhaps because many people never really read it properly. I think most schools accepted the notion of a core curriculum of Citizenship and Negro history. If the content of this core had been gone into much more fully at Oxford in lectures and small group discussions, and if there had been some practice teaching to demonstrate different methods of teaching it, I think the schools would have benefited and we would have left Oxford with a much more positive idea of the role of a Freedom School. On the score of method, I’d make a special (if old fashioned!) plea that volunteers (who are, after all, mostly pretty academic types) be introduced to (and if possible given a chance to try out) the project or activity method. Essentially I think this means helping pupils to be active in various ways to do their own research for information, and to give expression actively and in various ways to what they have learned—art, writing, talks, plays, interviews etc., etc. — with the possibility of choice for the pupil.

First Week in Ruleville. We arrived on the Sunday—slight chill at our first view of police truck and dog—but for those of us working at the center, the fear went when we got on the job, and found Ruleville quiet. The center was at the back of an old house which contained two other occupied dwellings. It consisted of a yard, with trees for sitting under; porch, with bathroom at one end; a wide hallway which was to become an office; an incredible attic—beams reasonably sturdy, but floor/ceiling of cardboard—where we later stored unwanted books; and two small rooms about 12 x 12 which were to be library and everything else. The first job was to sort 7000 books and cull a library of about 4000, shelve it, and store the rest. We were lucky to have somewhere to store it! This was all we did thru’ Thursday, apart from volunteers’ meetings to plan school and center programmes. One night at the mass meeting we were asked when school would begin. We decided we’d never be “ready,” so we said we’d open for registration Friday, and for a brief introductory session. Regular school was in session in the mornings, so we decided

to have adults, with baby minding in the mornings, kids in the afternoons, and leave the evenings clear for individual tuition or special classes if called for.

Morning Program 8:30 – 11:00 (often 11:30)

*Adults.* The morning schedule remained the same for the whole summer. It was simple and effective.

1st Hour – Citizenship (Mon, Wed, Fri)

Health, etc. (Tues, Thurs.)

2<sup>nd</sup> Hour – Writing (or, infrequently, Math.)

3<sup>rd</sup> Hour – Reading

Citizenship. The lecture followed by discussion was the approach used throughout the summer. All the freedom school teachers gave at least one session each, and voter registration and research people, and visitors were also used. This was good for both teachers and listeners. The topics chosen were in three different series.

1<sup>st</sup> 3 weeks: 1. Harriet Tubman

2. Booker T. Washington and Du Bois

3. and 4. Negro in Mississippi and the South

5. Negro in the North

6. The White Southerner

7. and 8. The Movement

9. Non-Violence

4<sup>th</sup> week: - 1. The Freedom Rides

2. Power structure in Sunflower Country

3. A Journey Through India – and Gandhi.

4. Freedom Democratic Party

Last 3 weeks:- 1. African Background

2. Slavery

3. Background to Civil War

4. Lincoln

5. Reconstruction

6. Birth of Jim Crow (Reading only)

7. Booker T. Washington and Du Bois (Reading only)

8. George Washington Carver

9. NAACP (Reading only)

10. Important 20<sup>th</sup> Cent. Negroes

11. Montgomery, Birmingham, and M.L. King (Reading only)

12. Civil Rights Bill and the National Elections.

This Citizenship program worked well. Our adherence to the lecture method all the way was somewhat unimaginative but it's a bit difficult to think how else it might have been done. I'm not sure how successful "activity methods" would be with adults—might be worth trying. Discussion improved as the summer wore on. In fact, I think the sessions might have been improved if the lecture time had been greatly reduced, and then previously planned "questions for discussion" had then been thrashed out.

Health I don't know the schedule for this. It was done 2 days a week for 8 weeks by one teacher, and I think it might have been better shared out a bit more. I think the course might have been improved by adding some basic physiology—with plenty of pictures and diagrams—and by using more demonstrations for the teaching of first aid. There was certainly no doubt about the interest of the women in the subject. There were a couple of sessions on food, and a recipe sharing session which proved most successful and ended in the production of a collection of Freedom School recipes. One topic that was not discussed that might usefully have been, was buying and housekeeping—sort of thing you get in one of those paperback shoppers' guides. Another subject that was asked for that we never supplied was Sewing.

Writing. As with Citizenship and Health all the adults remained in one class for writing. Usually, this was about 12 to 15 students, numbers fluctuated somewhat between six and 30. The method used was to have three to six teachers on hand circulating while the writing was being done, to help and to answer questions and to correct. The topic usually arose out of the preceding citizenship session. Very little was done to structure it, the idea being simply to encourage them to put thoughts on paper as freely as possible. I think this unstructured approach was good and perhaps liberating in a way. Certainly it produced some very interesting, albeit weirdly punctuated and spelled genuine writing, most revealing of thoughts, feelings and experience.

Later in the summer, we did attempt to teach certain structures: form filling, the sentence and with it the period and the capital letter; personal letter; business letter; report of a meeting.

I think we were wise to leave this till the end of the summer. Though there is a great eagerness to learn the proper forms, I think that to have begun this way might have been rather inhibiting.

A few of the people who came were near illiterates and were in need of straight out handwriting practice. Even these, I think, benefited from the fairly free approach, provided they continued to come. I think we should probably have had a special class for them, and perhaps we'd have attracted more and held them.

At least the team teaching approach guaranteed fairly individual teaching of each person.

Reading. Practically all the adults were given an individual textbook test (sometimes called “informal reading inventory”) using a set of basal school readers. This test is familiar to all teachers of reading. The purpose of the test was to discover the instructional reading level of each student; i.e., the level at which over 100 running words, he makes 2%–5% errors in word recognition. On the basis of this testing we divided the students into 3 reading groups.

1. All below 3rd Grade went into a literacy class. These worked on the Gattengo “Words in Color” system and were taught by Linda Davis. I don't know what Linda's final judgment on the success of the course was. One of the advantages of the method is that it is useful in improving writing as well as reading. One woman, in particular, benefited from this, and made quite remarkable improvement not only in handwriting, but in composition. The success of the method depends on faithful attendance and a pretty high degree of concentration on the part of the student, and, with the exception of the one woman mentioned, the less literate students attended least faithfully. My own feeling was that the method postponed actual reading for such a long time that it tended to be a bit discouraging. But I am really very ignorant of the method and predisposed to be critical of highly phonetic approaches to the teaching of reading, so that it would be important to get Linda's own appraisal of the success both of the method and of this particular experience.

2. 3rd and 4th Grade were taught by Fred Miller, who used an easy reading newspaper (not Junior Scholastic, but something similar) which people seemed to enjoy reading. Only trouble was that the paper was rather expensive.

3. 5th Grade and above were my group and were, in fact, the largest group. We read materials on Negro history, most of them written by us especially for the purpose, because most available materials were too difficult even for this group. We began with the Ebony Emancipation issue, in which we found plenty of good material written in impossibly difficult and high flown language. We began with the “Ten Dramatic Moments” which when rewritten, proved excellent. We read also parts of the Sarah Patton Boyle and Frederick Douglass articles, the M.L.K. “I Have a Dream” speech, several issues of the local “Freedom Fighter,” the mimeod newspaper produced by the Center. In the last few weeks, we read materials written by all the teachers, following the last Citizenship syllabus (see page 2).

This group was really a delight to teach, and the readings always produced, if not discussion, at least very pertinent and often moving comments relating the thing read to the situation in Miss. today.

On two occasions we read poems: Margaret Burroughs “What Shall I tell My Children who are Black?” which produced really excellent participation, and Eve Merriam’s “Tomorrow’s Footsteps” and Naomi Madgett’s “Midway” which served to sum up and reinforce the thoughts of the summer in a very effective way. If a teacher likes poetry, and has a few simple clues about how to present it, I think it is often very much appreciated.

My own method for teaching reading—or rather, for reading something with a group who has some skill in reading—usually followed the standard procedure enshrined in most American basal reading systems. I find the procedure extremely helpful, so I set it out.

1. Introduce the piece to be read, arousing interest, supplying background, explaining new concepts. In the process of doing this introduce any words that you think are new or difficult, or perhaps merely basic to understanding the reading, and write them on the blackboard, as you use them.

2. Have the class read the passage silently section by section, posing a question to direct and motivate their reading before each section, and discussing the answers briefly at the end of each section read. How long each section to be read should be will depend on many things, notably the skill of the group. I found that a reading 3/4 page of typed quarto long, consisting of 3 or 4 paragraphs, was enough to do in one hour-long lesson, and we generally read it silently paragraph by paragraph.

3. Read the whole passage through orally—usually around the class in turn.

4. Discuss meaning of passage as whole.

Baby Minding At the first announcement of Freedom School at the mass meeting, we invited mothers to bring their children, and promised to have nursery care for them. There were times when we repented of this invitation, but, on balance, I think it was very good that we were able to provide this service, and that the beginnings of a kindergarten were, in fact, established over the summer. Looking after anything up to 15 kids, ages ranging between 15 months and 5 years was a far more formidable task than any of us realized. The people who bore the brunt of the work and worry were the 4 community center workers, though some of the freedom school teachers did help some of the time also. Aside from the abysmal lack of equipment with which we began, I think that what made the task hard was that all of us, those involved, and those not involved, tended to underrate its importance. It was important not just because it made the attendance of

mothers possible, but for its own sake, and because it paved the way for the permanent kindergarten that now exists. The “curriculum” included the usual games, walks, stories, songs etc. —but these tended to require too much discipline and concentration. Things were much better when we acquired some simple equipment—blocks, tinker toys, wagon toy phone—which made self directed free play possible. Especially considering the age range, this kind of equipment was absolutely essential. A mattress also roved essential, as there were always a few babies who spent the morning squealing, or gurgling, or sleeping on it.

I think if this is to be part of the program next year, it should be spoken about at Orientation, shown to be important, and, if kids are interested, they should be encouraged to prepare themselves for it.

### *Afternoon Program: Kids*

The Ruleville Central High School was in session 7:30 AM to 1:30 so Freedom School met from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM.

There were 6 teachers, so we divided into six different classes according to age group 10 to 12 year olds; 13 and 14 year olds; 15 and 16 yr. old boys; 15 and 16 year old girls; 17 year olds; 18 years and over.

We have no accurate record of numbers and attendance, but I think the total number as probably about 120, and our daily attendance between 50 and 80.

At the end of the 3rd week, we lost 3 teachers . . . as they went to Indianola to set up a Freedom School there. The three different schedules which we worked to during the summer reflect the staff changes.

### Schedule I

1st Hour: in Age Groups for Citizenship, Reading, Writing.

2nd Hour: Electives—most met 2 days a week, some 1 day only

Typing	Reading	Art
French	African Culture	Biology
Music	Health	

The electives were taught not only by Freedom School teachers but by Community Center people also.

3rd Hour: Principally Recreation

Also some electives

Also canvassing—when needed.

One feature of this schedule was that we never met as a whole school together in a general session. I think this was a weakness. We did have one general session in the last week, when we sang a few freedom songs and then heard a talk about M.F.D.P., and then broke into age groups to discuss it. The kids liked this, and we had decided to do it once a week when we had to abandon Schedule I and devise a plan that would work with 3 teachers only.

Schedule I worked well, on the whole. Good relationships were built up between teacher and kids in classes that ranged in size from 6 to 20. One problem proved to be the numbers of hangers on and dropouts who wanted to hang around the center but were unwilling to join a class. There was some debate as to whether they should be told to go or allowed to hang around. I think in the end the former opinion won out, though it was never very rigidly enforced. My own approach is

that they should have been allowed to come and sit around, provided they were not a nuisance. I think that some arts of persuasion should have been used to enveigle them into classes, but I feel that there's always the chance that someone will come further in if he's given a welcome, allowed to hang around, and not badgered. I think a community center should be as free and permissive a place as possible. On the whole the younger kids came to classes more faithfully than the older ones, though some teachers managed to build up a very good relationship with their older kids.

Schedule 2 was designed to meet the conditions of the fourth week when there were only 3 Freedom School teachers (though 3 more expected the next week) and when we wanted to use community center personnel as much as possible. We decided also to draw on voter registration and research volunteers.

1st Hour: Mass Meeting or General Session, to begin with Freedom Songs, general announcements, contributions from the kids etc, followed by a talk by a special speaker, as follows: —

1. The Freedom Rides—Rabbi Levine
2. Sunflower County—in context of Federal, State, County, and Town systems of Governments; given by Jerry Techlin, Research.
3. The Party System—George Winter and Len Edwards.
4. Education in the U.S. —Jerry Tecklin
5. A Journey to India—Gandhi and Non-violence—Kirsty Powell
6. Book Review Session—in which a number of teachers and community center people took part. Books of various kinds were introduced—beginning reading (Seuss etc), Fairy Tales, Alice in W., Biography, Travel and Adventure, Novel (Huck Finn). After the session the library was open for checking out books. A most successful kind of session, I think.

2nd Hour: Expression Groups—Art, Role Playing, Writing

The whole school broke up into 3 groups, initially on the basis of preference, but we tried to insist that each child have one day in each group, and he was then free to go where he like. The resulting groups had a wide age range, but on the whole this did not prove as difficult as might have been expected—it was even, in some ways, rather interesting. The groups were large and in all of them we used team teaching. The aim was to find ways of expressing through writing, art, or role playing something of what had been spoken of in the speech. However, it so happened that the week we began working to Schedule 2 was also the week when the kids began working on a proposed picket of the Central High school for the purpose of urging teachers to vote. The result was that the role playing became geared almost entirely to role playing the picket, and some of the art work became directed to sign making.

Role Playing—this proved far and away the most popular, and there were sometimes as many as 30 or 40 in the group. In Role-playing the picket, great enthusiasm was developed, not only for the picket, but for role playing as such. As a result, in Schedule 3 a good drama group emerged, and role playing was used a good deal in the age groups, as part of ordinary class work.

Art—This group began with posters. It began to be exciting, however, when they were encouraged to do free, abstract works with paint, and then with charcoal and flat, not the tip of the pencil. Sometimes these were intended as emotional expressions.

Writing—The writing group did, generally, take the topic of the speech as its inspiration, and it often proved necessary to explore the ideas presented to it pretty thoroughly in discussion before writing was done, and this gave opportunity for useful review—but cut down on writing time. I think probably the freer approach that we used with the adults would have produced more creative results.

3rd Hour: Electives (same) and Recreation, and Canvassing

This schedule 2 had a great deal to commend it. When the speaker was dramatic like Rabbi Levine the meeting of the whole school was good, and the expression groups were really quite exciting and creative. I think they gave the kids a sense of freedom which engendered a good deal of enthusiasm. It was good, too, to be able to involve the community center and voter registration people in both the talks and the team teaching—in fact they were essential. In fact it seemed such a good scheme that there was some discussion about whether we should continue with it after the new teachers arrived. However in the end we decided that the advantages of intimate association with an age group were of even more value than the general excitement of the expression groups, so Schedule 3 ended up something of a compromise between the two previous schemes.

### Schedule 3

1<sup>st</sup> hour—General Session with freedom songs, etc., and a talk on Negro history—topics same as for last 3 weeks of adult program. The 6 freedom school teachers took turns in giving the talks.

2<sup>nd</sup> hour—age groups. These were somewhat reformed

The 10-12 year group had become so big that it split into 2 classes

The 13-14 group remained the same, and the rest of the senior kids became one class, with 2 (sometimes 3) teachers working as a team with them.

3<sup>rd</sup> hour—Electives, recreation, canvassing

The Value of the general session came to be debated among the teachers. Very early in the piece it was decided that the 10 to 12 group should meet in their own class, because it was impossible to talk to them and to the 18 year olds at the same time. However, even for the older students it seemed too passive a method, with too little interchange between speaker and audience. As a result, in the second last week we decided to have a general session only once a week, and to have the first two hours in age groups. This places a great responsibility on the individual teacher—but if he accepts that, it makes possible a much more active learning situation.

Age Groups. The switch in teachers mid-stream meant the 10-12's and the 13 and 14's were the only one who continued as separate class groups with the one teacher all the way. This was a great advantage, and I think, it is the main reason why we didn't do as good a job with the older students as we might have. I don't have reports on all the classes, but it might be useful to report on the two that I have reports on: Lucia Guest's and my own.

10-12's This class showed great enthusiasm. By the beginning of Schedule 3 it had grown so much that we split it. It met on the steps of the Sanctified Church, and the high school teachers who lived in the houses opposite had a grandstand view of what went on. Lucia has never taught before, but she strikes me as a very good example of a naturally good teacher—creative,

inventive, full of enthusiasm. I quote from a letter in which she gives an account of what she did with her class.

Looking back and trying to say what I did with my classes, I realize how much time I misused or wasted. If I had it to do over again, I think I would shoot for more concrete efforts, perhaps more writing, more art work. As far as what I did do: I guess a great concentration on world geography. I.E. what are the continents, where are they, what are some of the key countries in each continent, and how do people live there? We did the world maps and the map of Australia (big maps which each kid colored and labeled). I spend time on Australia—pop., largest cities, states, etc.

We did maps of Africa, and all the readings on Africa which we prepared. I also spent some time on Egypt, using National Geographics. As far as Negro History—this is where I fell down, I'm afraid. We went from Africa to U.S. slave trade, to Slavery in U.S. and skipped to Civil War, and didn't get further. As for the Movement: we went through the M.L. King comic book, and learned about "Snick" and what SNCC stands for. As for Government and politics (American): I attempted to teach some idea of the relationship between, and what are the 4 governments—municipal, county, state, Federal, also the importance of the ballot and where it fits into the scheme of things. As far as how I taught this:

1. I learned the great value of the blackboard, and of pictures.
2. Role playing—towards the last, I attempted to translate everything I could into role-playing—even geography.

13–14's—my class. I took Negro History as a core, following roughly the adult course (p.2), but leaving out the more sociological topics (like the Negro in the North etc.) My method was to introduce a topic, like Harriet Tubman, for instance, by telling the story, talking about it, looking at pictures, reading about it. This generally took one day. Then for the next two or three days, the kids followed up on this topic in their own way. I brought all the books, magazines, mimeoed material, pictures, etc. I could find to class, and got kids to choose what they wanted to do, and use the resource materials to help them. Some did historical, some creative writing, some drew pictures, or copied poems, or copied historical documents like runaway slave notices, etc. At the end of the summer, we displayed the work on all the units, arranged chronologically, to present a kind of perspective on Negro history.

See page 9 for other classes.

Electives. These were popular, but difficult to organize. Things went better when we submitted to the inevitable and started banging a gong to induce people to change over on time. I think we were perhaps too ambitious in the number of electives we tried to run, and some kids never settled into one long enough to get somewhere. However, I think the idea of electives has a lot to commend itself.

Typing—perhaps the most popular—had to exclude the younger members for lack of room. Mustered 6 typewriters, and had two classes of 6 each afternoon.

Health—a small but faithful group continued the whole summer. Included First Aid Physiology, and even some dissection—frog!

French—Great interest in learning a foreign language—all simple conversation—unfortunately we lost the teacher who was doing this.

Music and African culture—both began and fizzled out, either because we lost the teacher at the end of the first 3 weeks, or because the teacher was drafted to another elective.

Art—really got under way after the impetus given under the 2<sup>nd</sup> schedule. Much enthusiasm—great ignorance of simplest techniques—need encouragement to be bold and free in their work

Dancing—very popular—did modern dancing, singing games, and occasionally the kids taught us the monkey etc. Only girls, except once or twice for singing games and fold dances.

Role Playing—became an elective in the last three weeks—emerged from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Schedule.

Devoted itself to preparing an unscripted play about the High School protest—cast of about 20, one hour long. Presented it at the Freedom Festival, last day of school, and it was a great success.

Reading—we tried hard to offer reading of various kinds as an elective, but on the whole we did not establish sufficient continuity to make a great success of it. The moral is, I think, that reading should not be an elective. Something was done however. Again we tried to test and group the kids, but the great variations in ability and the paucity of teachers made it hard to get kids reading in a group at their own level. In the end we established three groups that had a fairly continuous existence in the last three weeks: -

1. Seriously retarded readers. This group numbered 4 at its maximum. It used a new series of beginning readers based on Karl Fries Linguistic approach and written by Mrs. Rosemary Wilson for a new experimental reading program being conducted by the Board of Education in Philadelphia, PA. The set of readers remains in Ruleville and I think they're excellent (but reading is a field full of partisanship!). I think this group made progress (age range 12 to 20) but they scarcely got beyond the "alphabet book". Teaching beginning reading must have provision for a long term project to be useful.

2. 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. This group read the Seuss books with great pleasure.

3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and up. This group read the 4<sup>th</sup> grade basic reader together—but it was too difficult for some, too easy for others.

Once or twice I tried individual reading—and I think this would have been the answer if I had succeeded in getting it organized. Each child would then spend most of the lesson reading a book at his own level silently, coming to the teacher for 5 to 10 minutes of individual oral reading, questioning about comprehension, and word study.

\*The other classes, 15's and up (continue from p. ) The senior classes had great discontinuity of teachers. They concentrated exclusively on citizenship and history, using mainly discussion, with some (I suspect too little in most cases ) reading and writing. I think senior students can also learn form more active methods.

### *Highlights of the School Program*

1. Caravan of Music. We had about 6 visits from folk singers and these were all a great delight. Among those specially remembered will be the drummer who let everyone have a go at the drums one by one after the show, and Jackie Washington with his children's songs and Barbara Dane, who taught us "It isn't nice". It would have been good if there had been more attempt to teach songs.

2. The Visit of 13 of the Women from National Women's Organisations gave us all a boost. A great crowd turned up and we put on quite a program. They sat in on "baby minding" and on a

reading lesson. Then Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. MacDonald, Mrs. Johnson, and Mrs. Tucker told the story of the Movement in Ruleville, after which followed some very good discussion. Then they met volunteers and heard Jerry Tecklin talk about voter registration, research, and the law—then more discussion. In the afternoon, the kids took charge: told the story of the protest at school, and then did a role play performance of the picket.

3. Meridian Freedom School Convention. Three kids went from Ruleville armed with a program for Senator, Congressman etc worked out with other young people over a whole afternoon and a morning of strenuous discussion. They voted for Mr. MacDonald for Mayor of Ruleville and Martin Luther King superintendent of Education.

Ruleville made a good contribution to the Convention. The story of the school protest and the motion of Bobbie Cannon inspired plans for the state wide boycott. Ora Doss and Eddie Johnson both made enthusiastic reports back to the Freedom School. Both were impressed by how hard work it was. As Eddie said in his report, “It wasn’t fun!”

Actually I think that next year the program might include a bit more fun—a dance early in the program, and perhaps other recreation planned to help kids meet each other, or perhaps more highly organized communal meals to provide opportunity for kids to meet people from other places, or perhaps some discussion groups or study circles devoted not just to drafting motions, but to the task of studying and discussing something written specially for the purpose

4. In White America. This was a great success. It was done on the back porch, and the 200 or so people sat on benches in the sun or stood. Despite Gil Moses’ misgivings about an out-of doors daylight performance, I thought the setting was excellent. The audience almost became a part of the play. Small boys climbed on the porch to go to the bathroom in the middle of a scene, dogs and hens paraded in front of the stage and there was an intimacy and informality about the performance that underlined for me the impression that the play was woven out of the very stuff of these people’s lives.

5. Freedom Festival. The last day of school was given over to a Freedom Festival. In the morning the adults came for a tea party which somehow proved a bit stuffy and “middle class”. Conversation didn’t flow as freely as usual though I think people enjoyed it. In the library we had a display of kids’ writing and art work and maps. In the afternoon we had a programme presented mainly by the kids, but two adults also took part: some plays written by the kids, a puppet show about the valiant knight Bob Moses and the wicked witch, Segregation, some poems of Eve Merriam recited in chorus, three freedom songs written by the kids, and an excellent, long, rehearsed, unscripted play telling the whole story of the school protest. Finally, Mr. Macdonald presented each kid with a dictionary.

### *The School Protest*

This story deserves setting out in detail some time, but here I’ll just give the main facts. The idea arose among the tiny group of kids active in the Ruleville Student Action Group which was stimulated into action when the volunteers came down. They began talking to the teachers about voting, and role played interviews with them in the meetings. Then, one meeting, after all the volunteers had gone they decided to announce a date to picket the school (August 5<sup>th</sup>) and to prepare for it they began having daily campus meetings at noon, and practiced role laying the picket during freedom school. They produced a leaflet setting out these plans, urging kids to come and join them, and urging the teachers to go down and register. That was the first phase.

Then, discussion with Charles MacLaurin and others threw doubt on the wisdom of having a picket, especially one whose date had already been announced. It was decided, as a kind of face saving device, to write a letter to the Principal and faculty, setting out a list of demands, and saying that if the demands were not met in reasonable time, they would take direct action. Besides asking teachers to go and register, the demands included such things as asking for an account of money earned cotton picking, for a student government and clubs, and for teachers to take the lead in demanding better, and integrated education. The letter was handed personally to each member of faculty on Monday morning. In addition, in Chapel two kids took advantage of a regular space in the program for student announcements, to make freedom speeches. Eddie Johnson expounded the letter, and Bobbie Cannon told teachers that there was “a new day” coming and they should be leading their people into it. The result was electric. The kids applauded and the faculty preserved a stony silence. That was the end of the second phase.

By the end of the morning, a notice had been handed to every student purporting to come from the Superintendent saying that any student who took part in any demonstration would be suspended. When M.C. Perry tore up this notice saying he didn't “want any of that trash”, he was immediately hauled off to the Principal and suspended. He tried to return to school next day; the Principal called the cops, and he was marched from the school at gunpoint. The Mayor then warned him that if he wished to return to school he would have to sign a statement that he would never again take part in civil rights activity. He went home to the plantation, and after a day, decided he would sign the statement. On the bus he learned that the kids of his class had staged a walkout the day before in protest against his suspension. School was pretty tense. The result was that the minute he got on campus the cops were again called. This time he was brought for trial, sentenced to 30 days and \$100 for disturbance of the peace, and it was 10 days before we bailed him out on appeal on \$500 bond. During this period things were happening at school, though I'm not very clear on the details. The kids generally agreed that they had missed the right moment for a demonstration by the whole school when they did not stage a wholesale walkout the day M.C. Perry was expelled. The kids had a meeting to discuss the letter and its demands; Mrs. Hamer had a meeting with the faculty; and the lawyer, David Godstick and I think Len Edwards met with the Principal. The kids brought their story to the meridian Freedom School Convention, and there plans were made for a statewide boycott. This was the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase.

### *The Library*

About 30 volunteers spent the first 4 days of the summer project doing nothing but sort the 7000 books piled in the Center, culling about 4000, and shelving them. We started lending books immediately using a check-out book. A group of kids volunteered to act as librarians, and worked on the issuing of books, and later on numbering and ordering them on the shelves. Eventually, we decided to use our very simple form of Dewey, using only the numbers for the main classes and a few other numbers within each class to apply to sections where we had many books. The system suited our purpose, and I think it worked pretty well. We had one shelf of “Book By and About Negroes” but otherwise there were no special displays— though I think they would be a good idea. The kids and I began work on a catalogue but we grew faint hearted, and decided it was better to concentrate on getting a good shelf plan first. We had a couple of book review sessions both for kids and for adults, and these were most successful and provoked a lot of borrowing of books. After the work day, when tables and benches were made for the library, we started to keep one room quiet for reading and studying. Before the regular school closed for picking, some kids

had already got into the habit of using the library to do homework, as well as to write letters and read.

