

Movement History

Mississippi Contested Elections – The Historic 1965 Testimony of Lawrence Guyot

LAWRENCE GUYOT, residing at 507 North Farish Street, Jackson, MS, having been first duly sworn by the hearing examiner, was examined and testified as follows:

Direct examination by Mr. Laskin:

Q. Would you state your full name, please?—

A. Lawrence Guyot, chairman for the executive committee for the Freedom Democratic Party.

Q. Where do you reside?—A. 507 North Farish Street. That is my business address.

Q. Are you a member of the Negro race?—A. Yes.

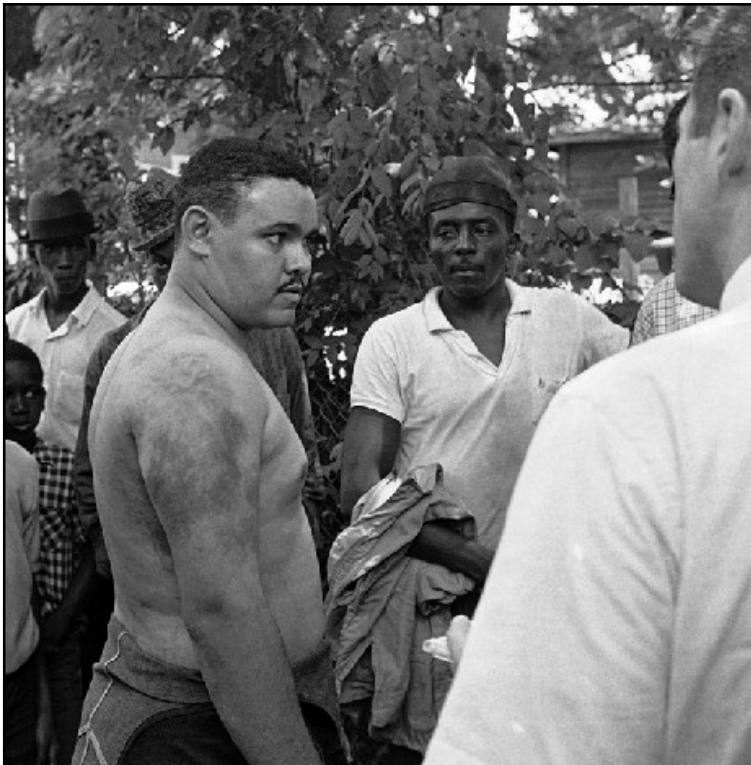
Q. How long have resided in Mississippi?—A. Twenty-six years.

Q. Were you born here?—A. Yes, July 17, 1939 in Pass Christian, Miss.

Q. Are you registered to vote, sir?—A. Yes.

Q. In what county are you registered to vote?—

A. In Harrison County, in the Fifth Congressional District in the State of Mississippi.



Lawrence Guyot in 1963 Greenwood, MS showing newsmen his bruises from police beatings after his arrest for participating in a local civil rights demonstration.

Q. Who purports to be your Congressman in the Fifth Congressional District?—A. An individual, illegally elected, by the name of William Colmer.

Q. Have you ever voted for William Colmer, by the way?—A. No.

Q. You did vote in the last presidential election, did you not?—A. That's right.

Q. What is your educational background, Mr. Guyot? Can you tell us about that?—A. I have a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and chemistry from Tougaloo Southern Christian College.

Q. Have you done any teaching in this respect?—A. No.

Q. Have you conducted any workshops in voter registration and voter education?—A. I began, in 1962, working with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee on voter registration and education throughout the State of Mississippi in attempting to participate and encourage others to participate in demonstrations around the right to vote.

Q. How long have you been engaged in this work?—A. Since August of 1962.

Q. And this was before you even graduated from college?—A. That's right. I graduated with the class of 1963.

Q. Are you presently engaged in voter registration work, workshops, speaking, and so forth?—A. Presently, myself and the members and officials of the Freedom Democratic Party are engaged in attempting to organize the Democratic Party throughout the State of Mississippi and attempting to offer political education to people who have been deprived systematically of that type of education for the last 73 years.

