

SESSION 2; (note to the teacher: Please ask the participants if they have attended a previous meeting of Freedom School last Tuesday, if they have not then please use lesson 1 for this session. If they have then proceed ~~with~~ this lesson for session 2. We may find that we'll have a different group coming on Tuesdays and Thursdays and in that case we can use one lesson twice.)

TOPICS: Albany, Georgia; Lee County Georgia; and Charlie Wingfield. Sources: Student NonViolent Coordinating Comm. reports.

- AIM: 1. To present the dynamic and stirring story of the Albany, Movement very briefly.
2. To present an example of what youth is doing in the Movement and what the nature of their determination is.
 3. To present a Negro community which has been brutally and almost totally oppressed and how it overcame these obstacles in the Freedom Fight.
 4. To show how northern Negroes can use the vote to help themselves and their southern ~~black~~ brothers.

APPROACH: Let the class know that this story could be multiplied by hundreds since Negroes all over the south are moving fast and hard to destroy segregation. Also tell them that sometimes it helps if we see something wrong faraway then it helps us to correct the wrongs we have at home. Also that what the Negroes are doing in the south is helping people denied rights everywhere in America.

The STORY:

I shall tell this story to you(the teacher) in narrative form with both details and facts and then each teacher can present it in whatever way he or she chooses.

Lee County, Georgia is a small rural county in the south western part of Georgia. It is 19 miles away from Albany Georgia, a city which has been in the fore front of the struggle for Freedom and Equality since 1961.

Before we talk about Lee County let us look at Albany. During the slave days the city of Albany was the center for slave trade in south west Georgia. Many slave owners bought and sold their slaves there. This city was also the center for the ~~slave~~ sale of fertilizer, feed, and farm tools. There are about 4 counties which surround Albany. Each of these counties , up until 5 or 10 years ago was known for a particular way of suppressing the Negro. Baker County was known for its brutal police who would shoot a Negro and ask questions later. Terrell County(still known as Terrible Terrell) was known as the place where a Negro was treated worse than in Mississippi. Lee County was known for its lynchings. Thus you can see the history of hardship, fear and oppression that marked this area, and you can understand why it has been so hard for the Negroes to do anything to stop these measures since although they were the majority of the population the white community controlled everything from their homes to their food, to even their lives. The Negroes had no power, no money and no education. There were not even public schools for Negroes in this area of Georgia until 1956. two yrs after the 1954 Supreme Court Decision to desegregate all public schools.

In the later part of November of 1961 a young Negro girl from Atlanta, Georgia came to Albany Georgia to visit some friends. Her name was Bertha Gober. She was only 19. Bertha arrived in the bus station in Albany. Only a few weeks before on November 1, 1961 the Interstate Commerce Commission has passed the "ICC Rulin" which forbade discrimination or segregation in any bus terminals, train stations or airports terminals which served passengers coming and going from one state to another. (this is called interstate travel). This law required that all "colored" or "white" only signs be taken ~~in~~ down and that all lunch room and bathroom facilities be integrated. Bertha knew as she stepped off the bus that this law had been passed and so she decided to go into the white waiting room. She had not been there for more than 5 minutes when a ~~police~~ policeman came up to her and said " Look, Nigger, you better move. This waiting room ain't for you. Go around back where colored are supposed to go and don't make any trouble/." Bertha replied in a quiet but firm voice that it was her right to remain there and that she would not move. The policeman shouted at her once again and then when she refused to move he roughly arrested her and carried her off to jail. Albany, Georgia, like so many other southern cities was refusing to obey the law and still maintained a segregated system. When the news of Bertha's arrest reached the Negro community it caused much anger and excitement. Many people wanted to march down to the bus station and sit-in. Others wanted to stage a huge demonstration in front of the Albany City Jail and demand that Bertha be released. Finally it was decided that a group of young people would go down to the bus station's lunch counter and ask to be served. The Negro community wished to let the white segregationists know that they were not willing to abide by segregation any longer.

This action began what has come to be known as the Albany Movement. Many actions followed including boycotting the white Newspaper and finally putting it out of business, picketing stores downtown which would not hire Negroes, marching to the court house to register thousands to vote the segregationist officials out of office since Negroes out numbered whites in Albany 3 to 1. By December of 1961 over 700 Negroes had been arrested and jailed for anti-segregation activities.

