

Handout from the Mississippi Freedom
Democratic Party*

"I saw the doors close and now I have seen them open again."

Rev. W. G. Middleton
Batesville, Mississippi

Rev. Middleton saw the doors close in 1890 when he was 10 years old. In that year Mississippi in effect repealed the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments[of the U.S. Constitution]by disenfranchising almost the entire Negro population of the State. For 74 years, Rev. Middleton and almost one million other Negroes lived under the "Mississippi Plan"—a legal and social system that kept them silent, powerless, and terrorized. But in 1964 these Negro citizens began to speak out through an organization of their own creation—the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

The MFDP is undertaking:

1. A state-wide voter registration drive;
2. Campaigns with MFDP candidates running against all five Congressmen and Senator Eastland;
3. A drive to get mobile registrars;
4. Intensive political organizing to develop local leadership;
5. A reapportionment suit calling for redistricting of the State Legislature and new elections;
6. Demanding recognition as the only functioning Democratic Party in Mississippi from the National Democratic Party;
7. A drive to get federal registrars into all 82 Mississippi counties.

In order for all of us to accomplish the issues which we are now undertaking, it is very important that everyone involve himself in a sub-committee. Only through these sub-committees can we begin to organize in our communities, gain local leadership and explore the provision of the various programs offered us on the state and national levels.

We would urge everyone to take an interest in the sub-committees and take note of sub-committee meetings in future mailings.

Freedom,

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* This is a facsimile copy of a handout printed by the MFDP in early 1965. All additions by the writer are in brackets. The original is in bad physical condition.

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT POLL TAXES*

WHY PAY POLL TAXES?

In 1967 all local offices in the state of Mississippi will be open for reelection.

The Freedom Democratic Party will be running their own candidates for offices like sheriff, city councilman, school board members, county supervisors and others in 1967.¹

Only if everyone has registered and has paid the poll tax can we elect sheriffs and a city government that represents everyone. Remember if you want a voice in who wins you must register, pay your poll tax, help select candidates to represent you and then vote. Now is the time to register and pay your poll tax.

The Freedom Democratic Party believes that the poll tax is not fair and is unconstitutional. There is a case now pending in the courts concerning the poll tax but as of this date there has been no decision.² Therefore, at this time it is still necessary to pay the poll tax in order to vote in local elections. You can vote in National elections— for Congressman and Senator in 1966 without paying the poll tax.

WHEN AND WHERE TO PAY POLL TAXES

Everyone who has not yet registered should register NOW in order to vote. If you are already registered, then you must pay your poll tax to the county registrar or to the federal registrar any time between January 1 and January 31, 1966. Remember, Federal registrars will accept your poll taxes.

HOW MUCH ARE POLL TAXES?

To vote in the next local election means we must pay two years of poll tax. That comes to \$4.00 (\$2.00 a year).

We have been denied the right to vote for too long and we should not have to wait any longer. The Freedom Democratic Party urges you to register and pay your poll tax. The Freedom Democratic Party is calling for free and open elections in 1966 and 1967.

.....TO BE REGISTERED AND TO HAVE PAID YOUR POLL TAX MEANS A VOTE.....

from

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1 see Tables VII and XX for Elected Negro Officials in Mississippi and other Southern States from 1967 to 1972.

2 The Mississippi State Law requiring the payment of the poll tax in order to vote in local and state elections was invalidated in Gray v. Johnson, 234 F. Supp. 743(S. D. Miss. 1964).⁺ In 1964 the XXIV Amendment to the U.S. Constitution held the payment of the poll tax to be unnecessary in order to vote in Federal elections. ...