Q. Have you met with much success in this regard?—

A. We have met with systematic intimidation and systematic oppression on every level by every institution in this state from the State Highway Patrol to the Society for the Preservation of the White Race, the Ku Klux Klan, the Sovereignty Commission and the White Citizens Council. Presently, we are attempting to show that individuals throughout the State operate under all of these bannerheads. It is completely impossible to attempt to organize politically in a State that is controlled on every level like this. I think that the case of COFO versus Rainey, which asked that Federal marshals be placed in Mississippi to protect the guaranteed rights of individuals attempting to register to vote and attempting and attempting to organize politically, and the way that was handled by Judge Cox points out that we have no recourse, even in Federal Court. Judge Cox immediately threw that case out. It

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was then given to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, and they pointed out very clearly that Judge Cox overextended his discretion and they then asked in the remanded issue that the Justice Department enter into the case in the form of *amicus curiae*. I think that is important for people to understand that the type of intimidation, the systematic use of churches, the newspapers, the television, radio, all of the news media, has hampered not only political organizing or people simply attempting to register to vote, but it has hampered labor coming in here to provide a fruitful means of employment for Negroes and whites and it has made it impossible for unions to organize in this state, and it has offered a continual threat to Negroes and whites who attempt to express any opinion of dissent. Just as it was pointed out this afternoon, people are fired simply when they ask about wages or have any question or inquiry about anything. It is not allowed in the State. This State is controlled by a few people, the State Democratic Party and the State legislature, made up of people who operate as Democrats but who unequivocally supported the Republican platform and candidates. Now, while they have a right to do this, I would question whether or not, politically, they would also have the right, *vis-à-vis* the State legislature, to pass a genocide bill. This bill was outlined to attempt to imprison any individual who had two illegitimate children. The mothers were offered the alternative of spending 2 months in prison, in the State prison located in Parchman, Miss., or to voluntarily surrender themselves for operations which would render them sterile. There was a lot of discussion about this bill, and it was all done before it was finally brought to the floor. Now, if it would not have been for the national attention garnered by organizations outside of Mississippi, I have no doubt that this bill would have passed. The operation of politics in Mississippi has been on the basis of gentleman's agreements, and worked out before the actual meetings. The Governor is no longer able to maintain law and order in the State. He has said so by pointing out that he is not prepared to call a special session of the legislature this year because he is afraid of the type of sounding board that that would actually give to the country. I think that now it is imperative that this country, *vis-a-vis* the House of Representatives, understand that all of the existing channels of government and entrance into government have been utilized by the people in Mississippi. And I think that if that is taken into consideration, if this challenge fails, then we have no recourse.

Q. What has been your personal experience, Mr. Guyot, that would bring this home? For example, have you had occasion to change the county of your registration in Mississippi?—A. I have worked in quite a few counties throughout the State of Mississippi, and I have either attempted to register to vote or I have assisted other individuals in attempting to register to vote, to break down the fear that has permeated this State because, first of all, people have to go into a courthouse, which they have never been allowed to go in before, and they have to face a registrar who represents white legal authority, and it is understood by all of the applicants that that registrar has the final discretion as to whether or not they are going to be registered, and the only recourse is to simply go down again and again.

Q. Has this happened to you?—A. It has happened to anyone attempting to register to vote. Now, it's just a matter of population ratio that it didn't happen to me in Harrison County, which is, by Mississippi standards, a more liberal county, there are 110,000 individuals and 10,000 of them are Negro.

Q. Is it true, is it not, Mr. Guyot, that you have tried to register in two other counties?—A. That is correct.

Q. And you are a college graduate with a B.S. degree?—A. That's right.

Q. And you were refused a passing status in those two other counties; is that correct?—A. That's right.

Q. Mr. Guyot, the Freedom Democratic Party was instrumental in starting this congressional challenge to have the election of the present five incumbents declared a nullity; is that right?—A. That's right.

Q. Has the defense of these five Congressmen come to your attention; that they themselves have not been guilty of any misconduct or shootings or burnings or bombings or economic reprisals that we have heard testimony about during the depositions taken in this matter; that they themselves are innocent of misconduct and should therefore not suffer from the outrageous and unlawful acts of other persons in the State of Mississippi; and that therefore their election should be declared invalid? I would ask you, as one of the instrumental and moving parties of this challenge contest, if you have heard it how you feel about this defense of the five Congressmen of Mississippi.—A. I think we have to take into consideration the legal rationale that the Justice Department has used in the case of *United States v. Phipps*, which was reviewed by the Supreme Court and which was remanded to the State of Mississippi and they were ordered to hear that case within the next 2 months, because the same legal

