

901 $\frac{1}{2}$  Nelson Street  
Greenville, Miss.  
August 6, 1964

Dear Mom and Dad,

I really have to iron and get back to the office in an hour so I can only make a start now. I have been very busy since there has been more to do than just canvass door to door to get freedom registration forms filled out. Essentially we are forgetting voter registration and I can see why.

I'll start with last Wednesday. I was responsible for the precinct meeting of the 6th precinct, a small area in the South End. I met Mr. James Williams, a 55 year old registered voter who has been president of the local NAACP, at the church Shanny is headquartered in on the South End. He is most interested so we went up to the office, got a list of registered voters and walked around from noon to 7:30. First stop we ate dinner. He's very quiet and kindly, but feels very strongly because he was run out of town. He had a cleaning business, got sick with ulcers or something that made him drop from 220 to 140, and at this point Dr. Frisby, richest Negro in town foreclosed on him. He wants to stop the Uncle Toms at this point, although he doesn't know quite how; is very anxious to learn and remembers the points that COFO people make. He was the chairman of the precinct meeting at which about 23 came.

Thursday night was the County Meeting, all Greenville delegates from the 7 precincts we had meetings in (10 from each). It was a real experience for all the COFO people of the problems here. Which reminds me, please buy (paperback? order if necessary) E. Franklin Frazier's Black Bourgeoisie. We've been calling it the "Negro Establishment" or the "Carter Klan" after James Carter nicknamed by the entire community "Baby Face." I really want to go into this because of the questions you raised about the N.Y. Times article. Mr. Askew (Charlie), a Negro architect from Philadelphia who teaches in high school who is I don't know how old but has been married 18 years, filled me in on a lot of things. Some of which is confidential and will have to wait until I get home. He feels these people have been worked around long enough. Was '63 the revolution or is it '64? If there is to be a revolution, it has to be now. There has been Negro leadership for 15 years here in cleaning, publishing, funeral homes, doctors, and ministers - but you really can ask the question "What have they done?" Dr. Page said that this crowd calls down to the court house as to who should pass the test - on the basis of whether they can deliver so and so's vote. They have worked all these years within the segregated society and they have gotten certain payments for it - a playground, a new high school as well as personal benefits I believe. When you challenge the whole system which you do when you ask for CIVIL RIGHTS, these people, call them what you will, will not go along with it. Challenging those in the white community that they work with, challenges them to. And so they slow the Movement. All the theory or conjecture or academics behind this is not as meaningful as SEEING these people act in a democratic political meeting.



Friday night

Mr. Chapple, whose name was in that article in the Times, was nominated for chairman of the convention. Then a young guy Willie Rollins nominated his friend for chairman. Then the man next to Chapple moved the nomination for Chapple be unanimous because he is experienced, etc. Charlie Cobb made an excellent statement against this sort of thing to the effect that every one in the room had a right to speak and such suggestions are what the regular Democratic Party daes, decides beford hand that so and so can be chairman without holding a real election. Charlie read the young guy's name first and he got elected. Because people vote first and because many thought they could vote for both nominees. Chapple somehow managed to get himself up front for part of the meeting assisting the young chairman. Very bad. We were sorry Charlie didn't stay up there.

Then Chapple pulled the big maneuver: he made a motion that all the precinct chairman and secretaries who were present automatically be made delegates to the state convention. With the ignorance of the crowd as to procedure and with the people looking to their traditional political leader and thus thinking he was doing the correct thing, the motion was passed. And so Chapple and Mrs. Edwards (wife of funeral home director) got elected. It turned out to be a stupid move because he got a strange bunch of people in there and could have nominated his friends and gotten them delegates. At least two of the alternates elected afterwards were in sympathy with all that he wanted to do.

What did he want to do?? If there is any compromise at the national convention with only part of the delegation getting seated, he would be one with his position within the regular Democratic Party. He could pull all sorts of strings keeping down the FDP if the Democrats would do certain things for him. After the meeting I talked to and got to know two young women who were most upset and I feel expressed widespread sentiment, within the community. Mrs. Moreton (two Freedom School teachers are living with her and she will work in the Freedom Center COFO and the community are planning to build) put it simply: it's the little people who do all the work (in this case getting Freedom Registration Forms filled out) and then these guys walk in and take it all away for themselves and the benefits, prestige, whatever don't seep back down to those who did the hard work. Dorothy Jones was the other, not as attractive and quieter who works as Hodding Carter's maid, she being an alternate and thus more involved. The third person I've gotten to know in the same way is Willie Rollins who was elected as an alternate also.

Friday morning I went into the office and read the memos about the District Caucus (attended by the delegates and alternates to the state convention as a caucus beforehand),



one from Greenwood and one from Jackson and they were both confusing. So I called the person to call in Greenwood and got it all straight.

