

Sunday, November 18, 1962  
504 South Madison Street  
Albany, Georgia

Hi Folks:

This has been a week of wonder. The Albany Movement has had its "Anniversary Week" and now the slow pace of the great spokesman makes its mark felt as men sit on their ideas and cheer the young vagabonds onward. It was somewhat corrupted; from paying canvassers "per head", to paying the jailed, to "Anniversary." Well, really it doesn't leave us guiltless as no matter how hard we tried, if we don't succeed, we should have tried harder.

Slater King's wife, Marion, who was knocked down by an officer from behind earlier in the summer while she was with child, lost her baby. We have lost so much of our blood. It causes me a great deal of pain to internalize this frustration. I only hope that Almighty God will grant release. Marion was always close to us.

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The mass meetings in the counties are really beginning to swing. Here's a brief outline of those we've held in the last week or so -- Faith.

We held our FIRST! meeting in SUMTER COUNTY! on November eighth, at Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Cobbs. There were twenty-three people from Sumter there, none registered. One man, Mr. Bobby Lee Robertson, told me after the meeting, that he had applied to register. He failed the test because he couldn't ask one question -- "When was God born?" No wonder.

Sherrod led the meeting, instructing and exhorting. Starting with the sit-ins, he showed the need and effect of sticking together. He told of the protection available to those who stick together in the fight for the ballot. He spoke of teaching ourselves to say no to white men.

The night following the meeting we received two phone calls in reference to Sumter. The first one told us that the caller was gonna blow the sons a bitch up. The second phone call, made almost immediately after the first, merely elaborated on the "gonna blow the sons a bitch integrationists" theme, although this time the man calling said that he was calling because we had moved into Sumter.

James Mays says that the Voter's League of Americus in Sumter has had to discontinue its meetings because the insurance company that insured the building where they met had cancelled the policy. This is in spite of the fact that Conra Brown, of Koinonia, said that Sheriff Chapel, of Sumter, has said that voter registration meetings can be held, but they better not be integrated meetings. Both our meetings have been integrated.

The night after the Sumter meeting, the home of one of the men who attended the meeting was shot at, he thinks with a pistol. This man has also attended meetings in Lee off and on. He is afraid that if it's reported he's afraid he'll lose

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This week has been a very exciting, humorous and inspirational one for me, because I have been faced with many new tasks.

I have traveled through thirty of these United States, but only for pleasure. My trip here to Albany, Georgia is not a trip for pleasure, it's a trip to fight for freedom, equality and dignity for 20 million Negroes all over the United States. On the way to Albany, I thought of many things I would have to sacrifice, like dropping out of school for a semester, not being home to sing with the Howard Choir at Constitution Hall, something I have always looked forward to; being away from my family and friends. Was going to Albany, Georgia to work with Voter Registration worth all this? But then as I passed through shanty towns and big cities and gazed at the stars something crossed my mind. What good would it do me to finish school if I couldn't get the type of job I really wanted. The Civil Rights Commission has stated that most students graduating from a Negro college or University get the same type of jobs that white students get when they just graduate from high school. Maybe if we could get the right people in office something could be done about this situation. And then I thought about Constitution Hall, Washington's biggest concert hall. Sure it's great to get the chance to perform with one of the country's greatest choirs and with a world known symphony orchestra, but there was once a time when Marion Anderson had to sing on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in freezing weather, because her skin is black and at the time no Negroes were allowed to perform at Constitution Hall. Nor were they allowed to go to any of the concerts given there. So why should I turn down a chance to fight for freedom so that I may sing at a place that was once Jim Crowed.

Then I thought about my family. Well, that was no problem. Because of the fact that both of my parents were born and raised in the South, they had to suffer the tribulations and heartaches caused by segregation. They wouldn't mind my leaving home for a few months to fight for equality.

So the decision wasn't very hard to make. My mind was at ease. "I am doing the right thing."

I arrived here with two other people on Monday November 14th. We hadn't been here fifteen minutes when someone called us and threatened to kill us if we came to Sumpter County.

We have gone to mass meetings in Sumpter, Terrell and Lee. All of these meetings have been wonderful experiences for me. It's wonderful to see these people so determined to fight for their rights, no matter what gets in the way.

I have met many wonderful people since I've been here, such as Mama Dohly, the KINGS, the Jordens, the Browns, and many of the students from Muncie High and Carver Junior High schools. I had the great pleasure of talking with Dr. Martin Luther King last Friday night after he gave a thrilling speech at a mass meeting in Albany.

And Saturday I went canvassing for the first time - for Thomas C. Chatmon. Chatmon is in a run-off for city commissioner tomorrow (Nov. 20)