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rationale used in that case is also used in the congressional challenge. That challenge was formally filed according to title 2, sections 201 et seq., about which there is no legal question as to validity. Now, we allege factually that in 1870 there is no legal question as to validity. Now, we allege factually that in 1870 the State of Mississippi was readmitted to the Union with the specific order that it would not change its voter registration laws, which at the time were simply that an individual be 21 years of age, live in the State 1 year, not have been convicted of a felony—period. We are also concerned with pointing out that the vagary of section 244, which turns on an individual being able to read and interpret any of the 285 sections of the constitution in the discretion of the registrar, and the publication of the names, addresses of prospective applicants for registration---this had identified these individuals as targets for various forms of intimidation, which has been substantiated very soundly in the depositions that have been taken from former victims of this type of intimidation. We are alleging, quite simply, that whether or not these individuals participated themselves, still, members, associates, and representatives of the political party in which they are represented were instrumental in this type of oppression and intimidation. We take the position that they were, first of all, illegally elected because the elections were illegal. And we feel that the integrity of the House of Representatives is really the question. This is not simply a southern question. It is a question of whether or not the House will constitutionally and pragmatically retain its right to control its Members. We feel that what is really at question is how political power is going to be distributed in this country, because there is no comparison between the election of any of the five pretenders in Mississippi and Congressmen from any other State in this country. And at the same time these individuals occupy seats of power which determine national and international policy.

Q. Mr. Guyot, taking all that into consideration, your opinion that there is actual responsibility on the part of these five purported Congressmen from Mississippi, have you not heard of the other defense set forth by the State and its official and its governmental apparatus; that things will get better and are in fact getting better, that the Negro will be allowed to register to vote, and that law and order will prevail? Have you not heard them say that everyone, regardless of race, will achieve equal rights and have access to the polls? This is their other defense raised in this lawsuit, Mr. Guyot, and I would like to know, in light of this promise by the

Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Mississippi Economic Council, attorney general, and all of the official representatives of the State, why do you still feel it is necessary to carry forward with this challenge in the light of this prospect, this promise that things in Mississippi will achieve a democratic and equitable condition?—**A.** Presently, I think we have conclusively proven that there is no legal framework or no legal recourse for people in the State of Mississippi, be it the city judge, count judge, or Federal district judge. And I think that if this challenge is going to be instrumental in any political change in the State, then they are going to have to have free and open elections in 1965. I think that the Governor, attorney general, secretary of state and state legislature have no more control over the radical insurrectionists of Mississippi than you or I have.

Q. Who are the radical insurrectionists, Mr. Guyot?—

A. I think there are a few people in this State who are professional killers and others who reach a point psychologically by the climate created in this State by the dissemination by all of the mass media of a lack of information and also a pattern of hatred that has been directed not only at Negroes, but also at the lower economic level of all people throughout this State. I believe the State government is no more able to control what goes on in Mississippi than the Federal Government has, because of its inactivity, not controlled it. I think if we really look at the facts, we would find that a lot of local Mississippians are serving as FBI agents who, coincidentally, happen to be members of the same families or very good friends of the local sheriffs and local police department. We cannot realistically expect relatives and old friends to arrest relatives and old friends when they violate the law. I think the real proof came when Charles Everett, who interviewed in Greenwood as a member of the FBI, simply terminated his post in the middle of his function to run for district attorney in Leflore County, and he won a resounding victory.

Q. When did this happen?—**A.** This happened in the general election of 1962.

Q. And you speak now from personal knowledge of these radical, lawless elements and their effect on the government of Mississippi; is that correct?—**A.** On the government and on the prospective applicants or people who are trying to enter for the first time in 73 years into the political process. I think that the injunction that I have offered to you as an exhibit really points out the systematic attempt of the secretary of state, attorney general and Governor, who paradoxically make up the election commission of this State—the injunction filed against the operation and activities

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of the Freedom Democratic Party is just one occasion of the type of suppression that this State will go to, to make sure that not only Negroes don't get involved in politics but whites of a certain economic level don't get involved either.

Q. This injunction is captioned "Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party versus the State of Mississippi and the Chancellor of First Judicial District of Hinds County" ;is that right?—**A.** No, that is the suit we filed in Federal district court, pointing out that the injunction—the first three pages—violated our rights.