During September, we tried hard to get the library to the point where the kids could run it themselves, and a chief librarian and group of assistants were doing a pretty good job, and were represented in the board.

As to the quality of the books, they included everything from Nancy Drew to Thomas Mann. Perhaps the Thomas Mann would be better in a college library, but I cling to the thought that Richard Wright might come out of Ruleville. And anyway, as long as the High School has no library to speak of, the Center Library must serve as a High School Library. The Literature and History sections of the library were quite good but it was pretty weak on Science and the Social Sciences.

### *Teachers*

I think we were extraordinarily lucky in the high quality of teachers, and their genuineness. We began with 6 people, with Liz Fusco as co-ordinator. When Liz and 2 others went to Indianola, we got 3 new people. Out of all nine of these, 4 were graduates, and 2 professional teachers. I think it was fairly obvious though, that neither being a graduate, nor being a professional teacher had much to do with being a good Freedom School teacher. When we lost our co-ordinator, it was suggested that we agree among ourselves as to who should take her place, and this was how I took over. I think this was a good way to do it, and it seemed to work out happily.

Like most Freedom School staffs we had our problems of personal relations, but on the whole I think we worked well as a team, and this is one reason why the summer was a joyful experience for us, all other things notwithstanding. I think the most important relationship for the school is that between the co-ordinator and the rest of the teachers. In some ways it is a pity that orientation is not long enough for a co-ordinator to be the choice of the group. But in any case, I think that the more the co-ordinator can act as “mere co-ordinator” and not as head the better. I think the spirit of staff meetings should be thoroughly egalitarian, and everyone should be aware that he or she has equal responsibility. I think staff meetings are important and should be quite frequent—at least once a week. I think it’s important that schedule and curriculum be planned co-operatively by the whole staff, though I also think it’s important that each individual teacher have freedom to develop his own curriculum for his class. I don’t think these two things are necessarily contradictory.

Another problem which I think we shared with many schools was some difficulty in working out a good relationship with the community center staff. I think in the end we succeeded, partly because at the personal level we got along well and enjoyed each other—which was just lucky—partly because the Freedom School needed the community center people in order to function. Difficulties were, however, inherent in a situation in which Freedom School and Community Center functions overlapped and in which Community Center functions were much less clearly defined than were Freedom School functions. One difficulty, for instance was whether Freedom School or Community Center co-ordinator should lead joint staff meetings. In the end, we agreed that where the adult morning classes or the kids afternoon classes were concerned it should be rated Freedom School business, but all other business was Community Center business. This seemed to work out O.K. Most of the time the two staffs met separately, and the Freedom School simply used all the community center personnel as teachers.

I gather that in some projects there was a good deal of tension between voter registration and freedom school volunteers. On the whole I think we escaped this. I don't know why: perhaps partly because some of the Freedom School and Community Center people were as militant as any, and when arrests were made in Drew all three groups were involved. I do remember one argument when plans for the school protest were developing when someone in voter registration suggested that all the school program should now be geared to the picket, and I protested that if freedom schools were to retain their integrity they had to be centers of real education, not just of propaganda. In actual fact, I don't think this was disputed. Not only that, there was a lot of sharing of work at every level. Voter registration people gave talks in freedom school and freedom school people helped canvas and make out file cards, and everyone helped in the Community Center's work day, or in food and clothing distribution.

### *Community Center*

Looking on, it seemed to me that in many ways the community center people had a hard time because it was not clear at the outset what their job was. They took on the responsibility for baby minding in the mornings. They organized a program for the under 10 year olds 2 afternoons a week. They accepted responsibility for the physical state of the center. They helped organize food and clothing distribution. They conducted a health survey. They planned and carried out a most successful Work Day when volunteers and local people made tables and benches, laid linoleum, and painted. All of these things were important but I think that sometimes Community Center people felt they were doing the jobs that were left over after others had done the "main jobs." Not only that, I think some community center talent was not perhaps used to its fullest extent, simply because at the beginning it was not clear enough what there was to be done.

### *Handing Over*

When Linda Davis came back from the meeting in Jackson with the news that she was to stay at the center through the winter, she discussed with the few remaining volunteers a plan for having a Board of the Community Center elected by the Mass meeting. This was in lien with the feeling often expressed during the summer that somehow the Center had to become the community's. The election of the Board was quite a milestone. In the last month I was down after the summer project proper was over there were many signs that the community was really claiming its own center. A team of kids helped man the radio. Another team of kids became librarians. A dozen or so 4 and 5 year olds began to come regularly to the kindergarten which Linda organized. Adults came 2 nights a week to reading classes. And the young people started to organize their own program with recreation and study and discussion concentrated in an organized way, mainly on Sunday afternoon. Perhaps more important, people, young and old began to drop in to the community center for various reasons: to borrow a book, to read or write in the library, to play Checkers or Monopoly, to talk, or dance, or listen to the radio, to meet before going to the courthouse to attempt to register, or before going to a county wide meeting on Sunday afternoon in Indianola, to talk over a problem, or to report some news, or to play basketball or football or croquet. If any confirmation were wanted of the need for community centers, this was it surely. In just 3 months this Ruleville Community Center had become a real center of community life in the Negro community. No one looked forward to the winter. But, as a

local person said to me—not a regular attender at the center—“We all know where we’ll be running if there’s trouble.”

***FREEDOM SCHOOLS IN MISSISSIPPI, 1964***

From the carbon copies of the spring's letters and reports I see what real apprehensions, as well as hopes, the people who dreamed of Freedom Schools had. Out of Charlie Cobb's idea of a situation in which there would be questioning, release from rigid squelching of initiative and expression—from Charlie Cobb's bitterness about the way the Negro has had to be silent in order to survive in white America, and his vision of the kid's articulateness and reaching for change, meaningful change, in Mississippi—out of his seeing that kids are ready to see “the link between a rotting shack and a rotting America”—came the original plan for Freedom Schools in Mississippi. That it could be an idea that people working desperately on voter registration and on keeping alive in the state could take seriously is perhaps evidence of the validity of Charlie Cobb's dream: Mississippi needed more, needs more, than that all Negroes 21 and over shall have the right to vote. The staff in Mississippi understood what Charlie was dreaming because they, too, were daring to dream that what could be done in Mississippi could be deeper, more fundamental, more far-reaching, more revolutionary than voter registration alone: more personal, and in a sense more transforming, than a political program.

The decision to have Freedom Schools in Mississippi then, seems to have been a decision to enter into every phase of the lives of the people of Mississippi. It seems to have been a decision to set the people free for politics in the only way that people really can become free, and that is totally. It was an important decision for the staff to be making, and so it is not surprising that the curriculum for the proposed schools become everyone's concern. I understand that Louis Chaffee, Dona Moses, Mendy Samstein, and Casey Hayden as well as Noel Day, Jane Stembridge, and Jack Minnis worked on and argued about what should be taught, and what the realities of Mississippi are, and how those realities affect the kids, and how to get the kids to discover themselves as human beings. And then, I understand, Staughton Lynd came in to impose a kind of beautiful order on the torment that the curriculum was becoming—torment because it was not just curriculum: it was each person on the staff in Mississippi painfully analyzing what the realities of his world were, and asking himself, with what pain I can only sense, what right he had to let the kids of Mississippi know the truth, and what right he had had to keep it from them until now. And because of these sessions, the whole concept of what could be done in Mississippi must have changed.

In a way, the Freedom Schools began to operate in those planning session. A section of the curriculum called “Poor whites, poor Negroes and their fears,” for example, considers the unity of experience between whites and Negroes, as well as the psychological and political barriers. And out of the discussions that produced this part of the curriculum came, perhaps, the idea of a “White Folks' Project,” and the intense economic orientation of what was begun in Research, and Federal Programs, also new projects. And out of work with the people day after day in the Freedom Schools emerged medical concerns, and farm league ideas, and the community building of community centers. It was because the people trying to change Mississippi were asking themselves the real questions about what is wrong with Mississippi that the Summer Project in effect touched every aspect of the lives of the Negroes in Mississippi, and started to touch the lives of the whites.

It was the asking of questions, as I see it, that made the Mississippi Summer Project different from other voter registration projects and other civil rights activities everywhere else in the South. And so it is reasonable that the transformations that occurred—and transformations did

occur—out of the Freedom School experience occurred because for the first time in their lives kids were asking questions.

The way the curriculum finally came out was that it was based on the asking of certain questions, questions which kept being asked through the summer, in connection with the kids' interest in their Freedom School teachers (mostly northern, mostly white, mostly still in college), in connection with Negro History, in connection with African culture, in connection even with the academic subjects, as well as in connection with the study of the realities of Mississippi in the light of Nazi Germany, 1935. The so-called "Citizenship Curriculum" set up two sets of questions. The primary set was: 1. why are we (teachers and students) in Freedom Schools? 2. what is the Freedom Movement? 3. what alternatives does the Freedom Movement offer us? What was called the secondary set of questions, but what seemed to me the more important, because more personal, set was: 1. what does the majority culture have that we want? 2. what does the majority culture have that we don't want? 3. what do we have that we want to keep?

The answering of these questions, and the continual raising of them in many contexts, may be said perhaps to be what the Freedom Schools were about. This was so because in order to answer anything out of what these questions suggest, it is necessary for the student to confront the question of who he is, and what his world is like, and how he fits into it or is alienated from it.

It was out of the experience of asking these questions that the transformations occurred. At the beginning of the summer, with rare amazing exceptions, the kids who were tentatively exploring us and the Freedom Schools were willing to express about themselves only one thing with honesty and passion, without the characteristic saying of the thing they think the white man wants to hear: that thing was that as soon as they could gather enough money for a ticket they were going off to Chicago, or to California! To leave the state was their ambition, and about it they were certain, even though they had not thought any further than that, even in terms of where the money was to come from, and certainly not in terms of what they would find there and what they would do there. Some sense of "go home to my Lord and be free"—some vague hope of a paradise beyond—seemed to inform their passion for the north, their programless passion.

But by the end of the summer almost all of these kids were planning to stay in Mississippi.

Within the flexible structure of the Freedom School it was natural that a confession of—an insistence on—the desire to race northward lead to a discussion of the condition of the Negro in the North, about which most of the teachers could tell specifically. And then came the news stories about Harlem, and Rochester, and Medford, Massachusetts, and the kids were interested, and worried. But it was not just because the truth about the North began to shatter their dream of it as a paradise that the kids changed their minds. The yearning for the North was, of course, the expression of a need to escape the intolerability of the situation in Mississippi. But the nature of their need to escape was that they really did not know what it was about Mississippi that they hated—or, rather, they felt that what was intolerable for them had somehow to do with the white man, somehow to do with getting only \$3.00 a day for 10 hours' work chopping a white man's cotton, somehow to do with the police—but they had not yet articulated, if they knew, the connections among all these things. And they had not, as well, articulated the connections of those things with their experiences of repression at home and in school. And so the very amorphous nature of the enemy was threatening to them.

The experience in the Freedom School was that patterns began to be seen, and patterns were real and could be dealt with. So the kids began to see two things at once: that the North was not real escape, and the South was not some vague white monster doomed irrationally to crush them. Simultaneously, they began to discover that they themselves could take action against the

injustices—the specific injustices and the condition of injustice—which kept them unhappy and impotent.

Through the study of Negro History they began to have a sense of themselves as a people who could produce heroes. They saw in the story of Joseph Cinque of the *Amistad* a parallel to kinds of revolts that the Movement, as they began to learn about it, represented. They saw that Joseph Cinque, in leading a mutiny on that slave ship instead of asserting his will to freedom by jumping off the ship into the shark-waiting waters, was saying that freedom is something that belongs to life, not to death, and that a man has responsibility for bringing all his people to freedom, not just for his own escaping. Connections between then and now kept being made—at first by the teachers, very soon by the students: who do you know that is like Joseph Cinque? How is Bob Moses like Moses in the Bible? How is he different? Why did Harriet Tubman go back into the South after she had gotten herself free into the North—and why so many times? And why doesn't Mrs. Hamer stay in the North once she gets there to speak, since she doesn't have a job on that man's plantation any more, and since her life is in so much danger? And what do you think about Fredrick Douglass's talking so straight to the President of the United States? And how does the picture of Jim Forman in the Emancipation Proclamation issue of *Ebony* suggest that same kind of straight talking? And who do you think the Movement is proving right—Booker T. Washington or W. E. B. DuBois? And why are the changes of gospel songs into Freedom Songs significant? What does “We Shall Overcome” really mean in terms of what we are doing, and what we can do?

Beginning to sense the real potency of organized Negroes in Mississippi, the kids in the Freedom Schools found an immediate area of concern in the Negro schools they attended or had dropped out of: the so-called “public” schools. They had grievances, but had, until drawn into the question asking, only been able to whine, or to accept passively, or to lash out by dropping out of school or getting themselves expelled. Within the Freedom Schools, especially by comparing the Freedom Schools with the regular schools, they began to become articulate about what was wrong, and the way things should be instead: Why don't they do this at our school? Was the first question asked, and then there began to be answers, which led to further questions, such as, Why don't our teachers register to vote, if they presume to teach us about citizenship? And why can't our principal make his own decisions instead of having to follow the orders of the white superintendent? And why do we have no student government, or why doesn't the administration take the existing student government seriously?

This was the main question, which came also out of why there are no art classes, no language classes, why there is no equipment in the science labs, why the library is inadequate and inaccessible, why the classes are overcrowded. The main question was **WHY ARE WE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY?**—which is of course the question that the adults were asking about the city and county and state, and the question the Freedom Democratic Party asked—and for which the party demanded an answer—at the Convention.

The students were taken seriously in the Freedom Schools. They were encouraged to talk, and their talking was listened to. They were assigned to write, and their writing was read with attention to idea and style as well as to grammar. They were encouraged to sing, to dance, to draw, to play, to laugh. They were encouraged to think. And all of this was painful as well as releasing because to be taken seriously requires confrontation. And so Freedom School was painful for the kids who grew the most.

Tangibly, what was set in motion out of this experience of joy and pain was the thing the Mississippi staff had hoped could happen in Mississippi, but could not totally form. In the spring

before the summer, SNCC in Mississippi had tried to organize a Mississippi Student Union, bringing together kids from all over the state. And there was good response, but not on the scale the MSU was soon to achieve out of the Freedom Schools. This summer the kids began to talk boycott of the schools, but to be able to discipline their thinking about boycott so that their action would not just be acting out their frustrations but careful, considered, programmed, revolutionary meaningful action along the lines of the Montgomery bus boycott and African revolutionary action. The kids were able to come together in the middle of the summer, in Meridian, and draw up a series of resolutions which said with terrible clarity what they felt about their world: what a house should be, what a school should be, what a job should be, what a city should be—even what the federal government should be. And they were able to ask why it was that the people did not have a voice, and to assert that their voices would be heard. The seriousness of their concern for a voice is reflected in the final statement of the list of grievances drawn up by the McComb Freedom School:

We are 12 Pike County high-school students. Until we are assured our parents will not suffer reprisals, until we are sure this list of grievances is met with serious consideration and good will, we will remain anonymous.

The McComb students are sounding this list of grievances to the school officials, the senators and the newspapers and the city officials and the President of the United States. Out into the world: look at me—I am no longer an invisible man.

And back again into themselves. Whoever the Freedom Schools touched they activated into confrontation, with themselves and with the world and back again. On one level, it was the white teacher saying to the Negro girl that nappy hair vs. “good hair” is not a valid distinction: that it is a white man’s distinction, and that the queens in Africa—in Senegal, Mali, Ghana—in Ethiopia—had nappy short hair! On another level, it was the Northern Negro student teacher saying to the kids yearning Northward that he himself had gone to an almost completely (or completely) segregated school, and that his home was in a ghetto. On another, it was a senior, suspended from the split-session summer school for participating in the movement and taking Freedom School academic courses (fully parallel) instead, saying of Robert Frost’s “The Road Not Taken” that the man took the road that needed him more: “because it was grassy/and wanted wear/ . . . and that has made all the difference.” On another level, it was the white and Negro Freedom School teachers sitting with the adults in the evening classes talking about what kids want and what kids deserve, and hearing the adults express some of their concern for their kids in the forming of a parents’ group to support the kids’ action against the schools. On still another, it was the junior-high-school kids in the community coming over in the evening to sit with the adults who were learning their alphabets, one kid to one adult, and both, and the staffs, crying with awe for the beauty and strangeness and naturalness of it. And on all levels, it was the whites, the northerners, listening to the Mississippi Negroes, reading what they wrote, taking them seriously, and learning from them.

Visible results of Freedom Summer include the kids’ drawings on the wall of Freedom Schools and COFO officers all over the state, as well as kids’ applications for scholarships (National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students) and even more applications for the Tougaloo Work Study program, which commits them to staying to work in Mississippi. In addition, there is the real probability that the Negro teachers in the regular schools—the teachers who have to sign an oath not to participate in civil rights activities or try to vote—have, this first

week of school, begun to experience for the first time in their lives the challenge from a student that is not adolescent testing or insolent acting out but serious demanding that in truth there is freedom and that he will have the truth!

Most significantly, the result of the summer's Freedom Schools is seen in the continuation of the Freedom Schools into the fall, winter, spring, summer plans of the Mississippi Project. Some project directors, who had been in Mississippi since 1961 during the slow, sometimes depressing, always dangerous, serious, tiring work of voter registration, first thought of the Freedom Schools as a frill, detrimental to the basic effort. At best, they were a front for the real activity. But Freedom Schools were not just, as the same project directors came to concede, a place where kids could be inducted into the Movement, a convenient source of canvassers. They were something else, and in realizing this the dubious project directors were themselves transformed by the Freedom Schools. They were, instead of anything superficial, and will go on to be, the experience—not the place—in which people, because we needed them, emerged as discussion leaders, as teachers, as organizers, as speakers, as friends, as people. I know this is so because in leaving the Freedom School in Indianola, the county seat of Sunflower County where the Movement had been resisted for three years, and where, when we came in, the people did not know how to cross arm over arm to sing "We Shall Overcome," I learned for the first time in my life that with kids you love to disconnect is to suffer. So the teachers were transformed, too.

The transformation of Mississippi is possible because the transformation of people has begun. And if it can happen in Mississippi, it can happen all over the South. The original hope of the Freedom School plan was that there would be about 1,000 students in the state coming to the informal discussion groups and other sessions. It turned out that by the end of the summer the number was closer to 3,000, and that the original age expectation of 16-17-18-year-olds had to be revised to include preschool children and all the way up to 70-year-old people, all anxious to learn about how to be Free. The subjects ranged from the originally anticipated Negro History, Mississippi Now, and black-white relations to include typing, foreign languages, and other forms of tutoring. In fact, these aspects of the program were so successful that the continuation of the Freedom Schools into the regular academic year will involve a full-scale program of tutorials and independent study as well as exploration in greater intensity of the problems raised in the summer sessions, and longer-range work with art, music, and drama.

To think of kids in Mississippi expressing emotion on paper with crayons and in abstract shapes rather than taking knives to each other; to think of their writing and performing plays about the Negro experience in America rather than just sitting in despairing lethargy within that experience; to think of their organizing and running all by themselves a Mississippi Student Union, whose program is not dances and fundraising but direct action to alleviate serious grievances; to think, even, of their being willing to come to school *after school*, day after day, when their whole association with school had been at least uncomfortable and dull and at worst tragically crippling—to think of these things is to think that a total transformation of the young people in an underdeveloped country can take place, and to dare to dream that it can happen all over the South. There are programs now, as well as dreams, and materials, and results to learn from. And it may well be that the very staffs of the Freedom Schools in Louisiana and Georgia, etc., will be the kids who were just this past summer students themselves in the Freedom Schools in Mississippi, and discovered themselves there.

Liz Fusco, Coordinator, COFO Freedom Schools  
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### **EXAMPLES OF STUDENT WORK**

*[Editors' Note: The following documents were written by Freedom School students. In retyping these documents for this text, no corrections were made in the spelling or grammar. The writing appears below as it was in the originals. The only change is the names of the students have been reduced to initials.]*

#### **Excerpts from the collection "What the Summer Project Has Meant"**

*What the Summer Project Has Meant* by [ZH]

The Summer Project Ment So Much to Me. I Met New people.

They taught us New things about our people, things that we hadnt realized about. The life of famous colored people.

We also learned about writing different letter, that was a big help. What I liked very much was ~~the~~ learning the

meaning of lots of words. Words that I had been over but not nowing the real meaning.

The project ment much to me discussing health, food that prevent different diseases. And if you dont get enough of food containing these vitamins, you may come in conact with these diseases.

The Library means a great deal of help. We learn steps on how to use the library, which was very important.

All of the SNCC student was just what we needed. I pray that they come back again.

*On Jobs* by [LB]

Our problem today is un-employment.

I think the government should bring some kind of factory in the State of Mississippi and someone from the Northern Stats should opperate it. I think a rug factory would be fine for those not getting welfare assistance. We thats getting Welfare assistance cant get a job.

#### **Excerpts from Freedom School Newspapers**

##### ***PALMER'S CROSSING FREEDOM NEWS,***

Priest's Creek July 23, 1964 number one St John's

*The Darkness of the Negro Students*

Some of the Negro students have been complaining about their teachers. They said their teachers do not give any information about the freeing of their people. The information given to them was false. They teach only what the white man wants us to hear. We have been taught that the white man was responsible for the abolishing of slavery, but that is false. What about the Negro abolitionists?

We have been taught that when the Negroes were free they were helpless. But this is false because they helped themselves by building houses and raising crops.

The reason for my coming out of darkness is by attending Freedom Schools. At this school both sides of the story are told.

[LC]

*In Freedom Schools*

I like to go to Freedom School. You would like it too. If you want to come and don't have a way, let us know.

I think we should all have our equal rights. We Negroes have been beaten, but we will never turn back until we get what belongs to us.

We just want what belongs to us. We don't want anything else. I think we as Negroes ought to have the right to vote for justice, equal rights, freedom, jobs, we need better books to read. In the stores uptown and down here we have to pay tax. That is a crying shame.

God is looking down on people now. We try to hid things form people, but we can't hide things from God. We pay tax. I think we should have a right to vote. All of our colored men are getting beaten and put in jail. This unfair I think, don't you?

[RMC] age 11.

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE *By the*  
*Freedom School Students of*  
*St. John's Methodist Church,*  
*Palmer's Crossing, Hattiesburg, Miss.*

In this course of human events, it has become necessary for the Negro people to break away from the customs which have made it very difficult for the Negro to get his God-given rights. We, as citizens of Mississippi, do hereby state that all people should have the right to petition, to assemble, and to use public places. We also have the right to life, liberty, and to seek happiness.

The government has no right to make or to change laws without the consent of the people. No government has the right to take the law into its own hands. All people as citizens have the right to impeach the government when their rights are being taken away.

All voters elect persons to the government. Everyone must vote to elect the person of his choice; so we hereby state that all persons of twenty-one years of age, whether back, white or yellow, have the right to elect the persons of their choice; and if theses persons do not carry out the will of the people, they have the right to alter or abolish the government.

The Negro does not have the right to petition the government for a redress of these grievances:

- For equal opportunity.
- For better schools and equipment.
- For better recreation facilities.
- For more public libraries.
- For schools for the mentally ill.
- For more and better senior colleges.
- For better roads in Negro communities.
- For training schools in the State of Mississippi.
- For more Negro policemen.

For more guarantee of a fair circuit clerk.  
For integration in colleges and schools.

The government has made it possible for the white man to have a mock trial in the case of a Negro's death.

The government has refused to make laws for the public good.  
The government has used police brutality.  
The government has imposed taxes upon us without representation.  
The government has refused to give Negroes the right to go into public places.  
The government has marked our registration forms unfairly.

We, therefore, the Negroes of Mississippi assembled, appeal to the government of the state, that no man is free until all men are free. We do hereby declare independence from the unjust laws of Mississippi which conflict with the United States Constitution.

***The FREEDOM CARRIER***

Vol. I No. I Greenwood, Mississippi July 16, 1964

Greenwood Grumbles. Speaking of Freedom

By Editor C.T

We feel free when we can do as we please. We do not like it if anyone tries to stop us. Even a tiny baby will fly into a rage if his hands are held so that he cannot move them. This is not exactly love of freedom, for the baby has nothing in particular that he wants to do with his hands. It is more nearly hatred of restraint. But psychologists tell us that it is one of the few qualities found in all children from birth, and it is probably the basis for man's love of freedom.

Animals too often seem to want more freedom than they have. The dog strains at the leash to run free. The pet bird flies out of his cage when given the opportunity. Wild animals in zoos pace their cages hour by hour, ready to escape at the first chance. These animals are probably better cared for and fed than they would be if they were free. But animals, like men, crave the freedom to do as they choose.

The Negroes in Mississippi are fed up with the life here. We feel that it is time something was done to stop the killings or murders, the prejudice, the mistreatment of Negroes here. Freedom is a very precious thing to any race of people, but in a nation that is supposed to be free and where oppression still exists, something really has to be done. As our forefathers fought for this nation to be free, we also say to our oppressors "Give us freedom, or give us death."

July 23<sup>rd</sup>, Thursday

***FREEDOM STAR***

Published by the students of the Meridian Freedom School

**I AM A NEGRO**

I am a Negro and proud of its color too,  
If you were a Negro wouldn't you?  
I am glad of just what I am now  
To be and to do things I know how.  
I'm glad to be a Negro so happy and gay  
To grow stronger day by day.  
I am a Negro and I want to be free as any other child,  
To wander about the house and the woods and be wild.  
I want to be Free, Free, Free.

Rosalyn W.

**HOW I SEE MYSELF AT "21" OR OVER**

My aim in life is to be a lawyer. There are not enough Negro Lawyers in Mississippi defending their fellow brothers and sisters. Some people living in Mississippi leave after or before they finish school. I do not see myself in some fancy mansion nor do I see myself living in the scums of places. I just want to live in a decent home living in the neighborhood with people. When I say people I mean both black and white. I do not believe in Segregation. I want to help people. To stop this police brutality. I see myself as a decent, respectable citizen. I want to be a nice person. And I would like for people to treat me the same way. If I do be a lawyer or whatever my profession will be, I will not marry until I finish school, grade and law school, and have a job. I mean a good job. Not babysitting and house keeping.

No I do not plan to leave Mississippi. To help others. I want to look as well as be respectful. Although looks don't mean everything. It's what you know. It's the work that you do and your aim in life. If you lead a good clean life, people will respect you no matter how you look.

With this closing I will say that "I will strive to do the best that I can."