That afternoon Pam (from Howard), Muriel (now the project director for the city, graduate of Howard who's taking time out for a six-week course in Lund, Sweden the end of August but will stay on in Miss.) and I went to see Dr. Page. He's the young doctor who stands alone and after all his fiascos with the crew will no longer associate with them at all. What we had to say was mostly explanation: that he had been (while out of town on vacation) the night before elected as an alternate to the state convention and as one of four to the county executive committee of the FDP. At the county convention they planned a meeting to elect a chairman: Chapple, Mrs. Edwards, a young woman we don't know much about, Dr. Page, four from Hollandale, and four from Leland those on the committee. He said he was willing to serve, but did not want to be in a position out front because then the fight would be harder. No commitment there at all because the committee still hasn't met. He won't do anything without the support of the young men in the VFW.

We got to the office at 6; mimeographed lists of the delegates and alternates and the agenda of the District Caucus before 7. Left out something: first thing I did Friday morning was go to Mrs. Edwards' house, sit with her in the bedroom because she had woken up sick, and take notes for us to type up the minutes of the ~~District~~ County Convention of which she was the secretary which she dictated from her notes. We had absolutely no information before I got on that. Then we had a delegate workshop - about 13 of the 24 were there. The factions showed up right then. The traditional philosophy is to put the experienced leadership in all positions of leadership BUT this is not the philosophy of the FDP which we tried to get across in the work shop. Anyone can go to the national convention if he can get himself elected because within the FDP anyone can vote, even if he is illiterate.

Staff meeting after that so we were all informed about the District Caucus. Then assignments of a visitation committee: staff seeing the people they knew in their precincts who would be going to the D.C. to explain procedure and try to draw them out. Yes, very political. But there is a very shrewd political group to struggle against, and at least those who have never been in politics should know the facts. Meaning procedure.

Saturday we went to see Dr. Page again: Askew, Charlie Cobb, Pam, and myself. COFO sponsored a bazaar at the existing community center which is essentially one room where I met Polly Robinson. She along with, now her sister instead of her husband who had to go back to Cornell to prepare for Ph. D. exams, are working in the white community for the National Council of Churches. They were meeting a minister working with COFO for dinner so arranged to pick me up. Spent that evening at the Downtowner (the ritzy motel where they're staying) with those three.



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Sunday I washed clothes until about 11, then got to work on the District Caucus which was held here - 350-400 people. Fortunately we ~~found~~ could use a big enough place, a church that used to be a movie theater. It started at 3, two hours late.

Chaos of course was evident. Election of permanent chairman of the meeting (recent college graduate from Indianola, home of the Citizens Council), 4 delegates and 2 alternates to the national convention, and 3 to the state executive committee, and presidential elector and alternate. Each had to speak and some were great. But I couldn't sit still to listen and take it all in. This is what the FDP means - this is the first time 90% of these people have had any political voice. It's an important training ground for leadership and political endeavor - thus this ~~is more~~ has priority over voter registration. Every time I see a TV set here, and it's often, I see the importance of the convention challenge. Miss. Negroes will SEE Negroes speaking to the nation for them; somebody will be speaking the truth for them for the first time. This will rouse this 50% of the state to become active, to get an idea of how things can be done. Reasons for the whole effort: (1) beginning of political activity for all, (2) organizational structure for the training of local leadership; SNCC or COFO will no longer do everything like lead mass meetings and have all the information, and (3) to use in court cases to strike out the voter registration laws which are discriminatory because they were passed since 1954 which are already enjoined in Panola and Tallahatchie Counties and to unseat Jamie Whitten, in Congress from this district on the basis that Mrs. Hamer who contested his seat in the primary, the candidate of the FDP, has more constituents that he does if we can reach the quota whatever it is. Very exciting to say the least.

I talked to Mrs. Hamer afterwards and reminded I had eaten at her home last summer. So she hugged me. Told me about her speaking tour - Baltimore, Westport Conn., Philadelphia, etc. She's on the State Exec. Comm.; was chopping cotton as Fannie before she went to register to vote two years ago. She led the freedom singing before the meeting started and it was the best I've heard possibly ever.

That night I went to a meeting for the Herbert Lee Memorial Center which will be a \$13-18,000 new freedom center building for all COFO and community programs to be carried on in. The reason for the architect Askew being here. Essentially the Carter Klan, all men. Got hung up in legal matters: nonprofit is impossible in Miss. because discretion of Secy. of State is so wide and there would be political activity going on. But business corporation didn't make sense to Dr. Page. So nothing was accomplished. Askew has done complete research on these individuals and has told me all or nearly so.

Monday I followed him around because he was leaving Tues. a.m. for home. Talked to the liberal white banker. That night the beauticians were supposed to come for a meeting about the new center, but only 3 showed after waiting an hour. Then we went to the Freedom School for a meal and great folk singing by five (including Judy Collins?) who spent the day here; are traveling all around the state.



Tuesday morning Larry Brenton, a guy from Penn, and I sat down in the house where I'm living and wrote a letter to Mrs. Hamer explaining the apathy of Greenville and asking her to come speak. And a leaflet full page for Thursday's regular mass meeting. Explaining in simple (and hopefully stimulating terms) the FDP. Then we learned the F.S. was putting on a play "We'll Never Turn Back" the story of Herbert Lee, first civil rights worker killed in Miss. in '61 in Amite County - which made the meeting even more important. It was approved and mimeographed by that night.