Q. I'm sorry. The document I was referring to was the answer of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to this attempt by the State of Mississippi to suppress the party's functions in the State.—**A.** That's right.

Q. Mr. Guyot, in your personal experience, have you run up against this lawlessness and intimidation, that you have described, that is generally existing throughout the state?—**A.** Yes, I have.

Q. Can you describe, to bring this home to us, some of the experiences that you, as the executive chairman of the Freedom Democratic Party, have had?—

A. Before I was elected chairman of the executive committee of the Freedom Democratic Party, I was working on voter registration with the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. On June 9, 1963, I was arrested. Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Rosemary Clark, and three other individuals were arrested on their way back from a workshop in Dorchester, GA., which was conducted by the Christian Southern Leadership Conference and by the Student nonviolent Coordinating Committee to instruct students how to conduct voter registration activities and political rallies. They stopped in Winona, Miss., at which time they were arrested by members of the highway patrol, beaten—well, I called Winona to attempt to find out the bond and charges.

Q. Excuse me, Mr. Guyot, would you set the date of this incident for us, please?—**A.** It was June 9, 1963.

Q. All right, continue please. —**A.** I called Winona to attempt to find out the bond and the charges at which time the individual who answered the phone and identified himself as the sheriff told me---asked me asked me if I was calling about "those niggers who had been arrested at the bus station."

Q. A person who identified himself as a sheriff of the county, Montgomery County---**A.** I asked to speak to the sheriff, and this person answered the phone, and I thought at the time he was the sheriff of the county.

Q. And this person stated, "Are you calling about those niggers?"---**A.** "Those niggers that were arrested at the bus station." And I said, "No, I'm not; I'm calling about those American citizens arrested at the bus station. And he said if I was really interested in finding out about the bond and the charges, I should go down there. So I left Greenwood and went to Winona, and myself and Milton Hancock attempted to see the sheriff of Montgomery County, and one of us was allowed into the sheriff's office, at which time I identified myself as working on voter registration in Greenwood. I then asked about the charges and I was inquiring about the individuals arrested at the bus station, and I was then recognized by a member of the State Highway patrol, Bassinger, who had seen me active in voter registration in Greenwood on January 27, 1963. Now, what happened then was that I was told that there was no bond and that they would not be allowed to have visitors, at which time I left. I attempted to walk back to the car that we had gone to Winona in from Greenwood, a distance of 14 miles, and I was asked by the sheriff and the man, Bassinger, a member of the State highway patrol, whether or not I was a member of that thing in Greenwood; and I said I didn't know what he was talking about. At that time he asked me didn't I know how to say, Yes Sir."

Q. The State highway patrolman asked you that?—

A. Yes. He hit me in the mouth and knocked into the street. I got up and the sheriff said "This nigger is getting unruly." At that time I was arrested for disturbing the peace, resisting arrest—I think those were the only two charges then.

Q. Disturbing the peace and resisting arrest?—

A. That's right.

Q. After you merely said you didn't know what he was talking about by "that thing in Greenwood?"—

A. That's right.

Q. And you were his and knocked down and place under arrest?—**A.** That's right; and I was taken by Bassinger, their member of the highway patrol. At this time I was again subjected a lot of questions. A piece of paper was found in my pocket had been given to me the night before and which had written on it, "killed in a car," at which time I was charged with murder.

Q. How did you happen to have this piece of paper in your pocket, Mr. Guyot?—**A.** This piece of paper was given to me on the streets of Greenwood as I was attempting to serve in my function as a person concerned about voter registration. I was asked by the donor of this piece of paper to turn it over to the FBI. It remained in my pocket overnight, and I was arrested in Winona

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before I could turn it over to the FBI. This piece of paper was used as evidence to charge me with a murder that had occurred of two people 2 weeks ago in a car.

Q. Who were these two people who were murdered?—

A. I have no idea.

Q. Do you know what race?—A. They were white.

Q. Go ahead please.—A. I was beaten for 4 hours by members of the highway patrol, by members of the local police, the sheriff and the mayor of Winona. I was punched, kicked. One individual was playing with a long knife and said, “We should castrate all of you black bastards, and that might begin to solve some of the problems.” And another was playing with a gun behind my head and he kept moving it across the back of my head, and at the same time I was pushed against the wall by two of them and punched repeatedly in the chest and stomach by a member of the highway patrol who was later identified by the Justice Department.