Anonymous

**THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS**  
*Concept and Organization*

Staughton Lynd

Professor Staughton Lynd was formerly Chairman of the History Department at Spelman College in Atlanta. He directed the Freedom School project in Mississippi last summer and now is on the faculty at Yale.

People sometimes ask me how to start a Freedom School. This question seems almost funny. Few of us who planned the curriculum and administrative structure of the Mississippi Freedom Schools had any experience in Northern Freedom Schools. And in any case, our approach to curriculum was to have no curriculum and our approach to administrative structure was not to have any (I will explain this in a moment). So my answer to the question: "How do you start a Freedom School?" is, "I don't know." And if people ask, "What are the Freedom Schools like?" again I have to answer, "I don't know." I was an itinerant bureaucrat. I saw a play in Holly Springs, an adult class in Indianola, a preschool mass meeting in McComb, which were exciting. But who can presume to enclose in a few words what happened last summer when 2,500 youngsters from Mississippi and 250 youngsters from the North encountered each other, but not as students and teachers, in a learning experience that was not a school?

There was one educational experience for which I did most initial planning and which I took part in personally: the Freedom School Convention at Meridian on the weekend of August 7-9. Perhaps because this was the one "class" which I "taught", the Convention has loomed larger and larger in my mind as I have reflected on the summer. If I were to start a Freedom School now (and we are about to start one in New Haven), I would suggest: Begin with a Freedom School Convention and let that provide your curriculum.

The Freedom School Convention went a step beyond the thinking which took place before the summer in its implications for the administration and curriculum of a school "stayed on freedom." Originally, we planned to have two residential schools for high school students who in the judgment of COFO staff had most leadership potential, with a network of twenty day schools feeding into them. Sometime in April it became apparent that sites for residential schools would not be forthcoming, and if they did, there would be no money to rent them. And we realized, after a few painful days, that this was a good thing. It meant that teachers would live within Negro communities rather than on sequestered campuses. It meant that we would have to ask ministers for the use of church basements as schools. In short, it meant we would run a school system without buildings, equipment or money (which we did: less than \$2,000 passed through my office in Jackson in the course of the summer, about half of it for film rental).

It meant, too, that each school would be on its own, succeeding or failing by improvisation without much help from a central point. In my own mind the image which kept recurring was that of the guerrilla army which "swims in the sea" of the people among whom it lives. Clearly, whether we swam or drowned depended on the naked reaction of Negro children and their parents. No apparatus of compulsion or material things could shield us from their verdict. At the Oxford orientation, I kept repeating that when the Freedom School teachers got off the bus and found no place to sleep, despite previous assurances, and no place to teach, because the minister had gotten scared; when they were referred to an old lady of the local church for help in finding lodging, and to a youngster hanging around the COFO office for help in finding students—as they

did these things, they would be building their school, their teaching would have begun. After about a week we knew that somehow, some way it was working. We had expected 1,000 students at the most; I can remember the night when I wrote on a blackboard in the Jackson COFO office: "1,500 students in Freedom School. *Yippee!*"

The Freedom School Convention went a step beyond this. For once the Freedom School coordinators (our word for "principals") approved the idea of a young peoples' mock convention, coinciding with the statewide convention of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the young people took over. *They became the administrators.* About a dozen students from all over the state met in Jackson to plan the convention (out of this group, incidentally, came a new impetus for the Mississippi Student Union). The Meridian Freedom School agreed to play host to the Convention, partly because Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman had been killed attempting to start a Freedom School near Meridian, partly because Meridian possessed the palace of the Freedom School circuit, a three-story Baptist seminary which could easily house 100 delegates. Meridian young people, therefore, took on the complicated task of finding lodging and arranging transportation. The planning committee worked out a program. Essentially it was workshops each morning, plenary session each afternoon, and a Freedom School play Saturday night. Joyce Brown of McComb and Roscoe Jones of Meridian were chosen as the Convention's principal officers.

And not only did the youngsters plan the Convention. At the Convention, there was a noticeable change in tone between the first and second days. By Sunday, these teenagers were rejecting the advice of adults whether in workshops or plenary sessions, for they had discovered they could do it themselves. Beyond the convention one could discern still one more stage in the development of academic self-government. A resolution of the convention pledged the support of all the schools to a Freedom School in the Delta, planning to boycott the public school there. Here was a program not only executed by the youngsters, but initiated by them. The curriculum of next summer's Freedom Schools, it has been suggested, may be built around preparation for a statewide boycott.

Indeed the Freedom School Convention's implications for curriculum were more revolutionary than its implications for administration. The curriculum presented to the teachers at Oxford had been drafted by Noel Day. Essentially it was a series of questions, beginning with the students' most immediate experience of housing, employment, and education, and working out to such questions as: What is it like for Negroes who go North? What are the myths of society about the Negro's past? What in Mississippi keeps us from getting the things we want? Beyond this, teachers were given some fragmentary written material on Negro history, and the advice to emphasize oral rather than written instruction. We were afraid that as a predominantly white group of teachers we would be rejected. The fear was unnecessary; but it helped us to break away from the conventional paraphernalia of education, to remember that education is about a meeting between people. We said at Oxford: If you want to begin the summer by burning the curriculum we have given you, go ahead! We realized that our own education had been dry and irrelevant all too often, and we determined to teach as we ourselves wished we had been taught.

But ideas can run only a certain distance beyond experience; as in administration, so in curriculum, we had a lot to learn. We learned that *students can and should make their own curriculum.* How? Simple. Already in March at a curriculum planning conference in New York City it was my belief that the curriculum should be built around the political platform of COFO's Congressional candidates. Mississippi suggested something more. *Curriculum should be built around the political platform the students themselves create.* For this was what the Freedom

School Convention was. Our emphasis at this convention was not (like that of the FDP) on people, but on program. We sought to provide a model for how people can democratically put together a political platform. The students of each Freedom School asked: If we could elect a mayor (or a state legislator, or a senator) what laws would we ask him to pass? Having drawn up a program in this way, each school sent delegates to Meridian, where in eight workshops—on public accommodations, on housing, on education, etc.—they put together the twenty-odd platforms of the different schools, and reported the results to the plenary session.

I think now it would have been better if the schools had begun with such a convention, and if the statewide program brought back to each school by its delegates had then become the curriculum for the summer.

Before presenting the program of the Mississippi Freedom School convention, let me try to convey a little of the feel of the occasion. Delegates were to arrive in Meridian the evening of Friday, August 7. On Thursday I drove up from Jackson with Luis Perez, who was trying to start a Freedom School in Neshoba County, where the three men had been killed. The housing committee placed us in a home just across the street from the Meridian Freedom School. It had no bathroom of any kind. At one in the morning we were awakened by Mark and Betty Levy, the able and indefatigable coordinators of the school, and members of the student planning committee. This was the week that the bodies of the three missing men were found. The Negro community of Meridian, we learned, had planned a funeral Friday night for James Chaney. Groups of silent marchers would leave a number of churches at dusk and walk to the church where the service would be held. This was just the time when delegates to the Freedom School Convention would be arriving. There might very well be a riot in response to the funeral. In the shadowy office of the Freedom School we tried to decide what our responsibility was to the delegates and their parents. We decided that they should come and participate in the funeral if they wished.

They came. As I drove groups of late-arriving delegates from the bus station to the Freedom School, we passed the lines of silent marchers converging at the church. Some wore dark suits and ties. Some did not. It made no difference for all one noticed was their faces.

Saturday morning the Convention began. Over the front of the room was a large hand painted sign: "Freedom Is A Struggle." At one side was another neatly-lettered sign with the times and places of workshops and plenary sessions. At lunch we gathered around Roscoe Jones and sang and sang. That evening the Holly Springs Freedom School presented "Seeds of Freedom," a play based on the life of Medgar Evers. At the end, the girl playing Mrs. Evers said she would carry on her husband's struggle, and each member of the cast ("students" and "teachers") told why they had come to Freedom School. Then the Free Southern Theater, a group of professional quality, organized by SNCC's John O'Neal and Gilbert Moses (no relation to Bob), presented Martin Duberman's *In White America*. It too had an interpolated ending. Susan Wahman, wife of Tom Wahman who helped me with Freedom School administration, spoke the words which Rita Schwerner had said to President Johnson: "I want my husband."

Half a program had been adopted Saturday afternoon, the rest Sunday afternoon, after a second round of morning workshops. A. Philip Randolph addressed the youngsters on the need for economic as well as political programs, something their program showed that they already knew. Jim Forman, SNCC's Executive Secretary talked about the students of Africa who went on to higher education but came back to their people to put this education to work. Bob Moses, characteristically, asked the Convention questions. Did they want to carry on Freedom School in this winter? Why? Did they want Freedom School *after* public school, or *instead* of public

school? Why? What about the problem of graduating from an unaccredited school? Most of the delegates favored returning to public school and attempting to improve them (here was the seed of the idea of boycott).

At the end of Sunday afternoon all were exhausted, as always at conventions. We struggled on to the end of the program. With a joyful shout, the program was declared adopted. Then one young man asked for the floor. "Wait," he said, "I move that copies of this program be sent to every member of the Mississippi legislature, to President Johnson, and to the Secretary General of the United Nations [tumultuous applause], and—wait, wait—a copy to the Library of Congress for its permanent records [pandemonium]."

He was asking that the program of the Mississippi Freedom School Convention be taken seriously. I think it should be. The Civil Rights Movement has been strangely neglectful of program. Who remembers the specific demands of the March on Washington, for instance? What planks were advocated by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party? It is true enough that the central demand was in the one case for a civil rights bill, and in the other for seating at the Democratic Convention; and this was as it should have been. But in the not very distant future candidates running for Congressional office will be real, not mock, candidates, and will have to declare themselves intelligently on a variety of issues. These candidates may come out of Freedom Schools. If we do not take their program seriously, it means not taking their ideas seriously. If we do not take their ideas seriously, we should ask ourselves what the Schools are for.

Here, at any rate, are excerpts from the program of the Mississippi Freedom School Convention:

Meridian, Miss.  
Aug. 8-9, 1964

#### PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS

1. *We resolve that the Public Accommodations and Public Facilities sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 be enforced.*
2. *We support the right of the Negro people and their white supporters to test the Civil Rights Act via demonstrations such as sit-ins. We are not urging a bloodbath through this means; we are simply demanding our Constitutional right to public assembly and seeking to test the federal government's position.*

#### HOUSING

1. *Be it resolved: That the federal government provide money for new housing developments in the state. Anyone could buy those houses with a down payment and low monthly rate. There must be absolutely no discrimination. The federal government should take action if this law is not complied with.*

#### EDUCATION

1. *Better facilities in all schools. These would include textbooks, laboratories, air-conditioning, heating, recreation, and lunch rooms.*
2. *Low-fee adult classes for better jobs.*
3. *That the school year consist of nine (9) consecutive months.*

4. *All schools be integrated and equal throughout the country.*
5. *Academic freedom for teachers and students.*
6. *Teachers be able to join any political organization to fight for civil rights without fear of being fired.*

#### HEALTH

1. *Each school should have fully developed health, first-aid, and physical education programs. These programs should be assisted by at least one registered nurse.*
2. *All medical facilities should have both integrated staff and integrated facilities for all patients.*
3. *Free medical care should be provided for all those who are not able to pay the cost of hospital bills.*

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. *Whereas the policy of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa is detrimental to all the people of that country and against the concepts of equality and justice, we ask that the United States impose economic sanctions in order to end this policy.*
2. *The United States should stop supporting dictatorships in other countries, and should support that government which the majority of the people want.*

#### THE PLANTATION SYSTEM

1. *The federal government should force plantation owners to build and maintain fair tenant housing.*
2. *In cases where the plantation farmers are not being adequately paid according to the Minimum Wage Law, the government should intervene on behalf of the farmers in a suit against the plantation owner.*

**1964 PLATFORM OF THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOL CONVENTION**

AUGUST 6TH, 7TH, 8TH, MERIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI

**PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS**

1. We resolve that the Public Accommodations and Public Facilities sections of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 be enforced.
2. We demand new and better recreation facilities for all.
3. We support the right of the Negro people and their white supporters to test the Civil Rights Act via demonstrations such as sit-ins. We are not urging a blood-bath through this means; we are simply demanding our Constitutional right to public assembly and seeking to test the Federal government's position.
4. Conversion of public accommodations into private clubs should be treated as a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**HOUSING**

The home, being the center of a child's life as well as the center of a family's, must have certain facilities in order for it to be a home and not just a building in which one eats, sleeps, and prepares to leave for the rest of the day. Therefore, be it resolved:

1. That there be an equal-opportunity-to-buy-law which permits all persons to purchase a home in any section of town in which he can afford to live.
2. That a rent control law be passed and that one should pay according to the condition of the house.
3. That a building code for home construction be established which includes the following minimum housing requirements:
  - a. A complete bathroom unit
  - b. A kitchen sink
  - c. A central heating system
  - d. Insulated walls and ceiling
  - e. A laundry room and pantry space
  - f. An adequate wiring system providing for at least three electrical outlets in the living room and kitchen, and at least two such outlets in the bedroom and bath
  - g. At least a quarter of an acre of land per building lot
  - h. A basement and attic.
4. That zoning regulations be enacted and enforced to keep undesirable and unsightly industries and commercial operations away from residential neighborhoods.
5. That slums be cleared, and a low cost federal housing project be established to house these people.
6. That federal aid be given for the improvement of houses, with long term low interest loans.
7. That the Federal government provide money for new housing developments in the state.
 

Anyone could buy these houses with a down payment and low monthly rate. There must be absolutely no discrimination. The federal government should take action if this law is not complied with.
8. That a federal law make sure that the projects are integrated and that they are run fairly.
9. That there be lower taxes on improvements in the houses so that more people will fix up their house.

10. That the federal government buy and sell land at low rates to people who want to build there.

#### EDUCATION

In an age where machines are rapidly replacing manual labor, job opportunities and economic security increasingly require higher levels of education. We therefore demand:

1. Better facilities in all schools. These would include textbooks, laboratories, air conditioning, heating, recreation, and lunch rooms.
2. A broader curriculum including vocational subjects and foreign languages.
3. Low fee adult classes for better jobs.
4. That the school year consist of nine (9) consecutive months.
5. Exchange programs and public kindergarten.
6. Better qualified teachers with salaries according to qualification.
7. Forced retirement (women 62, men 65).
8. Special schools for mentally retarded and treatment and care of cerebral palsy victims.
9. That taxpayers' money not be used to provide private schools.
10. That all schools be integrated and equal throughout the country.
11. Academic freedom for teachers and students.
12. That teachers be able to join any political organization to fight for Civil Rights without fear of being fired.
13. That teacher brutality be eliminated.

#### HEALTH

1. Each school should have fully developed health, first aid, and physical education programs. These programs should be assisted by at least one registered nurse.
2. Mobile units, chest x-rays semi-annually and a check-up at least once a year by licensed doctors, the local health department or a clinic should be provided by the local or state government.
3. All medical facilities should have both integrated staff and integrated facilities for all patients.
4. Mental health facilities should be integrated and better staffed.
5. Homes for the aged should be created.
6. Free medical care should be provided for all those who are not able to pay the cost of hospital bills.
7. We demand state and local government inspection of all health facilities.
8. All doctors should be paid by skill, not by race.
9. Titles should be given to the staff.
10. The federal government should help the organization pay the salaries of workers.
11. All patients should be addressed properly.
12. We actively seek the abolition of any sterilization act which serves as punishment, voluntary or involuntary, for any offense.
13. In a reasonable time we seek the establishment of a center for the treatment and care of cerebral palsy victims.

#### FOREIGN AFFAIRS

1. The United States should stop supporting dictatorships in other countries and should support that government which the majority of the people want.

2. Whereas the policy of apartheid in the Republic of South Africa is detrimental to all the people of that country and against the concepts of equality and justice, we ask that the United States impose economic sanctions in order to end this policy.
3. We ask that there be an equitable balance between the domestic and foreign economic and social support provided by our country.

#### FEDERAL AID

1. We demand that a Public Works Program be set up by the federal government to create jobs for the unemployed.
2. Because of discrimination in the past, we demand preferential treatment for the Negro in the granting of federal aid in education and training programs until integration is accomplished.
3. To help fight unemployment, we demand that federal funds be lent communities to set up industries and whole towns which shall be publicly owned by the communities, for example: textile and paper mills, stores, schools, job relocation programs for those put out of work by automation, job retraining, recreational facilities, banks, hospitals.
4. We demand that social security benefits should be given according to need, and not according to how much one earned previously. In addition, we demand guaranteed income of at least \$3,000.00 annually for every citizen.
5. The federal government should give aid to students who wish to study for the professions and who do not have the necessary funds.
6. We feel that federal aid in Mississippi is not being distributed equally among the people. Therefore we adopt Title VI of the Civil Rights Law which deals with federal aid. We demand federal agents appointed to Mississippi expressly for this purpose. We demand that action be taken against the state of Mississippi so that this aid may be distributed fairly.
7. We demand that the federal government divert part of the funds now used for defense into additional federal aid appropriations.
8. We demand that the federal government refuse to contract with corporations that employ non-union labor, engage in unfair labor practices, or practice racial discrimination.

#### JOB DISCRIMINATION

1. We demand that the federal government immediately open to Negroes all employment opportunities and recruitment programs under their auspices, such as in post offices, Veterans Hospitals, and defense bases.
2. The fair employment section (Title VII) of the 1964 Civil Rights law be immediately and fully enforced.
3. The guarantee of fair employment be extended fully to all aspects of labor, particularly training programs.
4. We encourage the establishment of more unions in Mississippi, to attract more industry to the state.
5. We will encourage and support more strikes for better jobs and adequate pay. During the strikes the employers should be enjoined from having others replace the striking workers.
6. Vocational institutions must be established for high school graduates and dropouts.
7. The federal Minimum Wage law be extended to include all workers especially agriculture and domestic workers.
8. Cotton planting allotments to be made on the basis of family size.
9. We want an extension of the Manpower Retraining Program.

10. Whenever a factory is automated, management must find new jobs for the workers.
11. Workers should be paid in accordance with their qualifications and the type of work done.

#### THE PLANTATION SYSTEM

1. The federal government should force plantation owners to build and maintain fair tenant housing.
2. In cases where the plantation farmers are not being adequately paid according to the Minimum Wage Law, the government should intervene on behalf of the farmers in suit against the plantation owner.

#### CIVIL LIBERTIES

1. Citizens of Mississippi should be entitled to employ out-of-state lawyers.
2. Section Two of the Fourteenth Amendment should be enforced, specifically in Mississippi and other Southern States, until the voter registration practices are changed.
3. The citizens should have the privilege of exercising their Constitutional rights
  - a. to assemble,
  - b. to petition,
  - c. to freedom of the press,
  - d. to freedom of speechin such ways as picketing, passing out leaflets and demonstrations. We oppose all laws that deprive citizens of the above rights.
4. We want the abolition of the House Unamerican Activities Committee because it deprives citizens of their Constitutional rights.
5. We resolve that the Freedom Movement should accept people regardless of religion, race, political views or national origin if they comply with the rules of the movement.

#### LAW ENFORCEMENT

1. We want qualified Negroes appointed to the police force in large numbers. We want them to be able to arrest anyone breaking the law, regardless of race, creed or color.
2. All police must possess warrants when they demand to enter a house and search the premises. In the absence of a search warrant, the police must give a reasonable explanation of what they are looking for. In any case, with or without a warrant, no damage should be done unnecessarily to property, and if damage is done, it should be paid for.
3. A national committee should be set up to check police procedures, to insure the safety of people in jail: their food, sleeping and health facilities; to protect them from mobs, and to see that no violence is done to them.
4. All cases against law enforcement agencies or involving civil rights should be tried in federal courts.
5. Law enforcement officers should provide protection against such hate groups as the KKK. Police and public officials should not belong to any group that encourages or practices violence.

#### CITY MAINTENANCE

1. The city should finance paving and widening of the streets and installing of drain systems in them.
2. Sidewalks must be placed along all streets.

3. A better system of garbage disposal, including more frequent pickups, must be devised.
4. Streets should be adequately lighted.
5. We oppose nuclear testing in residential areas.

#### VOTING

1. The poll tax must be eliminated.
2. Writing and interpreting of the Constitution is to be eliminated.
3. We demand further that registration procedures be administered without discrimination, and that all intimidation of prospective voters be ended through federal supervision and investigation by the FBI and Justice Department.
4. We want guards posted at ballot boxes during counting of votes.
5. The minimum age for voting should be lowered to 18 years.
6. We seek for legislation to require the county registrar or one of his deputies to keep the voter registration books open five days a week except during holidays, and open noon hours and early evening so that they would be accessible to day workers. Registrars should be required by law to treat all people seeking to register equally.

#### DIRECT ACTION

1. To support Ruleville, we call for a state-wide school demonstration, urging teachers to vote, and asking for better, integrated schools.
2. We support nonviolence, picketing and demonstrations.

## FREEDOM SCHOOL CURRICULUM

### *TABLE OF CONTENTS AND A NOTE TO THE TEACHER*

Because material trickled in until the very last moment, the actual contents of the curriculum do not correspond exactly with the “materials” listed at the beginning of each unit in the citizenship curriculum. The following Table of Contents describes what is actually in the curriculum. You can make corrections of the “materials” lists if you wish. . . . Items marked (P) are included only in the coordinators’ copies of the curriculum.

Table of Contents

A Note to the Teacher

Part I: Academic Curriculum

Reading and Writing Skills,

Mathematics

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Science

Part II: Citizenship Curriculum

Unit I The Negro in Mississippi

Case studies: Statistics on education, housing, income and employment and health  
The South as an Underdeveloped Country (P)

*[Inserted by Editors:]* The Poor in America

Unit II The Negro in the North

Case studies: Triple Revolution  
Chester, PA; Cambridge, MD; NYC School crisis (P)

Unit III Myths about the Negro

Case studies: Guide to Negro History  
In White America (P)

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Addendum I

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Addendum II

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Study Questions

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Development of Negro Power

Unit IV The Power Structure

Case studies: Mississippi Power Structure  
Power of the Dixiecrats (P)

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Nazi Germany

Unit V Poor whites, poor Negroes and their fears

Case studies: Hazard, KY (P)

Unit VI Soul Things and Material Things

Case studies: Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements

Unit VII The Movement Part 1, Freedom rides and sit-ins;

## Part 2, COFO's Political Program

Case studies: Readings in Nonviolence  
Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community  
Voter registration Laws in Mississippi  
Civil Rights Bill

[*Inserted by Editors:*] Charles Remsberg, "Behind the Cotton Curtain"

[*Inserted by Editors:*] Nonviolence in American History

[*Inserted by Editors:*] Teaching Material for Unit VII, Part 2

## Part III: Recreational and Artistic Curriculum

## A NOTE TO THE TEACHER

As you know, you will be teaching in a non-academic sort of setting; probably the basement of a church. Your students will be involved in voter registration activity after school. They may not come to school regularly. We will be able to provide some books, hopefully, some films, certainly some interesting guest speakers—yet other than these things you will have few materials apart from those you and your fellow teachers have brought.

In such a setting a "curriculum" must necessarily be flexible. We cannot provide lesson plans. All we can do is give you some models and suggestions which you can fall back on when you wish. You, your colleagues, and your students are urged to shape your own curriculum in the light of the teachers' skills, the students' interests, and the resources of the particular community in which your school is located.

The curriculum suggestions which follow fall into three parts, corresponding to three blocks of time into which you may wish to divide your school day. First come some ideas about the presentation of conventional academic subjects: English, mathematics, and the like.

We think such instruction is likely to be most fruitful at the beginning of the school day, when students are fresh. But we urge you, whenever possible, to use as materials for instruction in these subjects the actual problems of communication and analysis which the student encounters in his daily life, e.g. how to write a leaflet, how to calculate the number of eligible voters in a community.

Most of the material in this curriculum belongs to the citizenship curriculum, which you may want to present during the second half of the morning on a typical day. We assume that in this, as in all other phases of your teaching, you will use an informal, question-and-answer method. Hence, you will find that the material on citizenship is divided into seven units, each of which springs from a question, and each of which leads on to another question, which forms the next unit.

A large number of case studies have been provided to help you make the citizenship curriculum as concrete and vivid as possible. Many people, in many organizations, have taken part in preparing these case studies. If you disagree with the viewpoint of a particular case study, or of some part of the citizenship curriculum, please feel free to approach the problem in your own way.

Finally, we have some suggestions about the artistic, recreational and cultural activities which we think you may want to schedule in the afternoon, when it's hot. Don't neglect this phase of the curriculum. The comradeship formed on the ball field or in the group singing may be the basis of your relationship with a student.

## ***PART I: ACADEMIC CURRICULUM: READING AND WRITING***

### Introduction

It would seem advisable that, considering the special conditions under which the Freedom Schools will operate, some form of the team approach be adopted, to divide responsibility, yet retain an integrated educational approach to the student. The teachers should plan the activities together, so that each subject area correlates and reinforces the others. If, for example, the group of students plan to canvass, the language arts phase of the program could concentrate on an appropriate verbal skill, the social studies area could be devoted to the study of the population to be canvassed in terms of economic, social, religious factors and the implications of those factors, the math area could be given over to statistical breakdowns, charts, etc. (This example is a little advanced.) Or, if the students were to publicize a mass meeting, the language arts phase could study the considerations involved in writing persuasive material, the arts and crafts programs could make posters and leaflets, etc. One other advantage of the team approach is that, since students are first of all individuals, a group of teachers working in concert can serve their separate, special needs better. It is not likely that there will be sufficient time or variety of personnel to organize the staff in a detailed manner, but some version of the team concept could probably be implemented.

It is very important that there be cohesiveness and cooperation among the Freedom School personnel. Hopefully, before the opening of each school (there will probably be a week to prepare), the staff can make plans and agree on overall aims and apportion individual responsibilities. Frequent planning conferences after school begins are essential.

The value of the Freedom Schools will derive mainly from what the teachers are able to elicit from the students in terms of comprehension and expression of their experience. The curriculum should derive from the students' background, and all aspects of classroom activity should be an outgrowth of their experiences. The classroom groups will be small; the social interaction between teacher and students will be as important as academic instruction. The following list of procedures is designed to serve as a guideline, not proposed as any rigid formula. The formal classroom approach is to be avoided; the teacher is encouraged to use all the resources of his imagination.

### Reading and Writing Skills

#### A. VERBAL ACTIVITIES

1. Getting acquainted. It is perhaps better if the teacher initiates this activity by introducing himself to the class. The students may be reluctant to discuss themselves in a group and the teacher could arrange for private interviews.

2. Informal discussion. The students could report events, summarize the day's activities, discuss issues. The teacher should encourage the expression of conflicting points of view.

3. Oral reading. This could be tape recorded and played back. The teacher can make a brief and factual explanation of dialect differences by pointing out that his pronunciation is different from the students' (if it is) and that speech variations also include Boston (Kennedy), British, etc.