Walking down the street with Muriel to get to a meeting for the new center - the women's half of the men's group - somebody tapped me on the shoulder and there was Ivory in from summer school in Calif. and on his way home to Rosedale. Charlie gave him F.R. forms so I hope he gets active and does some work. He's so quiet and we really couldn't talk. Went on to Mrs. Frisby's (he's the rich man, leading doctor, may be running an abortion clinic he's so rich). Quite a dressy tea, all Negro. Punch and cookies. But Muriel fully talked on the point that the rural areas are much more active than G'ville and told them many things not known in efforts to stimulate fund raising for the center.

Wednesday I worked on typing minutes of FDP meetings which had to get to Washington via Jackson immediately or the legal part of the challenge would be all over. Polly came over late afternoon and Charlie, Muriel, Pat, she, her sister and I had a good session. Controversy over a college girls integrated get-together at a white home that Pam being COFO could not attend. The decision of the woman of the house. That was Wed. but haven't heard how it came off.

Dorothy Jones the night before had asked me if I could come stay overnight with her in Hodding Carter's house (14 rooms off the highway) because she didn't want to stay alone with the baby. Bring a couple people out and we could swim if we got there before soon after 4, the hour the Carters were leaving for Greenwood. Eventually the Carters knew (would approve it) so it wasn't sneaky and a young reporter who lives out there was there before he left town at 8. From 5-7 the whole project was swimming in that private pool - just imagining how delightful that was! I didn't stay but a couple others did, because had to get back for another delegates workshop.

Again we had to contact all 24 about whether they could go Thursday to Jackson and worry about transportation. I called Mrs. Edwards in the morning and she said she wasn't going and didn't care who her alternate was. By 7 her henchman said at the workshop she was going and driving - so we arranged Charlie Cobb to go in her air conditioned Cadillac because he had to arrive early also. Dr. Page couldn't go and would not be able to make it to the convention, sad to hear. Only 11 ended up going on Thurs. Willie nominated Mrs. Calvin and she got 80 votes, but didn't win. Mr. Chapple was in Jackson on business; got another county to nominate him - the 36 more delegates and alt's to N.J. - but all were watching out for him. So there's no one from G'ville altho two from Issaquena. Ed King is natl comm'man and Dr. Beittel is a delegate and there are two other white delegates



Thursday I went up to the office to make sure transportation was going to be provided. There's always change of plans at the last minute. It was my idea to call the DDT (Carter's paper) and get a news brief on the mass meeting. John called - and we got it - first one with details, front page. Came back here ~~for a couple hours~~ and cooked breakfast for a couple guys; then wrote letters and ironed from 12-4.

Then ran off to meet with lawyers on the center incorporation. They had the better alternative, a new one: national corp. (like NCC) buys the land and leases it to COFO for 99 yrs. @ \$1. The meeting was at 8, again at Dr. Frisby's office. About 5 there, the young 5. It was very possibly a boycott. Plan was accepted. Next step is Mon. night meeting to get club representatives together (cross class lines) and elect a permanent chairman for the fund-raising which will be the responsibility of this Negro men's group, then giving the money through COFO. Chairman and COFO have to withdraw for expenses. We have a beautiful prospectus now, but no publicity yet. I really enjoyed the lawyers esp. the one from Cleveland (other from Pittsburgh) who was very efficient, clear and knew what he was doing. He called us today about 6 from Jackson from the NCC office having talked with the people he promised to about the NCC's financial commitment and willingness to buy the land. They were put off by Askew's pushiness when they were here for one meeting, but are interested so I'll talk to the man and Polly when he comes here tomorrow to stay three days to talk with her. Just couldn't believe that he would call back. Not the way COFO operates; you're never quite sure.

Today Pat and I talked about a memorial service on Sunday. Muriel came in and got in on it. And then the day began - coordination by the three of us. Pat is a Wilson College grad, has worked this past year as a secy at Harvard Law and will stay down; she's been doing office work - our files, etc. Talked to the assistant chief of police, the mayor, and the deputy sheriff about the service and a permit to solicit for the center - but that's a whole 'nother story after Sunday.

Mona owes me a book for graduation (at least I want a book) and I have \$10 from Burnett and Pia. Could you have for me when I get home Black Bourgeoisie and Silver's Mississippi, The Closed Society??

I wish I had the time to explain more about this city and the center plans. I told John I've been thinking Eric should work here. It's wide open for every sort of work. I've gotten very political in the last week. I think we've been honest, but when the other side quote unquote has a meeting you only hear about through rumors in which they just luckily lose the vote 8-6 to put an ad in the paper saying that COFO is Communist (night of the District Caucus), there's something you must work against if you don't want to see the whole thing go down the drain!

love,

USA

P.S. Barbara Mutnick from Plainfield is telling somebody that she, Shanny, & I can speak at the summit rally Sept. 2. Tell me more about it? Where, time, who's involved?