Q. Do you know his name?—A. I don’t know, no. After this beating which involved thrusting a piece of lit paper in the area of my genitals, there was an attempt to get me to answer questions that I had actually committed that murder of those two individuals, whom I did not know and did not know had been murdered at that time. I was then taken from the courthouse—this occurred in the sheriff’s office in the presence of the city officials, members of the State highway patrol. And after that beating, when I was somewhat dizzy and groggy, I was then taken to the Montgomery County jail. Telephone calls began to come in, long distance calls, because I had left word at the Greenwood office that if I were detained obviously it would be because I was arrested. Those calls, in fact, saved my life. I have no reason to believe that those guys wouldn’t have killed me if other individuals were not aware that I was in that jail.

Q. Whom do you refer to by “those guys”?—

A. The two members of the State highway patrol, three members of the local police, chief of police, sheriff, and mayor of that town. I have no reason to believe that they were not concerned with killing me or anyone else who threatened to open up voter registration activities in Montgomery County.

Q. Had you been identified as a voter registration worker in that county?—A. I had identified myself when I walked in that office, and during the beatings Bassinger pointed out that he remembered me because I had been involved in demonstrations in Greenwood and that was what led to the question of whether I was in that thing. Now, you see, on June 13—well, first of all, I was transferred back and forth from the Mont-

gomery County jail to the county courthouse, and to the Carroll County courthouse and Carroll County jail; and I was beaten in that jail and I was approached by someone posing as a member of the FBI.

Q. Who beat you in the Carroll County jail?—

A. The jailer and an individual who represented himself after the beatings, as a member of the FBI. He wanted to point out to me—he showed me a small badge which I knew was not the identical material of the FBI because of my former activities with them about voter registration, and he then attempted to explain that he would attempt to get all the charges dropped and that I could walk from Winona to Greenwood. At the time I was wearing overalls used throughout the delta by people working on voter registration, and he said I didn’t have to worry because people would recognize me, and I wouldn’t have anything to worry about because we had to get rid of these problems and one way to get rid of them would be to drop the charges and I could walk to Greenwood.

Q. What is the distance?—A. Fourteen miles.

Q. And he wanted you to walk this distance?—

A. That’s right. But I refused until I could be picked up because I felt my life was in danger and also I was physically unable to walk that distance after having undergone a beating some 3 1/2 hours the day before. I then called Greenwood and two individuals came down to pick me up. James Peacock is the name of one of them. They were both arrested then, and I found out that the charges had not been dropped but that I would be tried the next morning. But before the trial, I was taken back to Montgomery County and beaten again; and the chief of police and Bassinger, the State highway patrolman wanted me to sign a statement to the effect that I came to Winona, I had trouble with the police, I was drinking and I fell out of a car and wounded myself.

Q. And this was third beating that you sustained in that period of time?—A. That’s right. I refused to sign the statement because it was not true, and I was then told by the chief of police that if I signed the statement he would try to get the murder charges dropped, and if I didn’t I would stay in Parchman just so long as the sun shines. Now, after being beaten again, because of not signing that statement, I was taken back to the Montgomery County jail, at which time I was visited by Dr. Howard, a doctor from Winona, and he attempted to get me to say I had fallen out of a car. I took the position that I was not prepared to make any statement relevant to the bruises I had incurred.

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Q. What was your physical condition at that time, besides the bruises you described?—A. Well, there were two gashes in the frontal and coronal area of my skull.

Q. Indicating your forehead?—A. That's right, this area here {indicated}. Also, I was bleeding from my nose and mouth, and I was bruised throughout the chest and stomach area, and I also had what appeared to be small blood clots in the area of the leg {indicating}, because I had been kicked repeatedly by three individuals after I had been knocked to the floor.

Q. You are pointing to the calf and shins of your leg? —

A. That's right, and the upper the upper leg too, inside the thigh here.

Q. All right, go ahead, Mr. Guyot.—A. After seeing Dr. Howard, it then really became funny to me because the chief of police, after having received a lot of long-distance phone calls brought me some aspirin because he didn't want me to die in that jail.

Q. The chief of police did this?—A. That's right.

Q. Now, in this primary, I believe you said you voted?—A. Right. After that I was interviewed by two very scared members of the FBI who pointed out very clearly that they were guests of the police and that we would have to talk quietly, at which time, despite the condition I was in, I gave a factual statement to those members of the FBI and I signed that statement. Two days later I was released on—no, I was tried first, the next day, found guilty of disturbing the peace, resisting arrest, and I was told that an investigation was being conducted relative to the murder charge.