4. Development of competence in real life verbal situations. Skill in asking directions, giving instructions, using the telephone should be developed. The telephone company could be contacted for tele-trainer material (two model telephones) so that the students could practice the social and practical uses of the telephone. The telephone directory provides an opportunity to develop skill in alphabetizing.

5. Presenting material in several different ways. For example, saying the same thought in a: 1) formal, 2) informal, and 3) slangy manner.

6. Improvisations. This is usually presented in terms of a real life situation where each participant is trying to achieve a specific goal, to get something from the others.

#### B. WRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Writing summaries of discussions. This can entail instruction in spelling, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization; it can provide an opportunity for vocabulary development. Teach attentiveness to which are the main points, which details can be omitted and which are important (such as date, time, and place for a future meeting), accuracy.

2. Writing from dictation. This develops critical listening ability as well as providing an opportunity for instruction in all skills mentioned above.

3. Writing reports of experiences, such as voter registration activities.

4. Writing endings to stories. The teachers could read part of a story, stop before the conclusion is given and ask students to write an ending. Other methods would be to give plot details and ask students to compose a story or to read the complete story and ask for alternative endings.

5. Writing poetry. A number of stimuli are necessary for poetry or creative prose. This activity could follow the reading of poetry to the class. Other incentives are natural surroundings, pictures, recorded music, sounds. (The students could close their eyes, for example, while the teacher crumples cellophane or paper. The students could be asked to “think with their imaginations” and to describe what the sound suggests to them.)

6. Writing reports for newspapers. This involves the accurate reporting of facts and develops the ability to see significant details. There is also an opportunity here to demonstrate the difference between fact and opinion, objective reporting and propaganda.

7. Writing persuasive material, such as a handbill. This could follow a verbal activity where one student had to persuade another student. The activity could begin on a personal level—i.e., one student could ask another for a pencil or a dime—and build up to the point where the student has to persuade his antagonist to accept a different belief about an issue. This kind of activity develops the ability to “think on the feet.”

8. Filling out forms such as applications, social security, voter registration forms, etc.

9. Writing social and business letters.

#### C. SUGGESTED READING ACTIVITIES

1. Reading newspaper reports, magazines, short stories, etc., for comprehension and evaluation.

2. Reading and summaries of activities. New words can be introduced by taking words from the selection and substituting words of similar meaning. This can involve the use of the dictionary. Reading comprehension skills can be employed by having a student derive the meaning of a word from the context of the sentence.

#### D. RELATED ACTIVITIES

1. Drawing pictures to illustrate poems, stories, and experiences.

2. Listening to poems and stories, listening to each other, role playing and activities where students can teach others, problem-solving discussion.

3. Following instructions—a recipe, for example, where the student also has the opportunity to see the importance of weights and measurements in something as specific as cooking (how to double a recipe), or following instructions for a sewing pattern or make-your-own construction.

4. Drawing and reading maps, interpreting tables; using indexes, tables of contents, glossaries, etc.

5. Homework. Simple, easily completed assignments should be made so that the students gain an opportunity to realize his responsibility for his education. Hopefully, this will stimulate independent investigation.

6. Testing. While this is not necessarily endorsed as an educational tool, it is one means of evaluating progress. Also, it is a fact of life—testing is a key factor in the voter registration situation and is something that college students have to deal with constantly. It should be presented in that context. Teach how to approach a test question—what is being asked? Which answers are only partially true, or although true, may be irrelevant to the question.

7. Relaxation activities. The teachers will probably want to teach more than anyone can learn in a six-week period. There will be a danger of making class sessions too concentrated for the students. On the other hand, the teachers may decide that a particular session is going badly and is, frankly, dull for the students. If attention lags for either reason, the teacher should switch to another kind of activity. These activities can continue the teacher's basic educational purpose if they are well-planned and well-selected, and still be reinvigorating for the class. Some ideas are drawing, breaking up for smaller discussion groups, and informal games.

Some ideas for games which can develop verbal skills in students are:

1. Twenty-five. Each youngster draws on a piece of paper a square of twenty-five boxes. Everyone calls a letter in turn. The object is to create words either across or down the columns. (I have found that teen-agers take a strong liking to this game, even those who can't spell well. Many points are scored simply by accident.)

2. Rogues' Gallery. Players must guess the names of people in pictures cut out from newspapers and magazines. A careful selection of pictures results in an interesting learning situation.

3. Observation. Players must list objects which they have seen and are then covered up.

4. Words and Pictures. Words, sentences, or paragraphs must be clipped from magazines of newspapers so as to write a story about a picture taken from a magazine. These words get pasted on a piece of paper. No words are to be written.

5. Sight Unseen. Teams of two. One person describes an object. The other person must draw the unnamed and unseen object as well as he can.

6. Hall of Fame. A letter is suggested (or can be elaborately chosen by the class), time is kept, and everybody puts down as many names, first or last, beginning with that letter as he can remember. Use a general list or else concentrate on certain categories.

7. Word Relations. Each player lists words by association; then the field is reversed. Winner is a person who makes least mistakes when order is reversed.

8. Letter Dice. (Individual game) Five dice marked with letters rather than numbers are thrown and from the letters appearing on the five surfaces the student must make a word.

9. TV Quiz Game. Adaptations of such games as Twenty Questions, Password, Concentration, etc. can be used to bring out points made in discussion, summarize class activities, etc.—or just make a break if a session gets dull.

**E. SUMMARY**

The resourcefulness of the teacher is a tremendously important element. As material will not be at hand, the teacher will most likely have to proceed on a day-to-day basis—using the xerograph, if available. In the matter of classroom procedure, questioning is the vital tool. It is meaningless to flood the student with information he cannot understand; questioning is the path to enlightenment. It requires a great deal of skill and tact to pose the question that will stimulate but not offend, lead to un-self-consciousness and the desire to express thought.

Classroom activities should not be dealt with as fragmented, isolated parts of a program; one activity should flow naturally from another (speaking and listening preceding reading and writing) with the students' experience as the source for the learning material. The relationship between school and life should be reinforced constantly.

*[Editors' Note: This part of the Academic Curriculum is, with minor modifications, the report of the Curriculum Conference Report of the subgroup 2, Remedial Academic Program. The report was written by Sandra Adickes.]*

**PART I: ACADEMIC CURRICULUM: MATHEMATICS**

(excerpt)

Note to Freedom School teachers:

This diagnostic is rather important in the summer curriculum. Your students will demonstrate a wide variety of levels of mathematical knowledge and we wish to satisfy individual needs as much as possible. This tests should help you find just what each student needs. Administer the test in the manner you think best. Some students will only be able to solve a few of the arithmetic problems, if that. Let them go when they feel they can do no more. I would suggest a very liberal time allowance. Most likely few of the students have seen any set theory but, given time, many could solve that section. Perhaps you'll want to break the test up into two parts. Perhaps it would be best for some students if you sat down with them and went through the test problem by problem, offering hints when necessary. Those students who are able to work the test will want something new. Suggestions are analytic geometry, probability theory, or the binary number system. But you are invited and encouraged to use your imagination in inventing a course for them. One word of advice. The standard method of teaching math in Mississippi is through routine drill, and more routine drill. If your course tends to seem routine, like regular school, the students will tend to lose interest and you may lose them. Be creative. Experiment. The kids will love it.

....

*[Editors' Note: The test that follows consists of four pages of increasingly difficult problems in Arithmetic, Algebra, Set Theory, and Geometry]*

#### Supplementary Lectures

Note to the teachers: these lectures are intended to give a bit of mathematics from a different point of view. You may alter or add to this as you like. (Actually, these are only a couple of ideas of how a teacher can show his students something new and different. You will need to amplify what is written here.) Feel free to write up your own lectures.

Lecture 1, Geometric Computation.

The point of this lecture is to demonstrate methods of addition, subtraction, multiplication, division, and the taking of square roots by geometric methods. Recall that the square root of a number  $Y$  is the number  $Z$  such that  $Z$  times  $Z$  equals  $Y$ . The square root of 9 is 3 because 3 times 3 equals 9.

Addition and subtraction are rather easy. First draw a horizontal line. Call it an axis and find a point on it which we call the "origin." Open the compass to a given unit length. Let's add 2 and 3. First place the point of the compass on the origin and mark off a unit length on the axis to the right of the origin. Then place the point of the compass on the new point and mark off another point to the right which will be a unit length's distant. This gives us our two. Mark off three more places to the right. Now we have added 2 and 3 and are 5 units to the right of the origin which illustrates that  $2 + 3 = 5$ .

Subtraction is similar. . . .

*[Editors' Note: the lecture continues over 4 pages, including graphics and examples, with increasing difficulty and ending with vector addition. The SNCC papers contain more Mathematics addenda.]*

## ***PART I: ACADEMIC CURRICULUM: SCIENCE***

(Enclosed are my suggestions for science curricula for the Freedom Schools. These are merely outlines; I could not do any more than this since I do not know what the general education level is, what equipment is available, how many people will be able to teach science, etc. The outline may seem somewhat advanced in level; however, what I have in mind is to keep most of the work qualitative, i.e. descriptive rather than mathematical. In this way, a broad range of scientific material can be introduced and the students' interest will not be lost in too many details, and physical or biological principles can be emphasized. . . .

Walter E. Gross)

### **PHYSICS AND CHEMISTRY**

#### 1. Mechanics.

Motion. How we describe it. Speed. Velocity (speed and direction of motion.) Acceleration. Forces. What a force is. Different kinds of forces, e.g. pulls and pushes, gravity springs. Force causes acceleration.

Application of these principles. Projectiles. Motion in a circle.

#### 2. Heat and gas laws.

What a temperature is. What heat is. Difference between the two. Effects of heat: boiling, evaporation, expansion, contraction.

Pressure.

Gas laws: relationships between temperature, volume, and pressure for a gas.

#### 3. Atomic physics and chemistry.

Matter is composed of atoms: why we believe this and how this was discovered. The great experiments that led up to this.

Combination of atoms into molecules. Elements and compounds.

What an atom is made of: neutrons, protons, electrons. The nucleus.

How atoms hold together: electric forces between the protons and the electrons.

Periodic Table of the elements.

The Nucleus: composed of protons and neutrons. Properties of these particles: Mass, charge, spin. Mass and energy as equivalent. Nuclear energy.

#### 4. Electricity.

Forces between charges. Electric field between stationary charges. Magnetic field when charges move.

Electrons in metals. Become free of atoms, and move; called currents.

Applications of electricity: magnets; motors; generators.

#### 5. Optics.

What light is. 2 theories: wave or particles. Evidence for each.

Speed of light.

Intensity.

Mirrors.

Refraction: lenses.

Optical instruments: telescope, microscope; the eye.

## **ASTRONOMY**

### 1. The Solar System.

The 9 planets: How they were discovered; Sizes; surface features; atmospheres.

Moons of each planet. Similarities and difference to the earth's moon.

How we know that the planets go around the sun, even though it seems that they—and the sun—go around the earth.

### 2. Outside the solar system

Galaxies, i.e. systems of stars. Our own galaxy the “Milky Way”. Distances.

Well-known stars; constellations. The North star. Sirius, the nearest star. How to measure distances: the light year.

How stars are made up; the sun.

### 3. Space travel.

Work that has already been done. Satellites and rockets.

Landing on the moon; the first stage.

Traveling to the planets; what might be learned.

## **BIOLOGY**

### 1. The cell. Why we believe living things are composed of cells.

How a cell is made—general features.

One celled animals and plants.

More complicated cells. Cells specialize and perform one function only: e.g. blood cells, nerve cells, fat cells.

Simple features of heredity: genes and chromosomes.

### 2. Plants.

Photosynthesis. Mechanism; importance in producing food for all living things.

### 3. Animals. Simple animals.

Vertebrae; evolution—how it was discovered and what its significance was. Description of the various kinds of animals throughout evolution.

### 4. Present research in biology.

Application of chemical techniques (biochemistry)

Application of physical techniques (biophysics)

***PART II: CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM, UNIT I - VI*****Introduction**

One of the purposes of the Freedom Schools is to train people to be active agents in bringing about social change. We have attempted to design a developmental curriculum that begins on the level of the students' everyday lives and those things in their environment that they have either already experienced or can readily perceive, and builds up to a more realistic perception of American society, themselves, the conditions of their oppression, and alternatives offered by the Freedom Movement.

It is not our purpose to impose a particularly set of conclusions. Our purpose is to encourage the asking of questions, and hope that society can be improved.

The curriculum is divided into seven units:

1. Comparison of student's reality with others (the way the students live and the way others live)
2. North to Freedom? (the Negro in the North)
3. Examining the apparent reality (the "better lives" that whites live)
4. Introducing the power structure
5. The poor Negro and the poor white
6. Material things versus soul things
7. The movement

Each unit develops concepts that are needed for those that follow.

Physically, the content (suggested questions and concepts) is on the right side of each page with suggested case studies and visual aid material listed opposite. [Note by Emery and Gold: in this printing, the content of the curriculum is printed as normal text, the suggested case studies etc. are in italics, and inserted as documents where available.]

The suggested questions and concepts in the content portion of each page constitute the teaching guide. It should be emphasized that these are only suggestions, and that individual teachers may interpret the concepts in different ways or substitute other methods. There is probably more in each unit than it will be possible to use, but it was included so that each teacher would have a range of material to choose from, and extra material if necessary.

There are two additional sets of questions **THAT ARE TO BE REINTRODUCED PERIODICALLY**, both permit an on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the curriculum, and to provide students with recurring opportunities for perceiving their own growth in sophistication.

The **BASIC SET OF QUESTIONS** is:

1. Why are we (students and teachers) in Freedom Schools?
2. What is the freedom movement?
3. What alternatives does the freedom movement offer us?

The **SECONDARY SET OF QUESTIONS** is:

1. What does the majority culture have that we want?
2. What does the majority culture have that we don't want?
3. What do we have that we want to keep?

### Unit I—Comparison of Students' Realities with Others

**Purpose:** To create an awareness that there are alternatives

**Materials:** Statistical data on education, housing, etc.  
 “The South as an Underdeveloped Country”  
*[Inserted by Editors:]* The Poor in America

Introduction: *Student, teacher each tell about themselves.* We are not here to teach you. We are here to help you learn and to learn together. We are going to talk about a lot of things: about Negro people and white people, about rich people and poor people, about the South and about the North, about you and what you think and feel and want, and about me.

And we're going to try to be honest with each other and say what we believe.

We'll also ask some questions and try to find some answers. The first thing is to look around, right here, and see how we live in Mississippi.

#### SCHOOLS—CONDITIONS IN NEGRO SCHOOLS

1. What kind of school is it [Negro School]? Sample questions: How many grades does it have? How many classrooms? What is it made of, wood or brick? Do you have textbooks, new or old? Do you have a library, movies, maps, charts, electric lights, a gymnasium? How many teachers, white or Negro? Laboratory space and equipment, desks, blackboards, etc.? Do you have history, geography, science, foreign language, etc.?
2. What do you learn there? Sample questions: How many go to college? Are there trade or vocational schools? What kinds of jobs are you prepared for? What about current events— who do you learn is good, who do you learn is bad, what do you learn about the South, about the North, about Negroes, about whites, about Kennedy, Johnson, Eastland, Castro etc. What do you learn about voting and citizenship?
3. Where do you learn about these things? Radio, newspapers, TV, etc.
4. Is this good or bad? Can you think of anything that you would like to see changed? How could your school be made better?

#### SCHOOLS—CONDITIONS IN THE WHITE SCHOOLS

Where do the white children go to school? What are their schools like? Compare Negro schools with white schools.

*Visual Aids (pictures of school, laboratories, school libraries, school rooms, gymnasiums.)*

Here are some pictures of other schools in other states besides Mississippi (or some in Mississippi, too.)

Sample questions: Do you like these schools in the pictures? Are they like your school? How are they different? Why would you like to have better schools? What do you see in the pictures that is different from you and your school? Why do these differences exist?

#### HOUSING—CONDITIONS FOR NEGROES

Sample questions: Where do you live? How many rooms are there? How many people live with you? How many beds do you have? Is your house made of wood or stone or bricks? What color is it? Is it painted? Is there water, electricity, bathroom indoors? What kind of stove— wood, gas, kerosene, electric? Do you have heat in the winter? What kind? Furniture? What kind, how

much? Can you think of any kind of changes you'd like to see, or any other kinds of houses you'd like to live in?

Questions: Where do white children live in this town? What kinds of houses—are there houses different? How? Better? How? Where does the Police Chief live? The banker? The store owner, etc.?

*Visual Aids (pictures of both rural and suburban middle-class houses, modern bedrooms, bathroom, kitchens, living rooms, etc.)* Do you like these pictures? These houses? Are they like your house? How are they different? Would you like this kind of house? Why?

NOTE: Discuss relationships between housing and schools (i.e. privacy, a place to study, quiet and books in the home, as related to studying) and housing and health (i.e., overcrowding, unheated housing as related to ease of sharing communicable diseases such as colds, TB, and infant mortality rates; bring in statistics on Negro-white life expectancy and mortality rates in Mississippi)

Question: Why do these differences exist?

### EMPLOYMENT FOR NEGROES

Adult Employment (men and women):

Sample questions: Who works in your family? What kind of work does your father do? Your mother? Do they work for white people or for Negroes? Who works most (mother or father)? Do they get paid a lot or a little? What do they do with the money they make? —pay rent, buy food, buy clothes, buy things for you? Do you think they could use more money? Why? Why don't they get more money?

Children's employment.

Sample questions: Do you ever work? What kind of work? After school? Or do you have to stay home from school to work sometimes? What happens when you stay home? Do you miss learning? If so, why do you have to do it?

Employment for Whites.

Sample questions: in this town, what kind of jobs do white people do? Are there any Negro police or firemen, or store owners? Do Negroes work as clerks or cashiers in the store or the bank? Are there any Negroes who have tenant farmers, any Negro lawyers? Doctors, Negroes who work at the textile mills?

What kinds of jobs do people do? List responses and suggest areas through questions if necessary, i.e., who fixes cars, who makes our clothes, who sells them, who makes cars, airplanes, rockets, who builds houses, who invents machines (shoe last, air brake, telephone, etc.), who writes books, who fixes radios, plumbing, electricity, who drives tractors and mechanical cotton-pickers?

Break up into small groups and see which group can make up the largest list of jobs that people have, and what duties these jobs have.

Question: Can Negroes do these jobs? Are they smart enough? Do some Negroes do these jobs? If not, why not?

Questions: Can anyone name:

1. A Negro inventor (George Washington Carver, Jan Matzeliger, Elijah McCoy)
2. A Negro scientist (Dr. Charles Drew, Benjamin Banneker, Dr. Daniel Hale Williams.)
3. A Negro writer (Richard Wright, Phyllis Wheatley, Ralph Ellison, James Baldwin, Alexander Dumas, W.E.B. DuBois, Langston Hughes, M.L. King, Septima Clark, etc.)

*Material on Negroes in various fields, pictures, stories, etc. Poetry reading and discussion. Photos or drawings of Negroes and Negro history figures should be posted.*

Negro employment and white—salary comparison, etc. Review what has been discussed.

### MEDICAL FACILITIES

Is there any hospital here? Where do you (your parents) go if they are sick, have a baby, a car accident, etc.? Where is the nearest hospital? Is it for Negroes, white, both? If there are different hospitals for Negroes and whites, compare facilities. (How close are they? How many beds, doctors, operating rooms, etc.)

*Review Unit I.* (Include schools, housing, employment, health)

Suggested approach: We've talked about jobs and health in Mississippi and in other states, and we have seen that Negroes have to live one way and whites another. Remember, we found out that your schools were (list) and we found out that other schools were/had (list), etc.

Question: What can we do about this?

Re-introduce three basic questions:

1. Why are we (teachers and students) here in Freedom School?
2. What is the Freedom Movement?
3. What does the Freedom Movement have to offer you?

### Unit II—North to Freedom? (The Negro in the North)

**Purpose:** To help the students see clearly the condition of the Negro in the North, and see that migration to the North is not a basic solution.

**Summary:** Starting with a new clarity of their conditions in the South to raise the question of whether the Negro can escape oppression by going North.

**Materials:** Chester, Pennsylvania,  
New York City Schools

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Triple Revolution

Suggested Introduction: *Map of U.S. with the South shaded. Point out each city.*

For years Negroes in Mississippi and other Southern states have seen how hard Jim Crow makes them live, just as we have talked about the last few days. In fact, since 1950, Negroes have left Mississippi (use census figures.) Where have they gone? Most of them have moved North, to Chicago, Detroit, New York, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Washington, Baltimore, Boston, etc. They have gone North looking for better jobs, more money, better schools, good hospitals, better housing. Now there are more than one million Negroes in New York City alone. Do you think that they've found what they were looking for? How do you know?

*Magazine pictures of city skyscrapers, bright lights, wide avenues, etc.,* Here is what some of those cities look like.

But how is it for the Negro?

They have had school boycotts to protest against segregation in Chicago, New York, Boston. Why?

*Case Studies: NYC Schools and Chester, Pa.*

Cover the Same Topics as in Unit I

Questions: *Picture or other materials on the ghetto.* Do you have relatives there? What do they say about the North? Do you have to say “yessir” to white men there? Do you have better housing in the slums or only crowded bad housing? Do you have better jobs in the North? (The median income of Negro families, nationally, in 1960, was half that of white families.) Does it cost more to live? How about schools? —better buildings, but still segregated, still overcrowded, still old textbooks, still few college graduates?

How about housing? More integrated neighborhoods in the South. In the North, housing very expensive and more expensive for bad housing. Negroes still can’t work at some jobs and they are paid less money. The overcrowding means there is more TB in Negro ghettos and a higher infant mortality rate. (30 percent higher among Negroes than whites).

Conclude: Itemize similarities in areas covered in Unit I (housing, jobs, schools, health).

Question: Are things better in the North? Is the Negro really free, equal? Why not?

Conclude: The Negro is a second-class citizen all over the U.S., and you can’t escape by leaving the South.

Introduce questions:

1. What does the dominant culture have that we want?
2. What does the dominant culture have that we don’t want?
3. What do we have that we want to keep?

### **Unit III—Examining the Apparent Reality (The “Better Life” That Whites Have)**

**Purpose:** To find out what the whites’ “better life” (better schools, jobs, housing, health facilities, etc.) is really like, and what it costs them.

**Materials:** Guide to Negro History, parts 1-3.

*[Inserted by Editors:]* In White America

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Addendum I

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Addendum II

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Negro History Study Questions

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Development of Negro Power

Introduction, Suggestions: We have seen that Negroes live differently than whites in Mississippi and in the rest of the U.S.—and it seemed that whites go to better schools, get better jobs, and live in better houses than Negroes.

*Reintroduce pictures of school.* Let us see if it’s as good as it looks. The nice, new building, the laboratories, the school libraries, the gyms, and new textbooks and so on.

Concept: What education is.

Suggested questions: What do people learn in school beside reading, writing, and arithmetic? Do they learn things about other people? What? About jobs? What? About their country? What? About their city or town? About their government? About what they believe? About other countries? What?

1. Repeat pledge of allegiance. Analyze it: does it mean everything it says? When you say it, what does it teach you about your country and what it believes?

2. Recite the “Bill of Rights.” Analyze it: Does it teach us about our country’s beliefs? What? What does Freedom of Assembly mean? Does it mean you have the right to come together and demonstrate? If so, why do demonstrators go to jail? What does Freedom of Worship mean? Does it mean you can go into any church? If so, why do people get arrested at kneel-ins? What does Freedom of Speech mean? Do you have a right to say what you wish about voting and freedom and other things at rallies and meetings at Freedom Schools? Do you have a right to say what you wish on leaflets and are you free to distribute them? If not, why not?

Question: Are these things the truth? Are they just ideals that we talk about or do Americans really believe them and practice them? Why could this be?

Concept: That truth, freedom, liberty, equality, and other ideals are often distorted and used as excuses and justifications for contradictory actions.

Questions: Are there any other things that the schools teach us that are untrue—myths? Can you point out any of the myths that are taught in the schools? What do the schools teach about Negroes?

NOTE: There is a real opportunity here for the teacher (white or middle-class Negro), if he can be honest and searching enough, to share the misinformation or myths he learned about Negroes and/or himself, and use his experience to help deepen the insights of the students.

Suggested supplements to students’ lists:

1. That all Negroes were slaves.
2. That Negroes are inferior—mentally, morally, physically.
3. That Negroes were happy and satisfied as slaves (well-fed and singing and dancing on the plantation)
4. That Negroes are happy and satisfied now.
5. That Negroes are incapable of participating in government.
6. That Negroes don’t want to participate in government.
7. That Negroes are lazy.
8. That Negroes can only do menial work and nothing more.

**Examine each of these myths.**

Questions: How do you know these myths aren’t true? Can you give examples?

Suggestion: Let us explore history and see how true these myths are (take them one at a time).

*Case study: Guide to Negro History*

Myth: That Negroes were happy and satisfied as slaves.

(Present Guide to Negro History in storytelling style first, then have students dramatize extemporaneously, using their own words.)

NOTE: the dramatization of a slave revolt can serve an important function by permitting students to vent repressed hostility and aggression against whites and their condition.

*Case Study—Guide to Negro History, Part II: Negro Resistance to Oppression*

Raise myth again. Question: What do you think now? Were Negroes happy as slaves?

Myth: That Negroes don't want to participate in government and are incapable of participating.

*Case Study—Guide to Negro History, part III: Reconstruction (1865-1877) and the Beginning of Segregation*

**Raise myth again: Question: if Negroes can and want to participate in politics, why don't they?**

Myth: Negroes are inferior mentally, morally, and physically, and can do only menial work.  
Cassius Clay and Joe Louis: list other accomplishments of outstanding Negroes in music, science, etc.

*Case Study—Guide to Negro History, part I: Origins of Prejudice (1600-1800)*

Raise myth again. Question: Why is this kind of myth started?

Concept: the effect on a person's self-image, motivation, and achievement when presented with low expectations (as exemplified by these myths.)

Questions: how do you feel in school when a teacher calls you "stupid" or "dumb"? Do you try harder or do you give up? Are you angry? (Set up other examples within the students' experience.)

Questions: What does this kind of myth do to you? Does it make you try? Does it make you proud to be Negro?

Discussion: Reintroduce three basic questions:

1. Why are we (students and teachers) here in Freedom Schools?
2. What is the Freedom Movement?
3. What alternative does the Freedom Movement have to offer?

We've talked about some of the myths that the schools teach; let us see what some of the others are.

NOTE: At this point schools might use the discussion method to try to help the students discover other myths from their own experience or what they have seen or heard on TV or the movies, etc. They might even be asked to recite the plots of war movies or cowboy and Indian movies, and

then follow up with questions, etc. (I.e., why are the Indians always bad and savage? Why are Negroes always domestic savages? {servants?})

Question: What do these movies teach us?

Review entire Unit III. What is taught in the schools and through other media? The myths of our society (enumerate) and what the effect of these myths is on the Negro (and other Americans) and what purposes these serve.