In the summer of 1962 a group of Negro and white students from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC- pronounced "snick") came down to south west Georgia to help register Negro voters. SNCC is an organization of young people from all over the country, both Negro and white, who have been in the forefront of civil rights since the sit-ins in 1960. You will hear more about SNCC in the Freedom Schools. SNCC had decided that Negroes in the counties around Albany needed someone to help them organize voter registration campaigns and to fight segregation. Hardly any Negro sharecroppers and farmers were registered since the reprisals were so severe against them, if they tried to do so. SNCC also recognized the importance of the vote if they were ever to get rid of the segregationists who controlled the south. These 7 young people, 4 male and 3 female, 3 white and 4 Negro moved into Lee County Georgia with an elderly lady named Mama Dolly Raines who owned a farm way back in the fields.

They had come to Lee County to set up Voter Registration Schools in the deep rural areas where Negroes were afraid and cruelly treated by white people. They invited sharecroppers to mass meetings to learn how to register and vote and how to fight segregation in other ways. Their task was almost impossible since they knew that the reason Negroes were afraid to do anything was because the segregationists would fire them from their job, burn their homes, hurt their children and even shoot them. SNCC workers had to win the trust and confidence of the people and they did this by picking cotton with them in the hot sun, sleeping in the shacks where the Negroes were forced to live, and sharing the meager bits of food that most Negroes had. One day the SNCC workers visited the Wingfield family, in Lee County. This family had 6 children and the oldest was an 18 year old boy named Charlie Wingfield. Charlie was an unusual person. He was 18 and still in the 9th grade because he had dared to speak out in his community for Freedom. The school authorities (both white and Uncle Tom Negroes) were afraid of him and they kept putting him back in school as punishment for his boldness. Charlie had protested the inadequate school conditions for Negroes. He had complained about the school making the girls sew curtains for the school windows as part of their "home economics" course and the boys having to cut the grass outside the school as part of ~~their~~ their "agriculture" course. Charlie had even organized a boycott of the school that spring and was expelled from school for doing so. Several teachers had been fired from their jobs for helping him. Most of the Negroes in Lee County were afraid of what Charlie was doing and thus they were even more afraid when the SNCC workers asked them to register and vote and go to mass meetings. They knew that several militant Negroes homes had been burned and others had been fired from their jobs for "getting out of their places".

Charlie Wingfield was not afraid. He was determined that he would not live under a segregated system another day. He had learned in his poor school that there were certain rights and privileges that every citizen had as an American citizen regardless of ~~their~~ his color and Charlie was not going to see his denied. The whole summer long Charlie walked the dusty roads of Georgia. ~~with~~ talking to people, teaching people, helping people to want to fight for their Freedom no matter what the cost. He encouraged Negroes to come to nightly meetings in their churches. He urged people to go down to the local court house and register. He told them not to be afraid. Charlie was followed at night on lonely country roads, his home was shot into 20 times in one week, he was threatened with death by the Ku Klux Klan. He went to jail for standing on the court house steps to register.

Charlie did not succeed in registering every Negro in Lee County, by the end of the summer. He did not even succeed in breaking down any of the barriers of segregation. His success lay instead in the spirit he instilled in his people and in his determination and courage. Even when Charlie's family was forced to move to Florida to protect their lives Charlie wrote this letter to the people of Lee County.

" Dear Brothers in Freedom;

I have moved to Florida with my family after our home was shot into one night a bullets just missed my 3 year old sister Margaret. I have tried to enroll in schools here but the authorities of Georgia notified the authorities here not to admit me. Without an education I might as well be dead. But I am determined to come back to Georgia and continue the fight I began. I am not afraid of dieing and I know that I might be shot or beaten. But as I do not despair..don't you lose faith in the cause. God is with us and we know we are on the side of right. If I don't make it through Georgia back to Lee County alive do not feel sad for me. Let my death be a ~~symbol~~ symbol to you of courage and hope that we shall have hur Freedom and until we do,
WE SHALL NOT TURN BACK!

Yours in the Struggle,
Charles Wingfield

DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS: You might let the class lead any response to the story. Any that they do would be profitable. If there is no response or any questions, you might ask a few yourself or pose a comment or two. You might suggest that a future topic might be how voting helps the Negro in the ~~struggle~~ struggle for Freedom North and South.

EX: If all the Negroes in Boston were registered voters then real pressure could be put on our congressmen in Washington to pass legislation protecting and upholding the Negroes right to vote everywhere, pressure to get congress to pass the literacy bills, pressure to get congress to pass President Kennedy's Civil Rights legislation.

Stress the fact that whites in the south are so afraid of letting the Negro vote because they know that then they would no longer hold the power and that this is true also in the north, though it is not just white people that the Negro would vote, but he would vote FOR better housing, better schools for their children etc.