Q. Did you have a lawyer at this murder trial?—

A. No, I asked for a continuance in order to get a lawyer, but they pointed out that wouldn't be necessary, wouldn't make any difference, and it didn't.

Q. The judge said that to you?—A. That's right.

Q. That you would be found guilty anyway, even after a fair trial?—A. After any trial there. That's right.

Q. Now, Mr. Guyot, at any time during your stay in the Winona jail, were you taken out of your cell and turned over to the white citizens?—A. That happened the night after the trial. I was taken out of the Montgomery County jail and there was a crowd of individuals in front of that jail, and I was turned over to them. I was beaten, shoved, and kicked and then taken by the jailer back into the jail. On the next day I was released on \$300 bond.

Q. Who were these people who beat you in front of the jail? Do you have any idea who the citizens were?—A. I think that these citizens were members of

the White Citizens Council because some of them I knew from my voter registration activities in Greenwood and Greenville. And I think it was not simply a bunch of people interested in someone who happened to be in jail because right after I was taken back into the Montgomery County jail, after that beating that night, I was photographed by some 25 people. I was forced to stand against the wall and 25 people just came in and took pictures. Now the day after that beating and after the trial, I was released on \$300 bond. It was only then that I found out that June 13 Medgar Evers had been killed because after that killing they cut off all the radios in the jail. And then I returned to Greenwood to attempt to conduct the voter registration activities, and then was carried off until June 25 when 23 of us were arrested for demonstrating in front of the Leflore County courthouse.

Q. You were arrested again in Greenwood?—A. That's right. The charges then were disturbing the peace and loud and unruly noises, and the reasoning behind this was—well, there was no reason. In fact, we simply went down to assist in the voter registration activities of people who wanted to register to vote in Leflore County. The 23 of us were arrested June 25, and we were added to another group of individuals who had been arrested on June 17 when a bomb had been thrown into a voter registration meeting in Itta Bena.

Q. These people were arrested because one of their meetings were bombed?—A. A voter registration meeting was conducted to teach prospective applicants how to pass the voter registration test and to attempt to get away from some of the fear that had been taught them throughout their lives. A bomb was thrown into this meeting. The people then left the meeting and attempted to go to the supervisor's home, who was the presiding official as far as law and order were concerned in Itta Bena.

Q. He was the supervisor of what?—A. Of a district, say. Now, what happened; when they left and attempted to go ask for protection, they were then arrested, 45 people, people who just left a meeting that had been bombed, and they were sent to the county farm. Now, the 23 of us arrested on the 25th of June were also sent to the county farm. We were then forced to work in clearing highways and what have you, which we did for 2 1/2 days, at which time we decided that in view of the fact that, first of all, we had been illegally arrested and second of all, there was imminent physical danger because of the nervousness of the guards and the casual conversations that they carried on with people we had known to be involved in

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other cases and incidents of brutality directed at people working on voter registration—that we would no longer work.

Q. Where was this prison farm?—A. The Leflore County Prison Farm is located 17 miles north of Greenwood.

Q. You were in fear of your lives, in other words?—

A. That's right.

Q. So you stopped working on this county prison farm?—A. That's right.

Q. What happened then?—A. The next day we were approached by an individual named Fountainberry, who was the superintendent of the work farm, and he pointed out that if we didn't work he would have to beat us; and we pointed out that we not going to work—period. A day later, we were approached by 43 individuals who were armed with submachine guns, baseball bats, and cattle prods, loaded onto a bus, and taken to Parchman Prison. The 23 of us had been joined—well, let me start again. There were actually 68 of us, but some of the people remained on the county farm. The 23 of us were transferred to Parchman prison where we were placed in individual cells, where we were deprived of all our clothing and all our personal belongings.

Q. Is this the State penitentiary, by the way?—A. Right.

Q. Where is that located?—A. In Sunflower County, Parchman, Mississippi.

Q. All right, they stripped you of all your possessions?—A. That's right, and we instructed—well, first of all, we were put in the maximum security compound and we were placed in individual cells, and we were instructed not to talk with one another, which we did, of course. When we did talk, we were then placed in the hot box. The hot box is room 6 by 6 which has 2 inches of air space—I mean a space in which air can enter—and at one time 21 of us were placed in that room.