Re-introduce three secondary questions:

1. What does the American majority society have that we want?
2. What does it have that we don't want?
3. What do we have that we want to keep?

#### **Unit IV—Introducing the Power Structure**

**Purpose:** 1. To create an awareness that some people profit by the pain of others or by misleading them;

2. To create an awareness that some people make decisions that profoundly affect others (i.e., bare power);

3. To develop the concept of “political power.”

**Summary:** Starting with the material learned in preceding units on Negro-white differences in education, housing, etc. and the use of myths to distort and misinform, to develop a concept of who constructs the myths, who profits from them, and how they profit both in local (town and state of Mississippi) terms and in larger terms. And to name these people as “decision-makers” and “the power structure.”

**Materials:** Mississippi Power Structure;

The Power of the Dixiecrats

*[Inserted by Editors:]* Nazi Germany

Review—suggested approach: Let's see what we have learned so far. We have learned that Negroes and whites live differently in both the South and the North and that Negroes are not given equal treatment in housing, education, etc. We have learned that although it seems that white people have better schools, for instance, that they pay for it by learning lies, and by learning to “hate” and be afraid. We have learned that we are misled by these lies too—that the myths have taught us to believe that we are inferior and dumb and that we have made no contributions to our society.

Now we want to find out why the schools tell these lies and find out who is helped by these lies.

**Concept:** That the myths serve a purpose by:

1. Keeping Negroes servile and teaching whites to feel superior.
2. Providing a justification for race relations in this country.

Questions: Why do the schools tell these lies? Who hears and believes them? What do they believe? How does it make them feel to believe these things? Do the lies give them excuses?

What kinds of excuses do the lies provide:

- \* If a white man kills a Negro?
- \* If a policeman beats a Negro for demonstrating?
- \* If a policeman beats a white demonstrator?
- \* If a Negro is refused the vote?
- \* If a Negro tries to integrate a school?
- \* If Negroes are paid less money for the same work?
- \* If white workers want to start a union?

Now, who profits by these lies? Let's start here in this town.

*Case Study: Mississippi Power Structure, Part I.*

Concept: That some people profit by the propagation of myths (make money, gain power, bolster up their egos, etc..)

Question: Who makes money when Negroes are paid less than white people? *Ask students about plantations near where they live; about factories near where they live.*

Example: A cotton farmer's profit is the price he gets for his cotton minus what he pays for labor. Does the farmer make more money if the workers he hires are Negro? Why? Is it profitable for the farmer to keep Negro labor cheap? How does he do it? Do the myths help him do it? How?

Example: Why does Northern industry come to Mississippi? They come from the North because Mississippi has cheaper labor and they can make more money. Why does Mississippi have cheap labor? Because there are no unions? Because there are white workers in Mississippi who are told that unions believe in integration. Where there are no unions, the workers are paid less and the businessman makes more money. Do the myths help to keep the salaries low for whites too?

(Caution: many unions maintain segregationist practices.)

Question: Why don't white people want the Negro to vote?

Example: The same farmer is able to pay Negroes less money than white people are paid because the state laws of Mississippi support segregation and inequality. Who makes these laws? How do they get their jobs? Who elects them? What would happen to these men and these laws if Negroes voted? Would you vote for a man who made laws that paid you less? Does the farmer vote for them? Does the business man? Do white workers? Why?

Concept: That poor whites suffer from the myths too.

Questions: If there was a union, the white workers would make more money too. Why, then, do they vote for politicians who are against unions? Are they more afraid of something else? Why are they so afraid of integration? What have the myths and lies that they have learned done to them? Who profits by this? The rich farmer? The rich businessman? How?

Concept: That the police work for the power structure and enforce the status quo.

Example: The following is an excerpt from one of Franklin D. Roosevelt's press conferences in 1938, when he unsuccessfully attempted to purge Southern reactionaries from the Democratic Party. Roosevelt described the experience of union organizers in a Southern town in a way that makes one think of COFO today:

They got in town about ten o'clock in the morning. They had a list of eight or ten of the operators. They were going to see them at the noon hour.

So they went to the factory and they asked, "Where is so and so? Where can I find so and so?"

They were engaged in asking questions, when one of the mill police tapped him on the shoulder and showed his badge and said, "Come with me."

He said, "We have not done anything; we are outside and on the street and just asking to see some fellows."

"Oh, we know; come with me."

They were taken to the police station and locked up in a cell on the charge of vagrancy. Both of them had, oh, fifteen or twenty dollars apiece in their clothes.

They said, "We are not vagrants; we came down here from such and such a city."

"But you are organizers."

"Of course we are organizers."

"Well, you are in a bad place."

They were kept in jail until five o'clock, just before dark, and the judge came in and said,

"What are you doing here?"

"We are down here to try to start an organization of the textile workers of this mill."

"That is what you think," he said. "Ten dollars fine and out of town before six o'clock, and do not come back."

They did not know what they were fined for, but they paid the fine, and as they went out of the courtroom, one of the marshals, or policemen, went up to them and said, "Which way are you boys going?" They said, "We have got to get out of town and we thought we would go to such and such a town, ten miles away."

They rode with him and he said, "This is where I turn off." They went about a quarter of a mile and out of a clump of bushes came some men with blackjacks and they got the worst beating up that any two people could get without getting killed."

Question: Who helps to keep the Negro from voting and the union from starting? Who helps the farmer and businessman make money by enforcing the segregation laws? Who pays the police? Who gives them their orders? Why? What would happen to a policeman who didn't obey orders? Why do the police follow orders?

Important to bring out:

1. For pay
2. For illicit gains from graft, etc.
3. Because they have learned the myths too, and "hate"

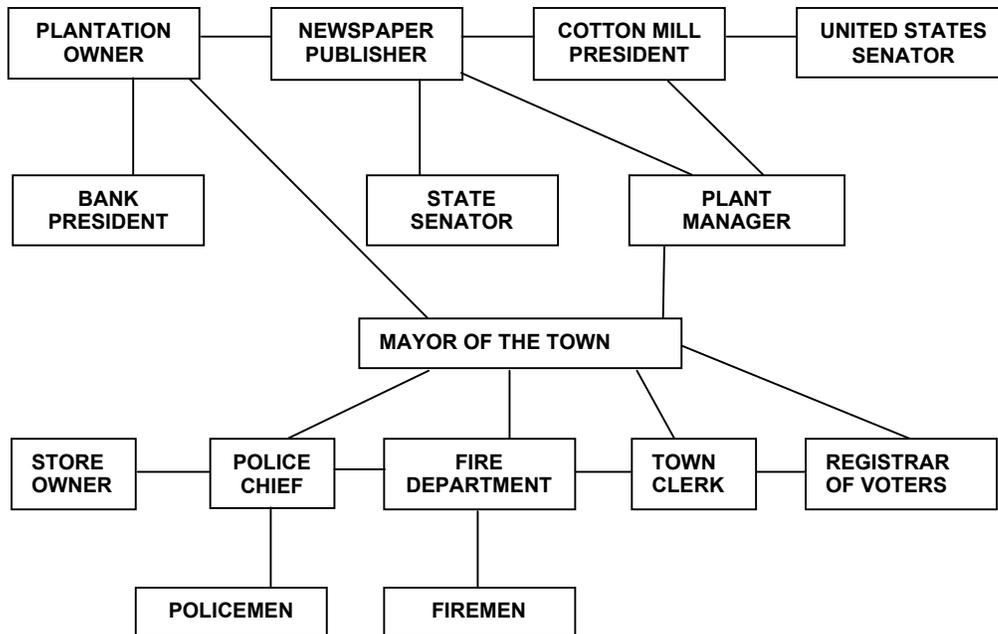
and "fear"

#### *Case Study: Mississippi Power Structure, Part II*

What is a power structure? That is the name we give to groups of men who make the myths, who profits from them like the farmer and the businessman who pay the police and give them their orders, who make the laws and decide what laws they want, who make decisions about who gets paid and how much they get, about who votes and who doesn't vote, about what is taught in the schools, and what gets printed in the newspapers., etc.

Can you name some of these men in your town? (Suggestions: look for the mayor, big plantation owners, businessmen, plant managers, mill owners, etc.)

Suggestion: With the information you get from either students, parents, or COFO research staff, construct an organizational chart of the power structure on the blackboard or large paper.



Show how a decision made on the upper level gets passed down through the chain of command and finally implemented.

Example: *Dramatize if possible.* A Negro tries to register. The registrar of voters fails him, and calls the Mayor. The next day the plantation owner fires him and orders him off the land, and his name is published in the newspaper. The bank forecloses on his car, and the store refuses him any more credit and the county welfare department says he must get three references from white people before he is eligible for relief. His wife is fired from her job as a cook for a white family. When they move in with relatives, the house is shot up one night and the Negro man arrested on "Suspicion."

Concept: That the Power Structure is a connecting and interlocking series of cliques that goes from local towns and cities up to the highest levels of the national government.

*Case Study:* The Power of the Dixiecrats.

We have seen that there is what we call a power structure in this town—a small group of men that make the decisions in this town—they run it, they decide when schools are built and what is taught. They decide, as much as they can, who votes and who doesn't; they decide who gets a loan from the bank; they make the laws. In every other town and country of this state, there are other men who do the same things—who make the plans and decide what will happen for all the rest of us. They decide who will run for the United States Congress; they pay for the campaigns; they decide what laws will be made; and they help to make the myths that we all learn.

Southern representatives in Congress, acting on behalf of the Southern power structure, obstruct progress not only in the South but in the whole nation. Because of the one-party system in the South, these representatives serve in the House and Senate over and over again. Their seniority enables them to become chairmen of key committees. Examples: Senator Eastland of Mississippi is the Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee, influences the appointment of judges to the Federal Courts in which civil rights demonstrators are tried.

Discussion: Review entire Unit IV. Raise and answer the three basic questions. Raise and answer the three secondary questions.

### Unit V—The Poor Negro, the Poor White, and their Fears

**Purpose:**

1. To indicate that the Power Structure derives its power in the final analysis, by playing upon the fears of the people, Negro and white;
2. To come to an understanding of these fears—what has helped to produce them and what they, in turn, have produced, namely, the myths, the lies, the system;
3. To grasp the deeper effects of the system we have produced and have allowed to continue, the deep psychological damage to Negroes and whites.

**Materials:** *Case Study on Hazard, Kentucky*

Introduction: We have talked about the world we want and the world we now have. Something is wrong with the world we have. We have looked at some of the wrong things. Now let us look at why the world has come to be as it now is . . . in particular, our world here in the South.

Concept: That the “power structure”—which, as we have seen, is one force that maintains a bad world—derives its power from playing upon the fears of the people, Negro and white.

Questions: Have you ever been afraid? Have you every been afraid enough to let somebody else take your punishment or take the blame for something they did not do? Were you afraid of being punished yourself? What is punishment? Physical pain like a beating? Could punishment also be losing something you wanted to keep? Like money? Like your pride? When you were a child, were you ever punished by having to stay inside the house, or in your room, or stand in the corner at school? Was this punishment loss of pride?

Here are some things we have learned about the “power structure.” (Write them on the blackboard.)

1. The “power structure” is made up of a small number of people who, because of their power, have a great deal of control over our lives.
2. Their power is financial and it is political.
3. They use their power to maintain segregation.

Here is something we do not know about the “power structure.” Why is it possible for such a small group to have so much control over all the rest of us? Is it only because they have money? If so, where do they get their money? Is it because of their political power? Where do they get the political power? Could it be that the “power structure” has power because we let it? That these few control us because we let them? Why? Why would we let a few people not only control us but control us in such a terrible way, build such a terrible world?

Do we like what they do? No? Then why do we let them do it? Are we afraid? What about whites? Are they afraid? Do they like to be controlled by a few people? Does anybody? What about poor whites? Isn't their condition much like ours? Poverty, unemployment, fear? Is it true that the "power structure" has power only because we give it to them—we and the whites. The power structure is built upon the fear of Negroes and the fear of whites. What if we moved out from under this structure? Where would be power go then? To the people? The whites will not move because they fear us because they believe the lies about us. Is it possible to show these whites the truth? How? What would happen if the whites and Negroes got together and moved right out from under the "power structure"? Do we have anything in common that might draw us together? What? What keeps us apart? Fear? Yes.

The "power structure" gets its power, in the final analysis, because we allow them power and we allow them power because we are afraid of something.

Concept: That the people of the South, Negro and white, are afraid; that the fears are sometimes different, sometimes alike; that all the fears work together to perpetuate the system.

Questions: Why should Negroes be afraid? Is there any real basis for our fear? Of course there is. We have been beaten and murdered, have lost our jobs and homes. We have real reason to fear. What about whites? Do most whites agree with the "power structure" and the lies? Why? Are they afraid? Why?

Let us imagine what might have happened inside the white man, over the years, to fill him with so much fear. We know in part already what happened to make the Negro fear—he was shot and lynched and murdered and beaten. What made the white fear? Write on board "What Happened Inside the White Man?" Let's list the things which might have caused him to create myths and lies.

1. Slavery: since the white man in the South lies about Negroes, let us begin with the coming of Negroes. We came from an unknown continent and we were unknown to the whites. Can we compare this lack of knowledge with, say, Columbus' day when men said if you sailed far enough, you would fall right off the earth? So the white men looked at us and we were unknown. They created myths—Africa is a deep dark place filled with savages.

2. Guilt: it is true that the white man did not know and still does not know much about Negroes. But it is also true that no man in his right mind can put any other man in chains without, sooner or later, feeling guilt.

Not long after the beginning of slavery, the guilt of the white man began. What did he do with this guilt inside him? He did not free us? Why?

3. Economics: the white man needed the Negro to work the plantation. He chose then not to free the Negro and so he had to find some other way to get rid of his guilt. What did he do to try to get rid of it?

4. Fear and lies: What does guilt do to you? Have you ever felt guilty? Does it make you afraid inside? What does fear do? Suppose you have done something you know to be wrong and you are first guilty and then afraid? Do you make up lies to get out of it? Have you ever tried to excuse yourself? Protect yourself? The white man did. He wanted to keep his slaves but he wanted very much to get rid of his guilt . . . so he made up lies: He said Negroes were not really human, therefore there is no reason for me to feel guilty. And from guilt came the whole lie of white supremacy/Negro inferiority . . . and from guilt came segregation.

As we saw, the power structure uses segregation to keep poor Negroes and poor whites from working together to solve their common problems. Segregation is also the white man's program for hiding away the cause of his guilt—the Negro—hiding him in slums, segregated schools, backyards. Segregation is a wall the white man builds to hide from you, the cause of his guilt . . . and by hiding you, to hide from his own conscience.

Negroes and whites are afraid. Negroes have reason to be afraid. Whites are afraid because of guilt. When Negroes are afraid, they continue to go along with the system. The same is true of whites. And so we say that: there is great fear in the South and it is from this fear that the "power structure" derives its power, from fear that the system keeps going. What do fear and lies do to people?

Concept: that the fear we have felt and the lies we have lived and the guilt have done great damage to us all, Negro and white.

Questions: What happens to you when you keep telling a lie over and over? Do you finally believe it? If you do not believe it, what happens inside to keep telling it anyway? What happens if you are afraid of something for a long long time? Does it change you inside? Does fear finally destroy something in you? What about guilt? If you are guilty of something and have to hide for a long long time, what happens? Are you happy? Free?

Draw a stick figure on the board—a man standing tall and straight. Here is man. He stands tall and straight as he is meant to stand. Draw a man stooped with his head hung down. Here is man again. What do you feel when you look at this figure? Tired? Old? Ashamed? Sick? Draw a stick figure stooped behind a fence or wall. What about this man? What do you feel? Fear? Hiding? What is alike about these two figures? They are bent. Is the first man bent?

Point to the first stooped figure. Have you ever seen a real person walk or stand this way? A Negro? A white man? Why? Age? Illness? Shame? Fear? Guilt? How about the other figure? Have you seen that? Which figure do you like? Why?

What do these figures represent? Above the two stooped figures draw arrows pointing down upon them and pressing them down. What do these arrows do? What do they represent?

We are talking about what lies do to people. What do you think about this? Do lies destroy something in man? Yes. Living, telling, or believing lies destroys something in us all. If somebody tells you that you are bad or lazy or inferior or guilty—you can either believe them or not. Suppose you do not believe them. Suppose you know better, but still they continue to tell you are bad . . . what happens inside you? Anger? Frustration? Despair? Sickness? Suppose you believe the lies? Do you know Negroes who have come to believe that they are inferior? How do they act? How do they stand? Walk? What about whites? Have you seen the face of a white man twisted in hate, fear, anger? Is it the face of a free man? A happy man? Have you seen the empty faces of whites on Main Street—faces that look through you—blank and empty. Are they the faces and eyes of free and happy people? No. No, they are not. White men have lost their health too—the health of their minds and of their bodies . . . from living the lies. No man can live the lie without being bent. The whole South is bent . . . and broken.

Can we really compare Negroes and whites in this matter of being free? It is clear to anyone who looks around that Negroes are not free to grow, to move about, to learn and develop and become whole inside. How about whites? Look down the biggest street in town. You see fine houses, cars, pools, trees, lawns. Do most whites live this way? Do whites who live this way have freedom? Does it show in their faces? If they had freedom, why would they also have fear? Do free men fear? Why would they have hatred? If they were free, why would they lock the doors of

their big houses? What about the rest of the whites? Those who have no fine houses and cars? What do they have? White skin? Are they free then? Is the KKK a group of happy men? No. No, we are not free and not happy. Because we are bent, broken, divided, not whole. We have taken a piece of ourselves and turned it over the “power structure” which is simply to say, we have turned ourselves over to a lie.

1. The “power structure” is one force that helps to maintain the world; in the South, that helps to maintain the terrible world of segregation.
2. That “power structure” derives its power, in the final analysis, from the fears of both whites and Negroes.
3. Poor whites and Negroes are oppressed by the “power structure.” We have much in common.
4. If poor whites and Negroes could get together and move out from under the “power structure,” it would fall.
5. We do not move because we are afraid.
6. Generally, the Negro’s fear is based upon very real danger.
7. Generally, the white’s fear is based upon guilt.
8. Fear—whatever the cause—produces lies. We live in the South.
9. Living lies bends and breaks us.
10. That is to say—keeps us from being whole.  
That is to say—keeps us from being free.

Have you ever heard this: “Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free?” Have we seen in this unit that lies and the fear behind lies and the guilt behind the fear . . . work together to enslave men?

If lies enslave us, then Truth will free us.

What IS the Truth? That is . . . what will make us free?

In the next unit, we will try to find the answer to the question: What is the Truth? Or, the same question: What is freedom?

### **Unit VI—Material Things and Soul Things**

**Purpose:** 1. To develop insights about the inadequacies of pure materialism;  
2. To develop some elementary concepts of a new society.

**Summary:** Starting with a questioning of whether the material things have given the “power structure” satisfaction, to raise the question of whether achievement will bring the Negro and/or the poor white fulfillment. Then to explore whether the conditions of his oppression have given the Negro insights and values that contribute to the goal of a more human society. And finally to develop this relevance into some insights as to the characteristics of a new society.

**Materials:** Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements.

Introduction: The last few days we have been exploring in another world—different than the one we live in everyday—the world of the “power structure,” and we have made some interesting discoveries:

1. That the “power structure” has a lot of power to make things happen just as they want them to be.

2. That the “power structure” has a lot of money that buys—big, luxurious houses, expensive cars, expensive clothing, trips, and all the other things we see on TV and in the movies.

But we’ve also discovered that—

1. The “power structure” is afraid of losing its power and its money; and
2. The “power structure” is afraid of Negroes and poor whites find out the “truth” and getting together.

Ideas to be developed:

1. The possessions of men do not make them free. Negroes will not be freed by:
  - a. Taking what the whites have.
  - b. A movement directed at materialistic ends only.
2. The structure of society can be altered.
3. While a radically new social structure must be created in order to give man the room to grow in, it is not the changing of structure alone that produces a good life or a good world. It is also the ethical values of the individual.
4. There are many kinds of power we could use to build a new society.

Concept: That just taking the “power structure’s” money and power would not make us happy either.

We have seen that having money and power does not make the “power structure” happy. We have seen that they have to pay a price for it.

Questions: Would just taking their money and power away and keeping it ourselves make us happy? Wouldn’t we have to be afraid and distrust people too? Wouldn’t we have to make up lies to convince ourselves that we were right? Wouldn’t we have to make up lies to convince other people that we were right? Wouldn’t we, too, have to keep other people down in order to keep ourselves up?

Suppose you had a million dollars. You could buy a boat, a big car, a house, clothes, food, and many good things. But could you buy a friend? Could you buy a spring morning? Could you buy health? And how could we be happy without friends, health, and spring?

This is a freedom movement; suppose this movement could get a good house and job for all Negroes. Suppose Negroes had everything that the middle class of America has . . . everything that the rest of the country has . . . would it be enough? Why are there heart attacks and diseases and so much awful unhappiness in the middle class . . . which seems to be so free? Why the Bomb?

Concept: That the structure of society can be changed. Discussion of a possible new society.

1. Money—should a few people have a lot of money, should everybody have the same, should everybody have what they need?
2. Jobs—should men be able to work at any job they can do and like, regardless of color, religion, nationality? Suppose a man were put out of a job by automation (like the mechanical picker?) What should happen to him? Should he just sit around? Should he be trained for a new job? Who can train him? When he is old, should he have to depend on his family or be poor? Should he be helped when he is old? Why? Should all workers join together if they wish? Should they share in the profits? Why?

3. Housing—Should every family be able to live where they wish to live, regardless of race or religion? Why? Should every family have a decent home? Should it have heat, a kitchen, a bathroom, hot water, nice furniture? Why does the kind of house a family has affect their family life? Suppose a family does not have enough money? Does a family have a basic right to good housing?
4. Health—should all people have a right to receive the same medical services regardless of religion or race or money? Should all people be able to receive whatever medical services they need regardless of how rich or poor they are? Why? From whom?
5. Education—Should all children be able to go to the same schools regardless of their race or religion? Should all children have the right to get as much education as they are capable of? Suppose they can't afford to go to special high schools or to college? Should they still be able to go? How? Who should pay?  
What should be taught in schools? Do we teach myths and lies? Why? Should we? Should we train people for jobs in schools? To be good citizens? What else should we train people for?—culture, resourcefulness, world citizenship, respect for other people and cultures, peace? What about teaching adults? Should they have a chance too? Should it be free? Should they be able to go to special schools if necessary?
6. Legal—Should the laws and the courts treat all people the same? Should the laws be more concerned with protecting the property a man has or the man himself? Why?
7. Political system—should every man have the right to vote? What if he cannot read? Should he still have the right to vote and choose his representatives? Should politicians have a right to give out favors? Can they be honest in this system? Suppose people can get good housing, jobs, health services, etc., in other ways . . . will they need political favors?
8. Mass media—should newspapers, TV, magazines tell the truth? Should that be their basic job? Should they have to support themselves by advertising? How else could they get enough money?
9. International relations—how should we want to treat other countries? Should we help them if we have more than they do? Should we work for peace? Can we have peace if we keep building bigger bombs and faster planes? (What does fear do, threats? What about children fighting?)
10. Cultural life—are artists, actors, musicians, and writers important? Why? Should art and acting and music and writing be considered work? Should there be free concerts and free plays for everyone to see? Why?

Concept: It is not simply the changing of the structure of society that will make a good world, but the ethical values of the individual.

What if men were just naturally bad to each other-if they didn't care about each other? Would it matter about the structure of society? Are men good to each other because of laws? What is an ethical value? Would it matter about the structure of society? Are men good to each other because of law? What is an ethical value?

Discuss “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” Do you have a set of values? Are society's laws enough? Are your own personal “laws” important, too? Are they even more important than society's laws?

*Case Study:* Statements of Discipline of Nonviolent Movements.

Is the movement the germ of a new society? How do people act toward each other in the movement? How do people act toward each other in Freedom School? How does this way of life

differ from the way of life of the larger society? We must keep these good ethical and spiritual values in the new society which we build.

Concept: That there are many kinds of power we could use to build a better society. What is power? (Power is the ability to move things.) What kinds of power are there? Discuss.

Mississippi

Freedom Movement

Physical Power

(Power to coerce or frighten)

Police state  
Intimidation

Federal intervention

Political Power

(Power to influence)

One party  
No vote  
Unjust laws

Vote  
Convention Challenge  
Negro candidates

Economic Power

(Power to buy)

Citizens Council  
control, banks, jobs etc

Boycott,  
Strikes

Do these “powers” balance each other? Do they succeed in bringing the two sides together or do they tend to pull apart? Are there other kinds of power?

Truth Power

(Power to Convince or Persuade)

Does persuasion pull people apart? Is it a different kind of power? Can we use truth to reveal the lies and myths? What happens once they are revealed? Once someone is convinced or persuaded, can they join with us? Is the better world for them too?

Soul Power

(The Power to Love)

Can you love everyone like you love your family or your friends? What does compassion mean? Is that a kind of love? Is there something in other people that is like what is in you? Can soul power change things? How?

*[Editors' Note: Units I to VI of the Citizenship Curriculum were written by Noel Day, and modified for the Freedom Schools by Jane Stenbridge.]*

## ***PART II: CITIZENSHIP CURRICULUM, UNIT VII—THE MOVEMENT***

**Purpose:** To grasp the significance of direct action and of political action as instruments of social change.

**Materials:** Readings in Nonviolence;  
 COFO Materials on Freedom Summer;  
*See:* Prospectus for the Mississippi Freedom Summer  
COFO Flyer: Freedom Summer  
COFO Flyer: MFDP  
COFO Flyer: Freedom Registration  
Charles Remsberg, “Behind the Cotton Curtain” (excerpts);  
 Southern Regional Council, report on Greenwood Voter Project;  
Voter Registration Laws in Mississippi  
*[Inserted by Editors:]* Civil Rights Bill  
*[Inserted by Editors:]* Rifle Squads or the Beloved Community  
*[Inserted by Editors:]* Nonviolence in American History  
*[Inserted by Editors:]* Teaching Material for Unit 7, Part II

### **Unit VII, Part 1: Freedom Rides and Sit-Ins**

QUESTION: What is a Freedom Ride?

ANSWER: A Freedom Ride is a special kind of direct action protest aimed at testing buses, trains, and terminal facilities—to see whether or not the seating of people on buses and trains is done according to law, i.e., the Supreme Court ruling of 1960 that segregated seating on interstate carriers and in terminal stations is illegal.

The second purpose of a Freedom Ride is to protest segregation where it still exists and to make known to the nation the conditions under which Negroes live in the deep South.

The third and overall purpose of the Freedom Ride is to change these conditions.

QUESTION: What happens on a Freedom Ride?

ANSWER: A group of people—in the case of the Freedom Rides—an integrated group buy interstate bus or train tickets. By interstate, we mean going from one state to another. They board the bus or train and sit in seats customarily used by whites only. At stations, they use restrooms customarily used by whites only. They eat at lunch counters customarily used by whites only and sit in waiting rooms customarily reserved by whites.

