

HATTIESBURG, MISS., FREEDOM DAY

JANUARY 22, 1964

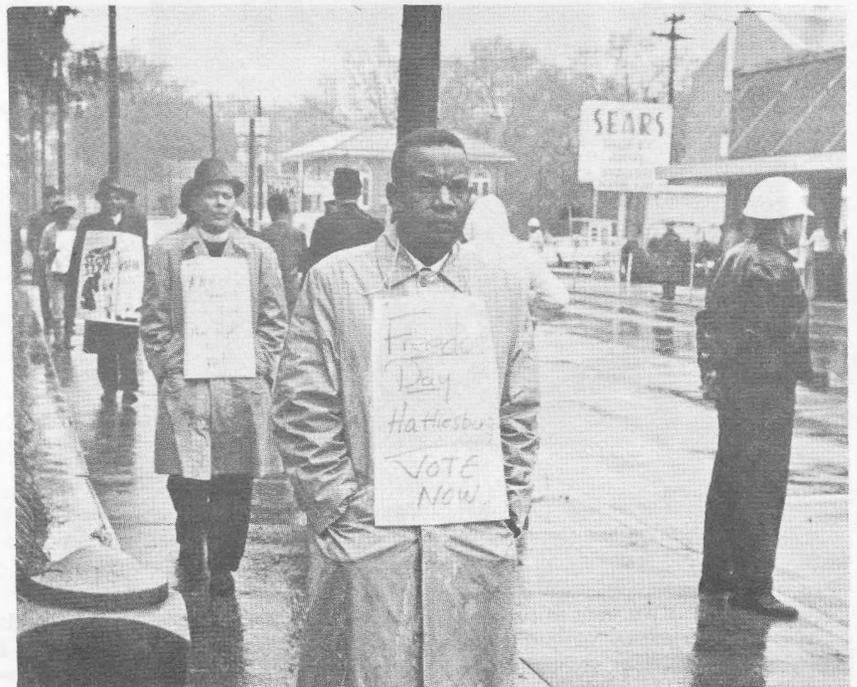


Hattiesburg is the county seat of Forrest county in southern Mississippi. The county has a population of 52,722 of which 28 percent are Negro; 7,406 of them are of voting age yet only 53 are registered voters. The Justice Department has had an injunction against the county registrar, Theron Lynd (left), since April 1962. The injunction orders him to stop discriminating against Negro applicants. Lynd was also convicted of civil contempt in July 1963 for his failure to register Negroes. However, he has not yet complied with the injunction or purged himself of contempt.

In Forrest county on January 22, "Freedom Day," an intensive vote drive began with the aid of many ministers. The campaign was conducted by workers from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), under the auspices of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), an alliance of all civil rights groups working in Mississippi.

"Personally I am not important in this . . . rather it's the deep over-riding fear of Negroes . . . American citizens who are residents of Hattiesburg. They are afraid and it's a tragic fact that they have good reason to be. Most of the Negroes there work for white people. If they register to vote, they will lose their jobs. You see, it's a basic bread and butter issue for parents concerned about feeding their children. Many of them have lost their jobs, but we are trying hard to instill courage in the townspeople."

-- Rev. Donald Register, St. Louis, Missouri

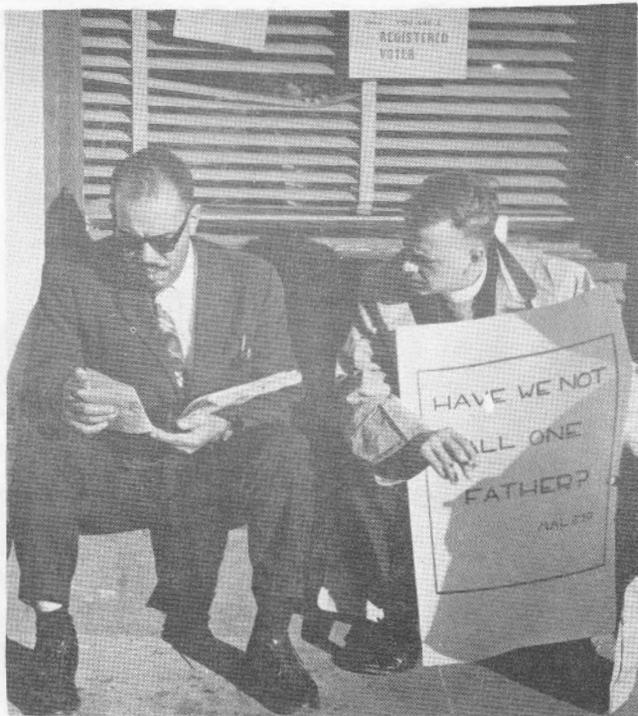


'I hope to try to indicate to those in the ministry that the church must have action to go along with the talk.'

-- Dr. Alan Pickering, United Christian Campus Fellowship, University of Nebraska.

"We saw a great change come over the local Negro community. Dick Gregory, the comedian, was there, and he told me it was the first time he had addressed an audience in Mississippi and not seen fear written on their faces."

-- Rev. Russell Williams, Denver, Colorado



"You asked what the point of it is. I think the point is that this is much like Germany at the beginning of Hitler's rise -- fear, police intimidation and summary arrests. I don't want you, or any other kids, to grow up in America in those circumstances."

-- Rev. Emil J. Hattoon, Decatur, Illinois
in a letter to his two sons.

These and over 100 other ministers and rabbis worked closely with field secretaries from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), canvassing house to house, picketing at the county court house and speaking at mass rallies in churches.

"We went to the SNCC state headquarters, where we were again most impressed with the creative determination and comprehensive program of these youthful civil rights leaders . . . We met these dedicated young freedom fighters, Negro and white, male and female, from north and south . . . All of them are heroes produced by the struggle for human justice in the southland, heroes with hard eyes, soft hearts, tight stomachs and unwavering commitment."

-- Rev. Kenneth Waterman, First Presbyterian Church, Kansas City, Missouri.

This work for civil rights and human dignity must continue. But so that it can continue, your help is needed.

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