QUESTION: What is a sit-in?

ANSWER: A sit-in is another kind of direct action protest aimed at breaking down racial barriers in restaurants, dining rooms, and any places where whites are allowed to sit, but Negroes are not.

QUESTION: What happens on a sit-in?

ANSWER: People go and sit at lunch counters, in dime stores and drugstores, etc. They usually sit and refuse to move. When this happens, they are sometimes arrested or sometimes the whole lunch-counter closes down and nobody—neither Negro nor white—gets to sit and eat.

QUESTION: What do Freedom Rides and sit-ins want to do?

ANSWER: They want to make it possible for people to sit where they choose, ride where they choose, and eat where they choose. *They want to change society*, and we call these two forms of protest “instruments of social change.”

QUESTION: What is society?

ANSWER: Society is the way people live together. People get together and they decide certain things they want—like schools and banks, parks and stores, buses and trains. We call all these things *social institutions* because they are the things people *build* as they live together.

QUESTION: Why do some people want to change society?

ANSWER: Sometimes, people build bad institutions. A bad institution is anything that keeps people from living together and sharing. Segregation is a bad institution. It is a bad thing that a few people have built in order to keep other people outside. In the South, in places like Mississippi, the whole society has become one big evil institution—segregation. If a good society is one where people live together and share things . . . then a segregated society is the exact opposite of a good society—because the whole purpose of segregation is to keep people separate. Segregation means separation and separation means a very bad society. That is what people want to change.

QUESTION: How can you change society?

ANSWER: You can tear down the bad institutions which people have built and replace them with new institutions that help people live together and share.

There are different ways of tearing down bad institutions. You can write to the President or Congressman and ask them to help get rid of bad institutions. They can make a law against those institutions. For example, after the Freedom Rides, there was a law made by which we can force buses and stations to desegregate. (ICC Ruling, September 22, 1961)

Also, in 1954, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that segregated schools were unconstitutional. A Negro took the case to the Supreme Court.

So, you can try to get laws passed. Or, you can persuade people to stop building bad institutions. You can go and talk to the white people who make segregated schools and maybe you can help them to see that this is wrong and maybe they will change it without having to be told to by the government.

QUESTION: Does this really work?

ANSWER: It does not work very quickly . . . and Negroes have waited too long. Unfortunately, people don't change easily. Unfortunately, the government does not pass new laws very readily.

QUESTION: Then what can you do?

ANSWER: You can compel things to change.

QUESTION: How?

ANSWER: You can refuse to keep evil laws. You can refuse to cooperate with bad institutions. You can refuse to cooperate with segregation. That is what the Freedom Riders and the sit-inners did—exactly.

The Freedom Riders said we will not keep that law which says we have to sit in the back of a bus because we are Negro. That law is wrong. It is wrong because all men were created equal. It is

wrong because Negroes are citizens of the United States and the Constitution of the United States says that no law can be made which takes away the freedom of any citizen. Since the law about sitting in the back of the bus takes away our freedom, we will not sit there. We will sit in the front, or in the middle, or wherever we choose because we have tickets and we have the right. The students who went to sit-in at the dime store lunch counters said we shop in this store and so we are customers of this store, so we will eat there.

QUESTION: Is there another way of changing things?

ANSWER: Yes, there is a way we don't support: to get a gun and go down to the station and take over the whole station.

QUESTION: Why didn't the Freedom Riders do that?

ANSWER: For two reasons. First of all, it won't work. Not for long. Because there are always people with bigger guns and more bullets. The Negroes in America are a minority and they cannot win by guns.

The second reason the Freedom Riders did not take guns is that when you use guns, you are building just another bad institution. Guns separate people from each other, keep them from living together and sharing . . . and for this reason *guns never really change society*. They might get rid of one bad institution—but only by building another bad institution. So you do not accomplish any good whatsoever.

In the South, the white men are masters over the Negroes. No man—Negro or white—has the right to be master of another man . . . and the whole purpose of the integration movement is to bring people together, to stop letting white men be masters over Negroes . . . what good would it do, then, to take a gun?

It is true that whoever has the gun is a kind of master for a while. It is also true that the best society is one in which nobody is master and everyone is free.

And, it is further true that there is a weapon which is much better and much stronger than a gun or a bomb. That weapon is nonviolence.

QUESTION: Why is nonviolence a stronger weapon?

ANSWER: Nonviolence really changes things—because nonviolence changes people.

Nonviolence is based on a simple truth: that every human being deserves to be treated as human being just because he is one and that there is something very sacred about humanity.

When you treat a man as a man, most often he will begin to act like a man. By treating him as that which he should be, he sees what he should be and often becomes that. He literally changes and as men change, society changes . . . on the deepest level.

Real change occurs inside of people. Then they, in turn, change society. You do not really change a man by holding a gun on him . . . you do not change him into a better man. But by treating him as a human being, you do change him. It is simply true that nonviolence changes men—both those who act without violence and those who receive the action.

The white people in the South and in America have to be changed—very deep inside.

Nonviolence has and will bring about this change in people . . . and in society.

QUESTION: What exactly did the Freedom Rides accomplish?

ANSWER: For one thing, because of the Freedom Rides, the Interstate Commerce Commission made a ruling by which a bus or train or station can be made to desegregate. This ruling came in September of 1961 just after the Freedom Rides.

QUESTION: Why didn't the ICC make that rule a long time ago? Why were the Freedom Rides necessary?

ANSWER: Sometimes, with governments, you have to show them a thing a thousand times before they see it once and before they do something about it. Way back in 1862, Abraham Lincoln wrote the Emancipation Proclamation. But Negroes still are not free. Just because there is a law on paper, it doesn't mean there is justice.

The Supreme Court said in 1960 that buses and trains and stations had to desegregate for interstate passengers. But in the South, nobody did anything about it. So, the Freedom Riders came to show the nation and the government that they would have to do something else. They would have to enforce the Supreme Court ruling. As a result of the Freedom Rides, the ICC enforcement was passed. If it had not been for the Freedom Rides, the ICC would have waited a long time and maybe forever to do anything.

QUESTION: Why?

ANSWER: Unfortunately, governments do not do anything until the people get up and say they have to. What happened with the Freedom Rides and the sit-ins was that Negroes were tired asking the government to do something . . . tired of writing letters and going through the slow process of the courts to get laws changed . . . tired of making speeches that never accomplished anything. SO THEY ACTED. We call the Freedom Rides and the sit-ins "DIRECT ACTION."

QUESTION: What is direct action?

ANSWER: Direct action is just another way of telling the world what is wrong. The special thing about direct action is that it makes use of the human body—instead of just the voice or the mind. Direct action is putting your body in the way of evil—placing your whole self on the very spot where injustice is.

A segregated lunch counter is wrong. So, people went and sat down in the middle of it. They put their bodies in the way and they were saying: here I am in the middle of your lunch counter and I will not move because your lunch counter is all wrong. It is segregated. Either you will desegregate it (make a new institution) or you will just have to close it altogether (destroy an old institution) . . . I am not moving.

Direct action is putting your body in the way of evil and refusing to move until the evil is destroyed, until the wrong is made right.

Direct action is saying, with your body, either you will have an integrated lunch counter or none at all. AND THIS IS WHAT HAPPENED. All over the South, lunch counters began to close to everybody. If it opened for everybody, the sit-inners had succeeded in destroying something evil and building up something good. If it closed to everybody, at least the sit-inners had succeeded in getting rid of something evil.

That is the power of direct action. We call Freedom Rides and sit-ins direct action.

QUESTION: What really happened on the Freedom Rides?

ANSWER: Negro and white students working with CORE in Washington, D.C. and places like that decided that somebody ought to come down South and see if the Supreme Court law had

made any difference and, if not, to tell the world about it. They felt that everybody should know about Alabama and Mississippi and how Negroes are treated in these places. All over the South, students were sitting-in at lunch counters and restaurants, courtrooms and offices. They had been doing other things in addition to sitting in. They had staged wade-ins at swimming pools, sleep-ins at hotels, stand-ins at theaters, kneel-ins at churches. They had picketed and marched, gone to jail. Already victories were being won.

It was time to try out the buses and trains. The students in Washington knew two things: one, they had every right to sit where they wanted because they were human beings and two, that the law said every citizen who is riding on an interstate carrier can sit where he chooses both on the bus and in the station.

All they needed was an interstate bus ticket. They each bought a ticket. The first Freedom Riders bought tickets from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans, Louisiana. On May 4, 1961, they left—thirteen of them, seven were Negro and six white. One interracial team rode on Trailways Bus and the other on Greyhound.

They went through Virginia and Tennessee without much real trouble. They came into Alabama. The trouble started. About six miles outside of a town called Anniston, a white mob was waiting for the buses. The Greyhound bus got there first and the mob attacked. They slashed tires, threw gas in and set the whole bus on fire. Many people were hurt very badly. When the Trailways bus arrived, the mob tried to get it. This bus was able to escape and made it on to Birmingham—only to meet a white mob at the Birmingham station. The Freedom Riders were beaten up.

Police and patrolmen escorted the bus all the way from Birmingham to the Mississippi line. The bus came to Jackson. Police were waiting. As soon as the Freedom Riders got into the white waiting room, the police picked them up and took them to the city jail in Jackson. From the city jail, they were moved to the Hinds County jail, from there to the county farm and finally to Parchman State Penitentiary, where they served their time rather than cooperate with the state by paying bail money.

During that spring three years ago, more than a thousand students made the Freedom Rides. Most of them were either beaten up or arrested or both. Bill Mahoney, a Negro student from Washington, was one of the Freedom Riders who spent a long, long time in Parchman. Bill wrote about how badly they were treated there and how they refused to eat and refused to cooperate in any way. In spite of everything they suffered, these Freedom Riders at Parchman were determined to stick to their belief in the power of nonviolence. One day, Bill and some of the other prisoners, wrote this prison code which they all followed:

“Having, after due consideration, chosen to follow without reservation, the principles of nonviolence, we resolve while in prison:

- \* to practice nonviolence of speech and thought as well as action;
- \* to treat even those who may be our captors as brothers;
- \* to engage in a continual process of cleansing of the mind and body in rededication to our wholesome cause;
- \* to intensify our search for orderly living even when in the midst of seeming chaos.”

So this is what happened on the Freedom Rides. Sometimes Riders would go back and tell everything that had taken place. Sometimes, they would write about it and tell the government in Washington. Before it was all over, the whole world knew how bad things really were in such places as Alabama and Mississippi. AND TODAY, because of the Freedom Riders, most of the

bus and train stations in the South are open to everybody. For those stations which are not opened on an integrated basis, there is now a ruling by which we can force them to open. This ruling was the direct result of the Freedom Rides.

Bill Mahoney and his group got out of Parchman Penitentiary on the seventh day of July in 1961. This is what he said about that day, “When we left, the number of Freedom Riders still in jail was close to a hundred. Before parting for our various destinations, we stood in a circle, grasped hands, and sang a song called “We Will Meet Again.” As I looked around the circle into my companions’ serious faces and saw the furrowed brows of the nineteen- or twenty-year-old men and women, I knew that we *would* meet again.

QUESTION: Did the Freedom Rides succeed? If so, how?

ANSWER: The Rides succeeded in five important ways:

- a. They showed clearly that it is not enough just to make a law; that simply because the Supreme Court says it is wrong to have segregated bus stations, these stations do not integrate overnight (e.g. 1954 Supreme Court decision on public schools.)
- b. They showed the terrible truth about the deep South.
- c. They showed those people who think social change can be made without suffering that they are wrong.
- d. They brought the fight for freedom into the deep South,
- e. They forced the Interstate Commerce Commission to do something—which it did on September 22, 1961. The ruling went into effect on November 1, 1961.

NOTE: As late as July 20, 1961, the Justice Department reported segregation in ninety-seven of the 294 terminals in twelve of the seventeen states surveyed. After the November 1 order, there were very few still segregated.

QUESTION: What about Mississippi?

ANSWER: All over Mississippi we still see signs like “Colored Waiting Room“ and “For Whites Only” in stations. We still see Negroes going into sections where they are told to go. And, in some towns, if you protest, you are arrested or worse.

QUESTION: Why?

ANSWER: Because Mississippi makes its own laws. It does not keep the law of the United States, not when it comes to race. This means if you go to a white waiting room, and some policeman tells you it is against the law—he is right. It is against the law. It is against Mississippi law.

QUESTION: So what do you do?

ANSWER: You break that law. You break it because it is both evil and is against the Supreme Court of the United States—which is the Law of the whole land. You act on two higher laws—the law of human rights and the law of civil rights, because you are a human being and because you are a citizen of the United States.

QUESTION: What will happen?

ANSWER: In a sense, you do not even ask what will happen. You simply do what is right because it is right. Mississippi is a bad place. It is not easy to do the right thing in Mississippi. A

lot can happen to you. But a lot happened to the first Freedom Riders and the students who first went to the white lunch counters. They did it anyway.

THE IMPORTANT THING IS THIS—unless we keep going and keep going to these places WHERE THE LAW HAS ALREADY BEEN PASSED IN OUR FAVOR—we will be cooperating with those people who want to keep us down. Every time you go into the “Colored” section, you are saying that Mississippi is right.

When you say Mississippi is right, you are saying one thing and one thing only: I am wrong. If Mississippi is right, then Negroes *are* inferior.

No, Mississippi is dead wrong. BUT YOU HAVE TO SAY SO. Every time you go to the back door, you are building up segregation. Mississippi likes to say “our Negroes are happy. They do not want changes.”

And every time you go where they want you to go, you are saying exactly the same thing. And it is not true.

QUESTION: Then what?

ANSWER: Then, if you are arrested, you get in touch with as many people as you can—COFO, the Department of Justice, the Department of Commerce, lawyers, the Civil Rights commission. You appeal the case. You file suit against the state of Mississippi. You get the case into a federal court and out of the state courts. You fight it until some court orders that bus station to desegregate, and sees that it does.

QUESTION: Has anybody ever done this in Mississippi?

ANSWER: Yes. A Negro in McComb, Mississippi filed a suit against the state, asking that the bus station in McComb be forced to desegregate. Recently, U.S. District Court Judge Sidney Mize issued an injunction against the state to force them to stop segregating that bus station. We will do this to every station in every town in Mississippi if we have to. The Freedom Rides did a lot, but they were only a beginning. They got the law completely on our side. It is up to us to use that law and force a change in Mississippi.

QUESTION: What is the story on the sit-ins?

ANSWER: The sit-ins, as we know them, began on February 1, 1960, when four freshmen from North Carolina A. and T. College in Greensboro, North Carolina took seats at Woolworth’s Dime Store in downtown Greensboro.

Within a week, the sit-in movement had spread to seven other towns in North Carolina and within six weeks, the movement covered every southern state except Mississippi.

The first success came on the seventh of March, 1960—only five weeks after the very first sit-in.

On March 7, three drugstores in Salisbury, North Carolina desegregated their lunch counters.

Sit-ins continued and increased all that summer. By September, it was estimated that 70,000 students had been in sit-ins in every southern state as well as Nevada, Illinois, and Ohio; and that 3, 600 had been arrested.

AND that one or more eating places in 108 southern cities had been desegregated *as a result of the sit-ins*. (Southern Regional Council figures.)

To grasp the happenings of 1960, you must feel the revolutionary spirit which swept across the campuses of hundreds of Negro colleges and high schools in the South. Four students went to Woolworth’s. Then twenty went in another town. Then, 200 went in a third town. It spread like wildfire—unplanned, spontaneous, revolutionary. Within a week after the first sit-ins, the entire

South was in an uproar. It was like a volcano had erupted, cracking through the earth and flooding the plain.

SO SEGREGATION BEGAN TO BREAK DOWN. The old institutions crumbled. The new society was being created. A fantastic spirit was felt—people went to jail, left schools, left home, filled the streets and jails. The seams which had for so long held together the rotten system broke completely and the people came pouring out. There was no way to stop them.

Police tried. Parents tried. Teachers tried. The South tried. They did not stop. Every attempt to stop them only increased their determination. Until thousands of students became involved that summer of 1960 . . . and the South and the nation began to listen. They had to listen. These students put their bodies in the way and would not move.

THAT is how they got the attention of the world.

Once they had got the world's attention, they never let it go. The minute somebody would forget about them and turn the other way, the students would do something new. There was fantastic creativity. Sit-ins gave birth to kneel-ins and to wade-ins and to sleep-ins.

The students were everywhere . . . and nobody could forget them. Nobody could forget the Negro and his grievances. If a man went to the movie to escape the sit-in at the lunch counter, he ran into the line of stand-inners at the movie. If he went to the hotel to sleep, there they were.

Everywhere . . . everywhere so that nobody would forget for one minute that the American Negro wanted his freedom and wanted it right then and there.

Students who were involved in those early days can talk on and on all day—can tell you what happened in Nashville the morning in May when 3,000 students marched in silence to the Mayor's office to present their demands, can tell you what happened in Orangeburg on Black Friday when hundreds of students from South Carolina State and Claflin Colleges were thrown in stockades and crushed with water from fire hoses, can tell you about North Carolina opening up, and Virginia closing its schools, and Alabama fighting back, about a thousand little lunch counters in a thousand towns across the South, can tell you how society began to change, how southern society began to collapse altogether, can tell you about nonviolence and about violence because they felt plenty of violence in jails and on the streets of America.

And all of this is still happening. It is just beginning to happen in Mississippi. We are living in the middle of the revolution and in the middle of a new history. . . .

When you talk about what happened in the sit-in movement, you are talking about a living moving force that still exists. Because of the great dynamic of the movement, one cannot do more than capture a moment here and there, a victory in Greensboro, an event in Atlanta, . . . one can talk about the songs and the people who make up this movement . . . but most of all, one can feel the spirit.

Some special things which happened can be described now—such as the spring of 1960 when it all began and the birth of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee—”Snick.”

QUESTION: What is the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee?

ANSWER: SNCC is a group of students who work full-time for civil rights, all over America.

QUESTION: How did it begin?

ANSWER: The first sit-in was in February. In six weeks, the movement was covering the South. In April, Miss Ella Baker, who had been fighting for the rights of Negroes for many years, arranged for the sit-inners to come to Atlanta and talk about what was happening. So they came—right from jail, many of them, and met each other for the first time. For the first time,

together, we sang “We Shall Overcome” . . . and for the first time, we recognized that we had begun a revolution. The students who came to that meeting wanted a committee that would stay in touch with all the towns where things were happening, would tell the nation, and would help keep things going through the summer. Each state named someone to be on this committee, which was called the Temporary Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

SNCC met each month that summer, opened an office in Atlanta, started a newspaper called *The Student Voice*, and made plans for a southwide student movement conference to be held in the fall.

At that October 1960 conference, SNCC was made a permanent committee. SNCC today has its headquarters in Atlanta still, with offices in every state in the South and Friends of SNCC offices all over the north and west. SNCC has offices in every major town in the state of Mississippi.

And this summer, more than 2000 people will be working for SNCC.

That’s a long way since June 1960 when we set up an office in the corner of another office and there were only two of us then.

QUESTION: What does SNCC do in Mississippi?

ANSWER: In Mississippi, SNCC is part of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), which is all the people who want freedom. COFO has two main purposes in Mississippi: voter registration and education.

QUESTION: Do we have sit-ins in Mississippi?

ANSWER: Yes, there have been sit-ins in Mississippi—and, of course, the Freedom Rides came through and were stopped in Mississippi. In Jackson, students of Tougaloo College, have been kneeling-in at Jackson churches all year. Many people have been arrested.

The people have concentrated on other things in Mississippi. There have been very few direct action protests, such as sit-ins, in comparison with other southern states.

QUESTION: Why are people doing a different thing in Mississippi?

ANSWER: They are operating differently in Mississippi because Mississippi is different.

Mississippi is the worst state in the South as far as treatment of Negroes is concerned. The thing that makes Mississippi different and worse, even than Alabama, is that every single thing the state has is designed to keep the Negro down.

Before Mississippi changes, there will have to be a well-planned and very strong movement among the Negro people. COFO, the people’s organization, is building up that movement. It just takes more “getting ready” in Mississippi.

The second thing people are doing in Mississippi is making up for lost time. All these years when Negroes had to live under the awful conditions in Mississippi, they lost the chance for good education. They lost the chance to understand government and to help run it—political education.

They lost the chance to vote. Or better, they never had a chance for these things. COFO is building up good freedom schools so people can have that chance. COFO is having FREEDOM VOTES so Negroes can vote. COFO is helping the Negroes of Mississippi run their own candidates for Senate and congress in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

In Mississippi, COFO is thinking first of helping the people who want freedom get some control in the state and gain a voice in the government of Mississippi.

When Negroes have a vote, then they can help make the laws. And when Negroes make the laws . . . they will get rid of all the segregation laws. They will get rid of segregated lunch counters. They will get rid of the walls that hurt people—black and white.

There are several ways to desegregate a lunch counter. One is by sitting in, or what we call direct action. Another way is by voting for people who will themselves desegregate the lunch counter . . . this is a kind of indirect action.

It is very good to desegregate a lunch counter—but it is good also to be elected to the United States Congress. Mrs. Hamer, a Negro lady from Ruleville, is running for Congress on the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Once we get good people from Mississippi in Congress, then they will change the laws.

QUESTION: Why doesn't COFO do both—direct action and indirect action?

ANSWER: They do both. It is true that there are not many sit-ins in Mississippi. One reason for this is that there would be so much violence. Students got beaten up for sitting-in in Alabama—they would likely be killed in Mississippi. Rather than subject people to certain violence for the sake of a lunch counter, COFO asks people to go to the registrar office and try to become registered voters. This is hard enough. This is direct action as far as Mississippi is concerned . . . and, if you get the vote, you have gotten something much more powerful than a lunch counter seat in the long run.

QUESTION: How can Mississippi society be changed?

ANSWER: It will take every tactic we have. Sooner or later, we will have to try all these ways of changing society: sit-ins, marches, kneel-ins, pickets, boycotts, voting, running people for Congress, Freedom Schools to prepare young Negroes to lead, literacy classes to teach people to read and write—everything will be needed to change Mississippi.

This is the reason for COFO. COFO is all the people who want freedom working together to change Mississippi.

QUESTION: Even with all this, how can we hope to win in Mississippi?

ANSWER: We won't win, at least not for a very long time, unless the federal government throws its weight behind us.

Howard Zinn, writing in the winter issue of *Freedomways* states quite clearly: "I am now convinced that stone wall which blocks expectant Negroes in every town and village of the hard-core South . . . will have to be crumbled by hammer blows. . . ." Zinn sees two ways for this to happen: one would be a violent Negro revolt; the other would be forceful intervention of the federal government—and, Zinn continues, unless this latter happens in such places as Mississippi, the former surely will.

The federal government does *not* have a good record in Mississippi. Time and again, in fact hourly, Negroes are denied those basic freedoms guaranteed them by the United States Constitution, by the Bill of Rights, by Section 242 of U.S. Criminal Code . . . and the federal government has done very little. (Section 242 of the U.S. Criminal Code, which comes from the Civil Rights Act of 1866, creates a legal basis for action and prosecution, says Zinn. The Section reads: "Whoever, under color of any law . . . willfully subjects . . . any inhabitant of any State . . . to the deprivation of any rights, privileges, or immunities secured or protected by the Constitution and the laws of the United States. . . .")

Zinn continues: “The responsibility is that of the President of the United States, and no one else. *It is his job to enforce the law. And the law is clear.*”

The wall which the state of Mississippi has thrown between Negroes and whites cannot be broken down by us alone—it is too high and too thick. It will take the power of the United States to break that wall *plus* the power of the people of Mississippi.

QUESTION: What can we do to force the federal government to help us?

ANSWER: We can continue working constantly to show the world how horrible Mississippi is, and continue trying to change it. We can put pressure on the federal government—by constantly writing the President and the Attorney General and members of the Civil Rights Commission, by going to Washington every chance we have and showing the President what we want.

That is the meaning of the March on Washington which took place last August. Hundreds of thousands of Negroes marched, with whites, to show the government that we are not free and that it must do something about the fact that we are not free. Mississippi people went on that March—and they carried signs, they talked about Mississippi, they got on radio and television—so the nation would know the truth and *do something*.

Our job this summer is to keep on telling America to do something about injustice in Mississippi. And our job is to keep doing something ourselves. We cannot afford to stop until we are free.

The favorite freedom song of the people of Mississippi has these lines:

We shall never turn back  
Until we have been freed  
And we have equality  
And we have equality. . . .

QUESTION: What has happened in Mississippi so far?

ANSWER: The Mississippi story really begins to take shape in the summer of 1960. Robert Moses, a young Negro teacher from New York, came to Atlanta and went to work for SNCC. In July, he first came into Mississippi to try and find students who would come to Atlanta for a big meeting with other Negro students from all over the South. He did find Mississippi students, and some came to the Atlanta meeting. After that meeting, they returned to the state and Bob returned to his teaching in New York. All that year, Bob kept thinking about Mississippi and the students in Mississippi kept thinking about the things they had heard from Bob and from other Negro students in the meeting. After that school year was over, Bob came back to Mississippi.

Negro leaders in southwest Mississippi had been wanting to start a citizenship school and a voter registration drive. Bob went down to help. During that summer, he worked in Amite County, Pike County, and Walthall County. Some people were registered, some were beaten, some were killed. The center of the work down there was McComb and the story of McComb is a very important story—because it is largely about high school students.

Things began to happen in a big way on August 18, 1961. The people formed the Pike County Nonviolent Movement. Eight days later, Elmer Hayes and Hollis Watkins went to Woolworth’s lunch counter and sat in. **THIS WAS THE FIRST DIRECT ACTION IN MISSISSIPPI.** Hayes and Watkins were arrested and jailed for thirty days for breach of the peace. Four days later there was a sit-in in the bus station. Three students were arrested—two of them were high school students: Isaac Lewis and Brenda Travis, sixteen. Their charges were breach of the peace and failure to move on. They got 28 days in the city jail.

Toward the end of September, Mr. Herbert Lee, Negro farmer and voter registration worker in Liberty, was killed. On the 3rd of October, there was a mass meeting. Many, many high school students attended. They had something important to decide.

This was what they had to decide—when Brenda Travis and Ike Lewis, their classmates, got arrested for sitting in at the bus station, the principal of their high school, Burgland High, threatened to expel any students who got involved in sit-ins. The students got mad. They came to this mass meeting. They decided that if Brenda and Ike were not re-admitted to Burgland High, they would protest. Brenda and Ike were not re-admitted. So the very next day, the high school students marched: one hundred and twenty of them right down through McComb and up to the City Hall.

And here is what those high school students said:

We, the Negro youth of Pike County, feel that Brenda Travis and Ike Lewis should not be barred from acquiring an education for protesting an injustice. We feel that as members of Burgland High School they have fought this battle for us. To prove that we appreciate their having done this, we will suffer with them any punishment they have to take.

In the schools we are taught democracy, but the rights offered by democracy have been denied us by our oppressors; we have not had a balanced school system; we have not had an opportunity to participate in any of the branches of our local, state, and federal government; however, we are children of God, who makes the sun shine on the just and the unjust. So, we petition all our fellowmen to love rather than hate, to build rather than tear down, to bind our nation with love and justice with regard to race, color, or creed.

Those Negro high school students were arrested—all of them—on that morning when they marched through McComb. Some were released on suspended sentences because they were too young. Those of age were sentenced and fined. Brenda Travis was sent to the girls' detention home for a year. And seventy-five of the other high school students transferred to Campbell College in Jackson, rather than go back to Burgland High.

That is McComb and the first big march in Mississippi. Since that summer, three years ago, the people of Mississippi—who want to be free—have stood up again and again to demand their rights. All over Mississippi, Negroes have gone to the courthouses seeking to become registered voters. Some have succeeded. Most have not.

In Jackson, students and ministers who support them, from all over the country have gone to the churches of Jackson and asked to worship together. They have been arrested for this—hundreds of them. Some churches have opened. Most have not.

And this summer—the people of Mississippi who want to be free are having a whole summer called THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SUMMER. This means Freedom Schools for all students who want to learn about civil rights and to talk about the things they can't talk about in regular school. Freedom Schools are a big part of the Mississippi Freedom Summer.

Another part is voter registration. All summer long people will keep on going to the courthouses of Mississippi and demanding to be registered as voters. In addition to regular registration, the people will have FREEDOM REGISTRATION. Freedom Registration is a chance for Negroes in Mississippi to show the world that they want to register and vote.

QUESTION: What else will the people be doing in Mississippi this summer?

ANSWER: The people will have their own community centers. A community center is a place where everyone can do many different things. It will be mostly for adults and will offer many

chances for them to learn things to help them live better. The centers will have job training programs, classes for people who cannot read or write, health programs, adult education and Negro history classes, music, drama and arts and crafts workshops.

QUESTION: What else will happen during the Freedom Summer?

ANSWER: The people who want to be free will have their own candidates running for office. These are our candidates. They are running in the Freedom Democratic Party. That is our party. The people of Mississippi have refused to cooperate with segregation. They are tearing down that old and evil institution and building new institutions—a new society where men can live together and share. That is the Mississippi story. . .

And it is a story of victory. It is a story of great suffering and death. Names like Clyde Kennard, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Herbert Lee, Lewis Allen. Like the sit-in movement, we have our stories of suffering and jail, of death and terrible suffering. And we have our songs of freedom . . . and our determination to BE free.

As far as Negroes are concerned, and as far as many poor whites are concerned . . . Mississippi is the worst state in America. But the people of Mississippi have done and are doing a great thing. They have built a new society, a statewide people's movement and for the first time, the nation is about to see what it means to have government of the people, by the people, for the people. . . . All across the South the walls have begun to fall. And in Mississippi, where things are so much worse, there is a whole new society taking shape. It is partly because things are so much worse here that the people have had the will and determination to build so much better. When the last stone of the wall called Jim Crow has fallen, the last evil institution collapsed . . . we will already have built the foundation of a new society where men can live without fear.

## Unit VII, Part 2: Mississippi's Politics and COFO's Political Program in Mississippi

(Presented in question and answer form under topical headings.)

### INTRODUCTION

- I. COFO—The Organization
  - A. What is COFO?
  - B. What are the Programs sponsored by COFO?
  - C. How did COFO get started?
- II. Mrs. Hamer's Campaign
  - A. Who is Mrs. Hamer
  - B. Why is she running for office?
  - C. What is Mrs. Hamer's Platform?
  - D. Who is her opponent?
  - E. How is the campaign to be conducted?
  - F. Has she any chance of winning?  
If not, why challenge?
- III. Other COFO Political Programs for the summer
  - A. How will the Democratic Convention be challenged?
  - B. What are the plans for the Freedom Registration?
  - C. The Freedom Candidates?
- IV. Voting in Mississippi
  - A. How is the state Democratic Party organized?
  - B. What are the voting requirements?
  - C. Who votes in Mississippi?
  - D. What are the proofs of discrimination in voting?
  - E. Why isn't the Negro allowed to vote? What does the white man fear?
  - F. What steps have been taken to give Negroes the vote?
- V. Historical Development of white, one-party politics
  - A. What role did Reconstruction play?
  - B. Who controls the votes and how?
  - C. Why hasn't the Republican party been stronger?
  - D. What changes will occur when Negroes can vote?

### Introduction

The following will provide a background of information from which it is hoped the teacher in the Freedom School will be able to direct a discussion and set up a situation in which dialogue will be possible on the subject of politics and its relation to the individual and to groups—especially politics in Mississippi. As part of this, the development of COFO, its aims and purposes as a political action group, will also be discussed.

The approach that will be taken is to use the example of Mrs. Hamer's campaign for Representative to the U.S. House as a point of departure for discussion of the political situation in the state. It is hoped that through the use of a specific case study, the students may see the political structure as relevant and close to his own experience. That even more importantly, the

students may be awakened to the essential role each individual plays in the democratic process, what this role is, and how to go about exercising his right to a voice in the decision making that concerns his life. Beyond this, by studying Mrs. Hamer's campaign and the broader aspects of COFO's political program for the summer and beyond, the student may see one example of how to combat the problems of discrimination that take his right away to have a voice in local, state and national government.

The basic concepts which it is important to get across from this unit are these:

1. Fundamentals of how the political structure is organized at local, state, and national level.
2. How the individual participates in politics and why it is important.
3. How the political structure in Mississippi is organized to discriminate against the Negro and why?
4. What steps can and are being taken to correct existing conditions of discrimination.

### I.COFO

QUESTION: What is COFO?

ANSWER: COFO is the Council of Federated Organizations—a federation of all the national civil rights organizations active in Mississippi, local political and action groups and some fraternal and social organizations.

QUESTION: Why have such a federation of organizations?

ANSWER: To create unity and to give a sense of continuity to Civil Rights efforts in the state. Particularly since any civil rights program must be carried out in an atmosphere of extreme hostility from the white community, it was felt that unity through an organization of this kind would create a bond of support for Negroes all over the state. COFO also provides a sense of identity and purpose to local political action groups already existing and a means of exchanging ideas. One of its major purposes is to develop leadership in local communities all over the state. In the past people have *belonged* to civil rights organizations. COFO would like to be an organization which in a real sense *belongs to the people*. It is so structured that all decision making is done democratically and directly by all the groups working together—allowing each individual the right of voicing his opinion and making his vote count.

Decisions concerning COFO are made at its state-wide convention meetings, which are called when necessary. Anyone active under any of the organizations which make up membership is entitled to attend COFO conventions and participate in policy-making decisions of the organization.

The staff consists of anyone working full time with any civil rights organization in Mississippi. This staff carries out the decisions of the COFO convention and prepares recommendations for its consideration. Below the state COFO convention there are district organizations corresponding to the five congressional districts. These district organizations are only in the planning state at present. The staff is divided into congressional districts with five district directors; this organizational structure is functioning at present.

The state organization has four standing committees: Welfare and Relief, Political Action, Finance and Federal Programs. The district organizations have or will have, similar standing committees. Dr. Aaron E. Henry of Clarksdale, State President of the NAACP, is President of the Council of Federated Organizations. Robert Moses, Field Secretary and Mississippi Project Director for SNCC, is the Program Director, who supervises the Mississippi staff and is elected

by it. David Dennis, Mississippi Field Secretary for CORE, is Assistant Program Director, and is similarly elected.

QUESTION: What are the programs sponsored by COFO?

ANSWER: COFO works in two major areas. 1) Political 2) Educational and social. The educational and social programs are the Freedom Schools, Federal Programs, Literacy, Work-study, Food and Clothing and Community Centers. Some of these are in operation; others are in the process of being developed.

*Freedom Schools* are planned for the summer of 1964. There are several things which hopefully will be accomplished by the Schools. (1) to provide remedial instruction in basic educational skills but more importantly (2) to implant habits of free thinking and ideas of how a free society works, and (3) to lay the groundwork for a statewide youth movement.

*Federal Programs Project* is to make the programs of the Federal government which are designed to alleviate poverty and ignorance reach the people of Mississippi. The federal programs include the Area Redevelopment Act, the Manpower Development and Training Act, the bureau of the Farmers Home Administration and the Office of Manpower, Automation and Training. You may ask why it is necessary for COFO to be concerned about the administration of federal programs, which are by definition, desegregated and anti-discriminatory. As things now stand the normal channel of information—the state agencies—do not properly present these programs. The State of Mississippi is not reconciled to the desegregated nature of these programs, so Negroes are not allowed to participate. Because of this, private agencies, such as COFO, must act as liaison between the federal program and the people they are designed to help.

*The Literacy Project* at Tougaloo College is a research project under the direction of John Diebold and Associates Company, and is financed by an anonymous grant to the college. The goal of the project is to write self-instructional materials which will teach adult illiterates in lower social and economic groups to read and write.

*The Work-Study Project* is an attempt to solve the pressing staff problems in Southern movement—the conflict between full-time civil rights work and school for the college age worker. Under the work-study program, students spend a year in full-time field work for SNCC, under the direction of COFO field staff, and with special academic work designed to complement their field work and keep them familiar with learning and intellectual discipline. After this year of field work, they get a full scholarship to Tougaloo College for one year.

*Food, Clothing, and Shelter Programs* is a privately financed distribution program of the necessities of life for persons whose needs are so basic that they cannot feed their families one meal a day per person. This welfare services aspect of COFO grew partly out of a need to provide for families who are leaving the plantations sometimes because of automation and sometimes because of their activities in voter registration projects, particularly in the Delta.

The food intake of most poor rural Mississippians is at some times sufficient. These times are usually (1) when they receive government commodities, (2) when the tenant or low-income farmer receives money from his cotton and other minor crops, usually in early and mid-fall, and (3) when landlords give credit to tenant families usually from late March to July. The rest of the time the poor rural families and the unemployed often go hungry.

The clothing situation of both the urban and rural poor is desperate. But the problem is not as difficult in summer months, when the weather is warm, as it is in winter, when the children must have warm clothes to go to school.

Many people in the deep South live in housing unfit for human habitation. In Mississippi over 50 percent of the rural occupied farm housing is classified as deteriorating or dilapidated. More than 50 percent of the rural homes in Mississippi have no piped water and more than 75 percent have no flush toilets, bathtubs or showers. COFO hopes to begin a program of home repair workshops and volunteer youth corps assisting people to repair their homes, all working out of a community center.

*The Community Centers* is to be a network of community centers across the state. It is conceived as a long-range institution. The centers will provide a structure for a sweeping range of recreational and educational programs.

In doing this, they will not only serve basic needs of Negro communities now ignored by the state's political structure, but will form a dynamic focus for the development of community organization.

QUESTION: How did COFO get started?

ANSWER: COFO has evolved through three phases in its short history. The first phase of the organization was little more than an ad hoc committee called together after the Freedom Rides of 1961 in an effort to have a meeting with Governor Ross Barnett. This committee of Mississippi civil rights leaders proved a convenient vehicle for channeling the voter registration program of the Voter Education Project, a part of the Southern Regional Council, into Mississippi.

With the funds of the Voter Education Project, COFO went into a second phase. In this period, beginning in February 1962, COFO became an umbrella for voter registration drives in the Mississippi Delta and other isolated cities in Mississippi. At this time COFO added a small full-time staff, mostly SNCC and a few CORE workers, and developed a voter registration program. The staff worked with local NAACP leaders and SCLC citizenship teachers in an effort to give the Mississippi Negroes the broadest possible support. COFO continued essentially as a committee with a staff and a program until the fall of 1963.

The emergence of the Ruleville Citizenship Group, and the Holmes County Voters League, testified to the possibility of starting strong local groups. It was felt that COFO could be the organization through which horizontal ties could develop among these groups, with the strongest common denominator possible within the general aims of the Civil Rights Movement. Every effort was made during this time to cut across county and organizational lines and have people from different areas meet with each other, to sponsor county, regional, and state-wide meetings, to bring students together from different parts of the state for workshops, to help and send groups outside of the state to meetings, conferences, workshops, and SCLC citizenship schools. During this second phase we began to feel more and more that the Committee could be based in a network of local adult groups sprung from the Movement as we worked the state.

The third phase representing the present functioning of the organization began in the fall of 1963 with the Freedom Vote for Governor. This marked the first state-wide effort and coincided with the establishment of a state-wide office in Jackson and a trunk line to reach into the Mississippi Delta and hill country. The staff has broadened to include more CORE and SNCC workers and more citizenship schools.

Plans for the fourth phase of the organization would include a budget or funds for program and staff on a long term basis, worked out with the major civil rights organizations and individuals across the country. The aim would be to organize every Negro community in Mississippi to train local people to help lead Mississippi through the next difficult years of transition.

## II. Mrs. Hamer's Campaign For Congress

(2nd Congressional District)

QUESTION: Who is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer?

ANSWER: Mrs. Hamer is one of the four candidates running for political office this summer in Mississippi. She is challenging Mr. Jamie Whitten for the seat of U.S. Representative in the Second Congressional District. Mr. Whitten is a powerful man in the House of Representatives, holding the position of Chairman of the House Appropriations Sub-Committee on Agriculture. Since the Second Congressional District is the heart of the cotton-growing Delta, where Negroes outnumber whites in most of the counties, what Mr. Whitten does as chairman of this committee has direct bearing on both Negro and white populations. So far, Mr. Whitten's actions have reflected a decidedly racist bias—so that he is not representing *all* the people of the Second Congressional District, but those white landholders who control the majority of the wealth in the Delta.

One of the most blatant example of this bias on Mr. Whitten's part was a bill before the Sub-Committee on Agriculture to train 2400 hundred men to drive tractors. The bill was killed. Why kill a bill which obviously would benefit the state by attacking the problems of automation? The answer becomes clear when we realize that (1) under the Manpower Retraining Act, all projects must be integrated. (2) The majority of those to be trained were Negro (600 whites.)

QUESTION: Why is Mrs. Hamer running for office?

ANSWER: Mrs. Hamer is the mother of several children and besides that, a woman, which is very unusual for Mississippi politics. It is certainly partially because she is a mother and concerned about the future of her children that she is running. However the real answer to this question can only be found in Mrs. Hammer's history and the experiences she has had as a native Mississippian. Mrs. Hammer, who is forty-seven, comes from Ruleville, Mississippi, in Sunflower County. This is cotton growing country—large plantations (of sometimes hundreds and thousands of acres of land), small towns, the Company Store, the sheriff whose job it is to “control the niggers” and not see the bootleg whiskey being sold—the home of Senator James O. Eastland.

Until 1962, the Hamers had lived for sixteen years on a plantation four miles from Ruleville. On August 31, 1962, Mrs. Hamer tried to register to vote—the same day she and her husband were told they would have to leave the plantation immediately by the owner. His comment to Mrs. Hamer was, “What are you trying to do to me.” A Negro does not act independently of his “Owner.” This revealing comment illustrates how inextricably the Negroes' destiny has been linked to the land and its owner. A system from which all the legal restrictions of slavery have been removed but which has remained frozen in place. It is only now changing because of the forces of change all around it. Mrs. Hamer's action represents the new attitude of emancipation on the part of the Negro, an attitude which has come slowly to the feudal-like system of the Delta, where the symbiotic relationship of white and black has perhaps been more intense than anywhere else. The slowness with which change has come to the Delta is in direct relationship to the amount of opposition expressed by the white people there. Mrs. Hamer began working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in December, 1962, and has been one of the most active workers in the state on Voter Registration. Because of her activities she has received much abuse from white people in the Ruleville community—people shoot into her home, threaten her

life. In 1963, she was arrested in Winona, Mississippi, held in jail overnight for no reason and severely beaten with a blackjack. She still suffers from this incident.

Mrs. Hamer feels very strongly that Negroes are not being represented in either state or national government and this forms the basis for her willingness to run for office even in the face of tremendous dangers to herself personally. Mrs. Hamer tells her audiences that she is only saying "what you have been thinking all along." But Mrs. Hamer plans to direct her campaign to whites as well as Negroes. It is her feeling that all Mississippians, white and Negro alike, are victims of the all-white, one-party power structure of the state. The major emphasis of Mrs. Hamer's campaign however, will be voting rights for the Negro. Her platform, like that of the other three candidates, includes a discussion of issues that reach beyond the problems within the state of poverty, automation, education, and equal representation and touches on national domestic issues as well as international policy.

It is a comment on the conservative reaction that the state has shown in the past ten years, that Representative Frank Smith was defeated in the 1962 elections. Although not outspokenly liberal about voting rights for the Negro, Smith was concerned for all the people of the Delta and has some idea of the problems the region faces in the future as automation takes away the jobs of many people. Recently he made a statement in support of the Civil Rights bill now before the Congress. The two or three rational men of some vision in the Mississippi Legislature have all been voted out of office in the last four years. It is necessary that Mrs. Hamer and people like her come forward to fill this gap.

QUESTION: How will Mrs. Hamer conduct her campaign?

ANSWER: Mrs. Hamer is entered in the regular Democratic primary in Mississippi to be held June 2, 1964. She is running on what is to be called the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY. If defeated in the Democratic party, she will be able to continue her campaign as an Independent in the General Election.

QUESTION: Has she any chance of winning? If not, why challenge?

ANSWER: The chances of Mrs. Hamer actually becoming the Representative to the House at this time are of course almost impossible. But since the campaign, as well as the campaigns of the other three candidates, has a two-fold purpose—the chances of winning the goals they seek are very good. One of the purposes is to encourage Negroes not now registered to vote to register by means of the "Freedom Registration" to be conducted this summer. The second purpose is to let the State of Mississippi and the nation become aware that change is taking place in Mississippi and that the rights of the Negro must be realized, if Democracy is to work in a state like Mississippi.

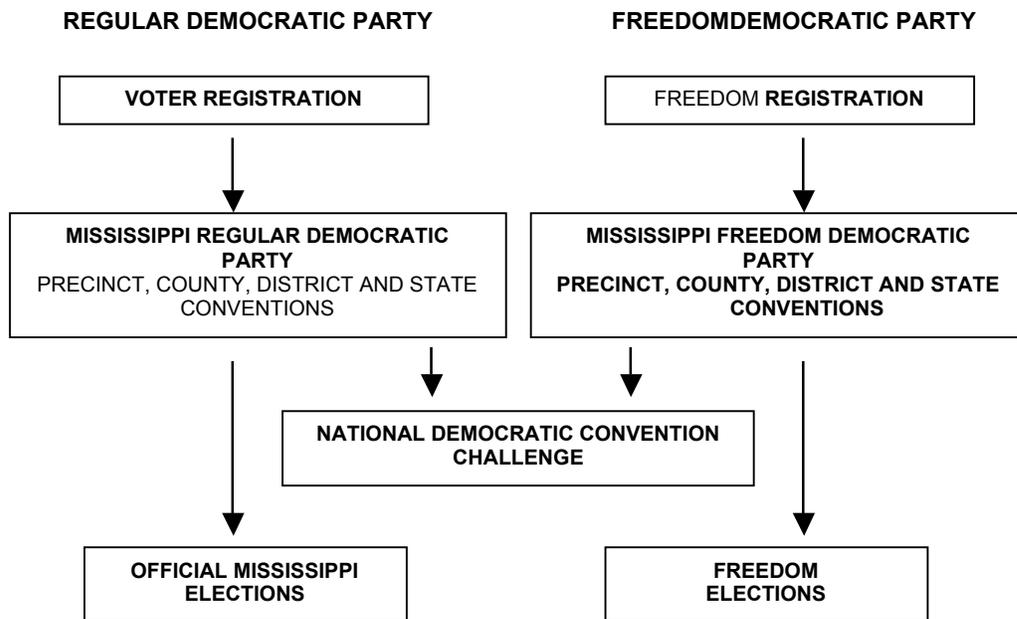
### III. Other Aspects of the COFO Political Program for the Summer

QUESTION: How will the Democratic Convention be challenged?

ANSWER: The focus of political activity during the spring and summer will be an attempt to unseat the regular Mississippi Delegation to the National Democratic Convention at Atlantic City, New Jersey, in August of this year.

Mississippi does not allow many people, particularly Negroes, to participate in political affairs in meaningful numbers. For this reason COFO claims that the Mississippi delegation to the Convention does not represent all the people of Mississippi and should not be seated. An attempt

is being made to contact delegations from other states to have them vote against seating the regular Mississippi delegation. It is not known whether this challenge will be successful. Two groups of delegates will attempt to be seated at the convention—the regular Democratic delegation and the so-called Freedom Democratic Delegation. This means that COFO is organizing (1) those people who are now registered voters in Mississippi and (2) those who have tried to register and have not been allowed to vote. From each of these groups a delegation will be chosen to go to the National Convention.



Note: Any registered voter can take part in both columns

Regular Democratic Party—The Democratic Party in Mississippi every four years holds a series of conventions to select delegates to the National Democratic National Convention. The conventions are held in years of a national election; 1964 is such a year.

COFO’s plan is for as many Negro registered voters to attempt to attend precinct meetings as possible and, if allowed to participate, to use their influence to get Negro representatives elected to attend the County Conventions. In other words, the attempt will be to have Negroes participating in the regularly prescribed manner in every stage of the political process from precinct meeting, to County convention, district convention and state convention. The possibilities of Negroes actually being allowed to participate is slim but it is important that the effort be made to go through the normal channels as an educational process for Negroes who have never had the opportunity of doing it before and also as an indication of serious intent to the white political structure.

Freedom Democratic Party—Because the state officials have refused to register so many people in Mississippi, COFO is running a parallel registration procedure called Freedom Registration. Freedom Registration will take place under a Freedom Registrar—one in each of the counties in the state. The Freedom Registration is a simplified registration form with no literacy or interpretative requirements. Any U.S. citizen who is a resident of Mississippi can be Freedom registered. The anticipated goal for Freedom Registration is 300,000 to 400,000 people.

It is these two delegations—from the regular Democratic Party and from the Freedom Democratic Party—which will attempt to be seated as the delegates to the National Democratic Convention. The challenge of the Freedom Democratic Party at the National Convention is one attempt to win truly representative government for all the people in Mississippi.

In addition to the campaign being conducted by Mrs. Hamer in the Second congressional district, there are three other Freedom Candidates. They are Mr. James M. Houston of Vicksburg, Representative of the Third Congressional District; Reverend Jone E. Cameron of Hattiesburg, Fifth Congressional District and Mrs. Victoria Jo Gray of Hattiesburg, Senate against Senator John Stennis.

The Freedom Candidates are running on generally the same platform. The platform was drawn up by the COFO Convention. Each of the candidates, of course, will vary in terms of the issues they discuss in the campaign. The platform drawn up by COFO touches on issues of foreign aid and domestic policy as well as local problems. On the issues of disarmament, the United Nations, foreign aid, the platform emphasizes our working directly for a peaceful world by urging further steps toward curtailing bomb testing. It recognizes that only through responsible involvement in the U.N. and foreign aid programs can the U.S. contribute to a peaceful world. It strongly urges passage of the Civil Rights bill *now*. On domestic issues at the National level it urges and supports the anti-poverty program of President Johnson, recognizing that poverty is one of America's most pressing problems. In addition, it supports medicare, federal supported education programs, particularly job retraining programs; further development of the nation's poverty-stricken rural areas; urban renewal programs in Mississippi, which have been curtailed by the Mississippi House of Representatives during this session of the Legislature.

In the November elections this fall all Freedom registered voters and regularly registered voters will be eligible to vote in the Freedom election. This election will have a ballot which will include Freedom candidates as well as the regular candidates. The election will again show that people wishing to take part in Mississippi political affairs are prevented from doing so by existing restrictions.

The COFO political program is designed to fill two roles:

1. Challenge the existing political structure in Mississippi and show how it discriminates against the Negro.
2. Educate the Negro politically; get the Negro thinking about specific ways of acting to improve Mississippi and his position in the state and to train people for future positions of leadership in the state.

#### IV. Voting in Mississippi

QUESTION: How is the Democratic Party organized in the State?

ANSWER: The precinct is the smallest political unit. It is usually a part of a supervisor's district (called a "beat"). Each county has five beats. Since there are usually two or three precincts to a supervisor's district, there are at least ten to fifteen precincts in a county. Some counties have many more precincts, other counties have fewer precincts. There are about 1800 precincts in the state.

The precinct convention is the only convention open to all voters in an area. These conventions are usually poorly attended. This is an indication of the apathy on the part of voters in the state—apathy which allows a frightening amount of power to be in the hands of a very few men who make most of the decisions. Negroes, since Reconstruction, have not been a part of this process at all, even those who are registered to vote. At the precinct convention delegates to the

county convention are chosen. The number of delegates is decided earlier by the County Democratic Executive Committee; usually from one to six delegates are chosen. Usually there are alternate delegates, thus doubling the size of the delegation. The precinct convention is run by majority vote and by rules decided by majority vote.

COFO challenged the precinct meetings in about fifteen or twenty precincts by having both registered and unregistered Negroes attempt to attend the meetings. This is to form the basis for the national challenge and therefore is most important. After the challenge, the duplicate Freedom Democratic precinct meetings were held to parallel the Democratic meetings.

The county convention meets at least one week after the precinct conventions and is attended by elected delegates from the precincts of the eighty-two counties of the state. The county convention selects delegates to the district and state conventions. Each county elects delegates equal to twice the number of representatives that county has in the Mississippi House of Representatives. Many times, each vote is split in half, so twice as many delegates are elected, and an alternate is then elected for each half-vote delegate. The county convention also elects the County Democratic Executive Committee, which has fifteen members. This committee appoints poll watchers, counts votes, and is the county political body.

The district conventions are held at least a week after the county conventions. There are five district conventions—one for each Congressional district. At the district convention six delegates, each with half a vote, are chosen to go to the National Democratic Convention. Three alternate delegates are also chosen. The National Democratic Convention is where the selection of the Democratic candidate for President is made. Three members of the State Democratic Executive Committee are chosen at the convention. One candidate for Democratic Presidential elector is chosen.

At the state convention, held at least a week after the last of the district conventions, the rest of the delegates to the National Convention are chosen. Mississippi has twenty-four votes at the National Democratic Convention. The state convention also elects the National Democratic Committeeman and the National Democratic Committeewoman. These two people sit on the Democratic national Committee; this is the committee in charge of policy for the state between conventions. The State Democratic Executive Committee is the policy body for the Democratic Party throughout the state.

Since traditionally there has not been a strong Republican Party in the state, the Primary for all practical purposes indicates the results of the election. Until the 1963 Gubernatorial election, when a Republican for the first time really offered opposition, people tended to vote in the Primary and not in the general election. This monolithic structure has offered very little atmosphere for real debate. There is some hope that the favorable showing of the Republicans (even though Goldwater conservative in nature) will offer at least an interchange of ideas for the future.

QUESTION: Who votes in Mississippi?

ANSWER: There are no statistics available on whites registered to vote. Even the information available on Negro voting is incomplete since it comes from only sixty-nine of the eighty-two counties in the state. In these counties Negroes constitute 37.7 percent of the adult population but only 6.2 percent are registered to vote. In thirteen of the sixty-nine counties there are no registered Negro voters.

It is no accident that information on voting is hard to obtain or that only 25,000 Negroes are registered. As anywhere else, part of the problem is apathy. But in Mississippi even apathy is

different. It is born not so much of disinterest as a feeling of utter frustration and futility passed from generation to generation.

For instance in Holmes County where Negroes are three fourths of the population, there are no Negro voters. Two or three have been trying to register every day since July, 1963. The registrar has said flatly that he will allow Negroes to take the test but he has no intention of passing them. It is this kind of frustration which the Negro is faced with for even attempting to exercise the most basic of democratic rights in Mississippi.

QUESTION: What are the proofs of discrimination in voting?

ANSWER: The whole pattern of voting requirements and of the registration form is calculated to make the process appear to the voter to be hopeless. The process is a complicated one which culminates in the would-be voter's name being published in the paper. Why publish a prospective voter's name in the paper—like announcing his marriage or the birth of a child? The major purpose is to overwhelm the voter so that he is afraid to even attempt to register. Behind this approach is supposed to be—and all too often is—a collection of fears that someone will challenge a voter's moral character, that he may be prosecuted for perjury. This not an altogether unfounded fear as illustrated by the fact that one man who attempted to register was accused of being morally unfit to be a voter because he and his wife were not legally married but had been living in a common-law relationship for over twenty years. In addition, publishing a prospective voter's name announces his intention to his employer, landlord and anyone else who might retaliate with violence.

It is difficult to prove, on the face of it, that the voting laws in Mississippi are purposefully discriminatory, since they apply equally to white and black. However it is by comparison with other states—particularly those outside the deep South—that the whole procedure becomes suspect. It is much less difficult to see how discrimination works at the level of the individual Negro who attempts to register. There are many evidences of brutality, economic and physical retaliation. An illustration of physical retaliation is the case of the three Negro men who went to Rankin County Courthouse to register. As one man was filling in the form, the County Sheriff came in and began questioning him. When the man told him he was registering to vote, the sheriff began beating him on the head with a blackjack and forced him out of the office. This was the result of individuals deciding on their own to register—not a planned registration campaign which had aroused feelings against Negroes.

We do have clear evidence, however, that the *intent* of the voting laws passed by the legislature in 1955 and 1962 was discrimination against Negro voters. Public officials at the time carefully avoided making statements which could be used in court actions as proof of intention to discriminate. However, Governor White stated in 1954 that the constitutional amendments proposed (and passed in 1955) would “tend to maintain segregation.” In 1962 a representative urged the legislators not to take up unnecessary questions regarding the legislation in public. So there was no real debate on the floor of the house. In recent times this policy has been strictly adhered to on any legislation affecting race in the state legislature. The comments of a legislator, who was very conscious of the power of the Citizens Council, give us an indication of how restricted the lawmakers are to differ:

It's hard for us sometimes to consider a bill on its merits if there is any way Bill Simmons (executive secretary of the Citizens Council) can attach an integration tag. For instance, a resolution was introduced in the House to urge a boycott of Memphis stores because some of

them have desegregated. I knew it was ridiculous and would merely amuse North Mississippians who habitually shop in Memphis. The resolution came in the same week that four Negroes were fined in court for boycotting Clarksdale stores. Yet the hot eyes of Bill Simmons were watching. If we vote against the resolution he would have branded us. So there we were, approving a boycott while a Mississippi court was convicting Negroes for doing what we lawmakers were advocating. It just didn't make sense.

In October, 1954, the Jackson *Daily News* editorialized on statements made by Robert Patterson, Head of the Citizens Council, about the legislation. The headline read, "The amendment is intended solely to limit Negro registration." The *Jackson Times* (a now defunct newspaper) reported, "This proposed amendment is not aimed at keeping white people from voting, no matter how morally corrupt they may be. It is an ill-disguised attempt to keep qualified Negroes from voting; and as such, it should not have the support of the people of Mississippi." This advice was not heeded, however, and the legislation was passed.

The registration form itself is not too difficult in terms of its demands on the person's literacy. There are, however, numerous factual questions which the registrant must answer, such as his precinct. The attempt to make the application appear difficult begins with its title "SWORN Written Application for Registration." There are included a series of potentially confusing questions, which ask about the registrant's occupation, business and employment. The numerous small questions which make up this part of the form are obviously not all necessary and could be answered by fewer questions. Then why have them? Because they provide more opportunity for error on the part of the person registering.

The voter test is an exam in which the registrant must be able to write and interpret a section of the Mississippi Constitution. A Yale law graduate states that "there are some 285 sections of the state constitution, and the document is one of the most complex and confusing in the nation." The examiner points to a section and tells the applicant to copy and interpret it. On the tester's cognizance, you pass or fail. He has absolute power. His decision is not reviewable, and there are no standards by which it can be judged in court.

The above information gives us the background of discrimination in voting in the state and some specifics of how the Registrar misuses the registration form to keep Negroes from voting. There are, however other proofs of discrimination—incident after incident of people who have been turned away from the Circuit Clerk's office without being allowed to register; people who have been shot at, lost their jobs or otherwise have been intimidated for attempting to vote. It has always been made clear to the Negro by his white employer, landlord, or acquaintance that he is not to attempt to vote—this is the most present kind of proof of discrimination.

QUESTION: Why isn't the Negro allowed to vote? What does the white man fear?

ANSWER: In Mississippi, where the Negro represents 42 percent of the population, perhaps the numerical reason is the most overpowering answer as to why the Negro is not allowed to vote and why the white man is so afraid. The intensity of white reaction is in direct proportion to the numbers of Negroes in a given county or area. For instance, in the gulf counties and the extreme northern hill counties where there is not as large a percentage of Negroes, opposition by whites to voting is less violent. While in the Delta counties, southern counties and the river counties, with a few exceptions, opposition is sudden, violent and explosive when Negroes attempt to register to vote in large numbers or individually. It is often the individual Negro who deviates from "his place" which frightens the white man the most. What was known and safe suddenly becomes

unknown and uncontrollable. Retaliation to individuals is often death, as in the case of Herbert Lee in Amite County. Mr. Lee tried to register and encouraged others to register—for this he was shot down by a state legislator. When Negroes register in large numbers because of a voter drive, the white man can blame “outsiders” and “agitators” for stirring up things.

In essence, then, the reasons Negroes are not allowed to vote and the things the white man fears are inextricably part of the same cloth. The white man fears a “Negro take-over”—block voting. Negroes controlling the state—these are the surface things. Underneath this are the sometimes conscious and sometimes unconscious fears about himself—the guilt for an enslaving system which makes a man less than human because of the color of his skin. All of this gets translated into myths about the Negroes’ inferiority, dirtiness, ignorance, violence. These myths in turn justify the system. For those people who can see beyond the myths, who either for moral or economic reasons would like to see the segregated pattern of southern life change, there is the White Citizens Council. The Council has a great deal of control of the political structure but even more than that is a “big brother” looking over the shoulder of anyone who wants to step out of line.

Perhaps some quotations from Council literature can say it better. “If the Negro was permitted to obtain the ballot . . . it would mean that no qualified white man . . . could ever hold public office (and) seats now held by competent white representatives would be held by ignorant, incompetent Negroes.” “There is a vast gulf between the IQ of the Negro . . . and the average white man because of an inherent deficiency in mental ability, psychological and temperamental inadequacies, of indifference and natural indolence on the part of Negro.”; “If segregation breaks down, the social structure breaks down. . . . The Communists hope to achieve disintegration through integration America”; “Integration represents darkness, regimentation, totalitarianism, communism and destruction. . . . Segregation represents the freedom to choose one’s associates, Americanism, state sovereignty and the survival of the white race”; “The enemy cloaked in the mysterious name of ‘integration’ is hysterically assaulting the natural order, the created order in nature, the legal order under God, and above all else, the free grace of Jesus Christ.”

QUESTION: What steps have been taken to give the Negroes the vote?

ANSWER: The first concerted effort to get Negroes registered in Mississippi began in 1961 when Bob Moses, moving into Greenwood, Mississippi, started a program to educate and encourage local people to participate in political activity. This project was sponsored by the Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council. As has already been discussed, the beginning of COFO came from this effort. The focus of COFO has been largely on political action. Because obtaining the individual’s right to vote is the key to full participation in the democratic process through which hopefully a deeper kind of change can come. Until 1963 much time was spent simply in becoming known in local communities and establishing the basis of a political organization which could act with united effort. The past year has seen several new attempts at education and mass registration.

The Mock Campaign for Governor was one such attempt. By focusing on the Campaign with Freedom Candidates, COFO was able to garner 80-90,000 votes and in the process educate this many people to the process of voting and the importance of political participation.

Freedom Days have also been planned in several communities this past spring. Most notable are the ones in Hattiesburg and Canton, Mississippi. These are voter drives sponsored by COFO to get as many people in the community as possible registered to vote. In both places a day or several days were set to get as many people as possible to go down to register. It was necessary to

picket the courthouse in both Canton and Hattiesburg because of the obvious policy of discrimination on the part of the Registrar. In Canton only two or three people a day have been allowed to take the test at all. Picketing has been allowed by the local officials, which in itself is an innovation in Mississippi, where people have never been allowed to picket over five minutes without being arrested. The National Council of Churches has cooperated in this project by sending teams of northern ministers to each city to act as observers and to be in a negotiating role with city officials and sympathetic whites. This has tended to keep down the violence but has not stopped arrests altogether.

QUESTION: How successful have the Freedom Days been?

ANSWER: They have not been successful in terms of numbers. For instance in Hattiesburg of about 500 attempts to register, about 150 people have actually been registered (and here the registrar is under federal court order not to discriminate). Other federal suits are being filed against Registrars to try to get them disqualified. This kind of counter-action may in time prove so harassing to local registrars that they will improve, but is a lengthy and expensive process. Since 1961, out of about 70,000 people who have been reached by civil rights groups, only 6,000 to 7,000 have actually attempted to register and only 10 percent of that number have actually gotten registered. This is very little success for a lot of time and effort spent. But to understand the goals COFO is trying to reach, we must look at things other than numbers. The amount of education and political awareness among Negroes has been incalculable. The feeling that at last there is something they as individuals can do to better themselves and their lot in Mississippi has been created. Once this spirit has been aroused, change *has already begun to take place*. In a real sense, the Freedom School is attempting to spread this spirit to students, who can gain from this a new sense of their own identity and importance as people. The second thing that has been accomplished is that the white Mississippian can no longer believe the myth that the Negro is “happy”; he is too aware there is change in the air. This means that one segment of the white population is becoming resigned to change; another is beginning to feel it can do what it has wanted to do all along—help bring about change; and the other feels backed into a corner and is becoming vicious. The third aspect of the effects of political activity is that the rest of the nation has before it constantly the stark reality of the disenfranchised Negro in Mississippi. It makes it a little more difficult for James O. Eastland in Washington to talk about “gradual change” and States Rights as an excuse for segregation, when Negroes are being denied their basic right of the vote in Mississippi.

#### V. Historical Development of White, One-Party Politics

QUESTION: What role did Reconstruction play?

The striking parallel between people and events of the 1850’s and the 1950’s reminds us that Mississippi has been on the defensive against inevitable social change for more than a century and that for some years before the Civil War it had developed a closed society with an orthodoxy accepted by nearly everyone in the state. The all pervading doctrine then and now has been white supremacy.

Dr. James Silver  
*Mississippi-The Closed Society*

ANSWER: Dr. Silver, History Professor at the University of Mississippi, points out a truth that far too few people are aware of or want to recognize. And that is that the south has always, for all practical purposes gone its own way, politically and otherwise. People from outside the Southern states have always been prone to view the “Old South” as a more backward section of the United States—but very definitely a part of the same heritage. It would be a mistake to say that slavery had its influence on the politics of Mississippi but so did the influx of immigrants to New England. This is to reduce the problem to the too-simple answer of sectional politics.

The white Southerner if asked to explain his “way of life” to the outside often harks back to Reconstruction to answer for the South’s sectionalism, one-party politics, and segregation. It is as much a mistake to take this answer at face value as it is to see the white southerner only as a bigot and a racist. There is no doubt that Reconstruction was a difficult time for both the white southerner whose rights, temporarily, had been suspended and for the newly freed slave, who had to adjust himself to freedom. The aftermath of war is the price that must be paid for waging war. C. Van Woodward in *Reunion and Reaction* points out that the South had by 1877 regained control of its own destiny and proceeded between then and 1890 to reestablish segregation by means of enacting segregation laws and making the new battle cry “states rights.” An important element of this control was keeping the Negro from voting.

He further states that democracy in America had always operated through compromise. The period of the Civil War and Reconstruction represent the only time when principle became the prime motivation for political action. For the ten years following the end of the war the South remained true to its principles and so did the North. However, with the secret compromise of 1877 between southern politicians and northern Republicans, the pattern of compromise and political expediency was re-established. This compromise represents the beginning of the coalition between the South and those northern Republicans who espouse the causes of states rights and business interests. It is this coalition which, in part, make the South the powerful force it is in the legislature.

The compromise of 1877 over the election of Hayes and Tilden essentially was that the South would allow Hayes to win the election in exchange for the three remaining states then under federal occupation being returned to local control. Prior to the Civil War the South had been as divided in political loyalty as other sections of the country. It was after the war that the Southern Whigs, unable to tolerate the Northern wing of party because of their concern with equal rights for Negroes, resignedly settled into the Democratic Party. Many of these so-called conservative Democrats still basically held the same views that led them to vote for Henry Clay’s nationalistic and capitalistic protective tariff and national bank.

After this party shift, Woodward says, “a thick miasma settled down over the political scene in the South. Under the fog of the one-party system, one white man was virtually indistinguishable from another in his politics.”

QUESTION: Who controls the vote?

ANSWER: Most obviously, white people control the vote, leaving the Negro without representation, except as they see fit to represent him. However, traditionally the one-party system has continued based on a lack of dialogue. This control has had to be tight and monolithic. Ralph McGill talks about the “small town rich man” as the source of political as well as economic power in the small towns of the rural South. This is not just the plantation owner of the cotton growing area, but the man in each small town who owns the gin and the main store, the cotton warehouse, the lumber mill. He lives in the largest house in the town, has his finger in everything

that goes on in the town and rules with an iron hand. He makes a contribution at campaign time and always to the right man, and if in doubt, to both candidates. He has a hand in political patronage in his county.

Since the time of the depression in the 1930's this pattern has been gradually changing. It has remained longest perhaps in Mississippi, where change has come slowest and most painfully. This kind of small town demagogue can still be found in Mississippi but his influence in being displaced by industrial interests and as the state's economy becomes more diversified.

QUESTION: Why hasn't the Republican Party been stronger?

ANSWER: It has been to the advantage of the deep South to remain monolithic. It has been able to have more influence this way, at a national level. On the whole, few people have participated in politics and most have been willing to let a few people make the decisions for them. However, in the recent Gubernatorial campaign, for the first time, the Republican Party made a strong showing. Not nearly enough to win the election, only 34 percent of the vote. But this represents a crack in the wall of the one-party system. The legislation before the Mississippi legislature indicates how threatening this showing was to the political power structure in the state. The legislation, if passed, would virtually outlaw the Republican Party in the state. In an analysis of the election returns, Dr. Gordon Henderson of Millsaps College, stated that the majority of the Republican voters seemed to be urban, young, educated, and of the middle class. Their political views seemed to be conservative. And indeed the Republican candidate offered little hope to the Negroes of Mississippi. What it does offer is a chance for dialogue. However, there is hope for the future, if a two party system does develop, the Negro's vote will certainly be in demand.

QUESTION: What changes will occur in the state when Negroes can vote?

ANSWER: Most important, it will give the Negro a chance to voice his opinion in how his children should be educated, how his town is to be run, in short to decide for himself those things which in the past have either been neglected or done for him. In terms of what changes will occur on the state scene. When Negroes have the opportunity to use their vote, it is likely to have a liberalizing influence. Many kinds of social legislation, which have previously been defeated or kept out of the state, such as federal job retraining programs, urban renewal projects, stronger welfare policy, etc. will have a chance of being passed. It means an opportunity for Negroes to hold public office and to begin to work at other than menial tasks.

Certainly, obtaining the vote alone is not going to create the "good society" in Mississippi. There has to also be a beginning of understanding and acceptance of each other, if the Negro is to obtain his human as well as his civil rights. In the long run one is useless without the other. But obtaining the vote has the potential for unlocking a number of doors that have been closed to the Negro in Mississippi and is absolutely essential if a democratic form of government is to work in the state.

## LESSON PLANS FOR THE UNIT ON MISSISSIPPI POLITICS

## INTRODUCTION

The lesson plans are organized to be a combination of lecture and discussion, with a great deal of freedom given students to discuss his own ideas and pursue topics of interest to the class. For instance the sections dealing with party organization and historical aspects of the one-party system might be presented in lecture form with discussion afterward. Then hopefully, this factual material will be brought into the discussion in other places. Each of the lectures will be organized around one or more concepts that the student should be presented with through the material. Case studies, visual materials and in some cases field trips may be used to illustrate points discussed.

This is to be a general outline only. It is hoped that the teacher will be flexible enough to adapt the material to his own background and experience. There are excerpts from some of the bibliographical material used in reparation of the background which have been duplicated for the use of the teacher. It may be useful in providing illustrations for some of the points of discussion.

The lesson plan material is not divided into specific periods, i.e., it is topically arranged with questions and illustrative material suggested at appropriate places. The teacher may use the plans in any way which seems best to suit the students interests. The arrangement does follow a natural train of development.

## MATERIALS TO BE USED AS TEACHING AIDS

Campaign literature on Mrs. Hamer (to be passed out to all students)

Voter Registration forms—regular forms (to be passed out to all students)

Freedom Registration forms (to be passed out to all students)

Sample Sections of the Mississippi Constitution (to be passed out to all students)

Pamphlet, “Why Vote—the ABC’s of Citizenship” (to be passed out to all students)

Film—“We’ll Never Turn Back”, on Greenwood Voter Project

Tapes of Mrs. Hamer conducting campaign and singing—obtainable from COFO office, 1017 Lynch St., Jackson, Miss.

Two sections of “Behind the Cotton Curtain” by Charles Remsberg on the Republican Party, and retaliation to the white community.

Report on the Greenwood Voter Project, printed in a larger report by The Southern Regional Council.

SNCC research staff, “Voter Registration Laws in Miss.”

- TOPIC: Mrs. Hamer’s Campaign and the organization of Mississippi Political System.
- CONCEPTS: (1) Importance of individual participation in politics and  
(2) Fundamentals of political organization at local, state and national level.
- PRESENTATION: Mrs. Hamer’s story and the facts about her campaign  
DISCUSSION: Discussion should center around why Mrs. Hamer is running. If the students have heard her speak they might discuss what her platform is and what they think of it. How does she differ from her opponent? Why is her campaign unusual?

Use Campaign lit. on Mrs. Hamer.

**PRESENTATION:** Process of how someone runs for office—how will Mrs. Hamer be different? Present Democratic Party Organization in state.

**DISCUSSION:**

Play tapes of Mrs. Hamer's speeches and singing

**PRESENTATION:** Other ways that an individual can take part in politics other than voting or running for office. Present other political programs of COFO such as Freedom Registration Freedom Vote—ways of working for these programs for the students.

Pass out S.C.L.C. Pamphlet "Why Vote"

**DISCUSSION:**

**REVIEW:**

**TOPIC:** COFO Programs and discrimination in voting.

**CONCEPTS:** (1) How discrimination works and  
(2) what is being done about it.

**PRESENTATION:** Voter Registration Campaigns—Freedom Days in Hattiesburg and Canton. Could use here the material on the Greenwood Project as a case study.

**DISCUSSION:** Discussion should center around why Mrs. Hamer is running? If the students have heard her speak they might discuss what her platform is and what they think of it.

Film: "We'll Never Turn Back"

**PRESENTATION:** Voter requirements in Mississippi—how this works to discriminate against the Negro. Specifics of how the registration form is filled out.

Use here the regular and Freedom reg. forms to illustrate differences.

**DISCUSSION:**

Regular and Freedom Registration Forms

**PRESENTATION:** All aspects of COFO's Political Program, as a means of obtaining the vote for Negroes in Miss.

**DISCUSSION:**

If students have not already had experience canvassing, a field trip might be arranged in which the students and teacher would canvass for an afternoon or evening in order to use the knowledge they had gained about the registration process and also to give them a sense of participation.

If a trip is not feasible, the teacher should encourage students to participate in this way.

**TOPIC:** Historical Aspects of Discrimination and the Future.

**CONCEPTS:** (1) why discrimination exists  
(2) What political freedom can mean.

**PRESENTATION:** One party system, how it developed and why.

**DISCUSSION:**

**PRESENTATION:** The effects of the one-party system. Citizens Council—untrue myths about Negroes—psychological effects on Negro and white. You could

use here the excerpts from “Behind the Cotton Curtain” on Republican Party and retaliation to whites.

DISCUSSION:

PRESENTATION:

How the vote can change the lives of people in Miss., what it cannot do that has to be done in other ways.

DISCUSSION:

REVIEW:

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- <sup>1</sup> Charles Cobb, "Organizing the Freedom Schools," in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: An Anthology of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*, Susan Erenrich, editor and developer, Cultural Center for Social Change, Washington, D.C., 1999, 136.
- <sup>2</sup> Ibid., 110.
- <sup>3</sup> Ibid., 136.
- <sup>4</sup> George W. Chilcoat and Jerry A. Ligon, "Theatre as an emancipatory tool: classroom drama in the Mississippi Freedom Schools," in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, (1998, volume 3, number 5), 518.
- <sup>5</sup> Daniel Perlstein, "Teaching Freedom: SNCC and the Creation of the Mississippi Freedom Schools" in *History of Education Quarterly* 30 (Fall 1990), 310.
- <sup>6</sup> Ibid, 312.
- <sup>7</sup> George W. Chilcoat, and Jerry A. Ligon, "'Helping to Make Democracy a Living Reality': The Curriculum Conference of the Mississippi Freedom Schools," in *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision* (XV:1, Fall 1999, 43-68), 58.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid., 59
- <sup>9</sup> Bob Zangrando to Tom Wahman, August 15, 1964. SNCC Papers, Martin Luther King Library and Archives (Sanford NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982; Reel 67, File 337, Page 0640).
- <sup>10</sup> Ibid., 6.
- <sup>11</sup> In this and in many other ways, the Freedom School Curriculum reflected much of the philosophy of John Dewey. Dewey argued that "Organized subject matter . . . does not represent perfection or infallible wisdom; but it is the best at command to further new experiences which may, in some respects at least, surpass the achievements embodied in existing knowledge and works of art. From the standpoint of the educator, in other words, the various studies represent working resources, available capital. Their remoteness from the experience of the young is not, however, seeming; it is real. The subject matter of the learner is not, therefore, it cannot be, identical with the formulated, the crystallized, and systematized subject matter of the adult" (*Democracy and Education*, p. 182, Free Press, 1966, originally published, 1916).
- <sup>12</sup> Staughton Lynd and Harold Bardanelli to Freedom School Teacher, 20 May 1964, SNCC Papers, Martin Luther King Library and Archives (Sanford NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982; Reel 67, File 340, Page 1189).
- <sup>13</sup> George W. Chilcoat and Jerry A. Ligon, "Developing Democratic Citizens: The Mississippi Freedom Schools", in Erenrich, *Constant Struggle*, (edited from "Developing Democratic Citizens: The Mississippi Freedom Schools as a Model for Social Studies Instruction" in *Theory and Research in Social Education*, Spring, 1994, 128-175), 113.
- <sup>14</sup> Howard Zinn, "Freedom Schools," in *The Zinn Reader*, Seven Stories Press, New York, 531.
- <sup>15</sup> Kirsty Powell, *A Report, Mainly on Ruleville Freedom School, Summer Project, 1964*, SNCC, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982) Reel 68, File 367, Page 0582.
- <sup>16</sup> Robert Weisbrodt, *Freedom Bound*, New York, Penguin Books, 1991, 111-112.
- <sup>17</sup> Ibid., 111.
- <sup>18</sup> Staughton Lynd, "Freedom Summer," in *Living Inside Our Hope: A Steadfast Radical's Thoughts on Rebuilding the Movement*, ILR Press, Ithaca, New York, 1997, 33.
- <sup>19</sup> Len Holt, *The Summer that Didn't End: The Story of the Mississippi Civil Rights Project of 1964*, Da Capo Press, New York, 1992, 107.
- <sup>20</sup> John Dewey, in *Democracy and Education* argues that thinking requires that we have an aim in view, that we learn about current and past facts for the purposes of creating ideas that we test in action. "The opposite to thoughtful action are routine and capricious behavior . . . . The latter makes the momentary act a measure of value, and ignores the connections of our personal action with the energies of the environment. It says, virtually, 'things are to be just as I happen to like them and this instant,' as routine says in effect, 'let things continue just as I have found them in the past.' Both refuse to acknowledge responsibility for future consequences which flow from present action. Reflection is the acceptance of such responsibility" (Free Press, New York, 1966, 146).
- <sup>21</sup> Zinn, *Reader*, 534
- <sup>22</sup> From the Introduction to the Citizenship Curriculum

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- <sup>23</sup> *Profiles of Typical Freedom Schools*, COFO memo, Jackson office (nd), SNCC, The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee Papers, 1959-1972 (Sanford, NC: Microfilming Corporation of America, 1982) Reel 68, File 364, Page 0552.
- <sup>24</sup> Staughton Lynd, *Freedomways*, Second Quarter, 1965, 304.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 304.
- <sup>26</sup> George W. Chilcoat and Jerry A. Ligon, "Developing Democratic Citizens: The Mississippi Freedom Schools as a Model for Social Studies Instruction," in *Theory and Research in Social Education* (XXII:2, Spring 1994), 147.
- <sup>27</sup> Len Holt, *Summer*, 108.
- <sup>28</sup> Zinn, *Reader*, 537
- <sup>29</sup> Zinn, *Reader*, 537.
- <sup>30</sup> Chilcoat and Ligon, *Constant Struggle*, 122.
- <sup>31</sup> Chilcoat and Ligon, *Constant Struggle*, 122.
- <sup>32</sup> Chilcoat and Ligon, *Constant Struggle*, 124.
- <sup>33</sup> Zinn, *Reader*, 536.
- <sup>34</sup> Chilcoat and Ligon, *Constant Struggle*, 120.
- <sup>35</sup> Herbert Aptheker, *A Documentary History of the Negro People in the United States*. Vol. 7, New York, Citadel Press, 1993, 282.
- <sup>36</sup> Holt, *Summer*, 110.
- <sup>37</sup> Holt, *Summer*, 109.
- <sup>38</sup> Cobb, *Constant Struggle*, 137.
- <sup>39</sup> Chilcoat and Ligon, *Constant Struggle*, 110.
- <sup>40</sup> Zinn, *Reader*, 539.