Q. In a room six by six?—A. That's right.

Q. What about plumbing?—A. There was a hole in the floor which served as the only plumbing facility available.

Q. How long did you stay in there?—A. Three days.

Q. You spent 3 days in a hot box like that?—A. That's right. Now other individuals of the 23 who were imprisoned at that time spent more than 3 days in there. We were also visited at the time by members of the Sovereignty Commission and by the then-Governor Barnett, who came to the prison and wanted to find out what we thought of conditions.

Q. Ross Barnett, the former Governor of Mississippi, came to ask you what you thought of the conditions?—A. That's right. Now, some of the prisoners were interviewed by members of the press, the Mississippi press, and there was an attempt to point out that this was really a movement of people attempting to register to vote, but that there was a leader of the group and that everyone blindly followed the orders of the leader; and one person, after being put under pressure, agreed that this was what in fact existed. However, this was contrary to what in fact was the truth of the matter this was not the method of operation of people working on voter registration.

Q. Did they make any threats to you at that time while you were in Parchman?—A. Yes, there threats to fix us.

Q. What do you understand that to mean; a threat to fix you?—A. I asked one of the doctors on that place. Parchman, what they meant by that, and he said, "Well, castration, you know what I mean."

Q. In other words, if you persisted in your voter registration activities, you were threatened with castration?—A. That's right.

Q. Were there any other threats?—A. Well, there were threats in, first of all—is to make sure everybody in the State would know who was involved, the names and address of the 23 of us were passed around, really, because we were visited by individuals from across the State who some of us had known in other areas as members of the Sovereignty Commission or White Citizens Council.

Q. You recognized these persons who came to the prison as officials of the State government, is that correct?—A. Of the Sovereignty Commission, yes.

Q. Go on, Mr. Guyot.—A. We remained in Parchman for 2 months, after which the bond was finally put up and we were released. Then the voter registration activities began. I went to Hattiesburg, Miss., September 17 to witness the trial of Theron C. Lind by a three judge panel.

Q. Who was Theron C. Lind?—A. He was the registrar of Forrest County tried by a three judge panel on September 17, at which time he was found guilty of employing discriminatory practices and he was ordered to register 45 individuals and to use 14 of the 285 sections of the sections of the Mississippi Constitution. And I passed out copies of the voter registration application in the courtroom, in a federal district courtroom at which time I was stopped by the bailiff.

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But I simply refuse to stop passing out that information because I felt it was very relevant to the case being heard.

Q. Was this a State of Federal official who stopped you?—**A.** It was a Federal official. He attempted to stop me. I didn't stop. However, when I stepped outside of the courtroom, I was arrested by a member the Hattiesburg police department and I was arrested on the basis that I did not have a selective service card. I was then retained in that jail for 2 days, after which I was released.

Q. Did you have a trial?—**A.** No.

Q. And the charge was failure to have a selective service card?—**A.** That's right.

Q. And that was all?—**A.** That's right.

Q. And you spent 2 days in jail?—**A.** That's right.

Q. After you got out of jail, what happened?—

A. I began to work on voter registration in Forrest County, and that led up to an attempt to really open up and conduct workshops and rallies to get people to attempt to register to vote. This was completely unsuccessful to any substantial number until January 22 when we called a Freedom Day and people from all of the civil rights groups in Mississippi and the National Council of Churches participated in a demonstration that was timed politically, because the inauguration of Governor Johnson was on the 21st of January and this Freedom Day was the 22nd of January and Hattiesburg was Governor Johnson's home town, and if he was a Governor then he should be involved in seeing that people were allowed to be registered to vote. This obviously didn't work.

Q. Wasn't the Governor interested in seeing that people were registered to vote?—**A.** Obviously he was not or else he would have seen that they were registered if he had any political power in the State; but I think the political climate then was as it is now. No one controls this State. There is no law or order or a possibility of law and order. As long as the consistent dissemination of hate material is not only perpetuated but is also produced by the State Agencies of the so-called State government, there is no hope for law and order.

Q. Do you notice any improvement in the climate since the middle of February of this year?—**A.** I notice absolutely none. I think the forms of intimidations are somewhat changing, but it is intimidation. I think now the attempt will be to deal somewhat with slight changes in that for the first time this year teachers talked about the right to vote in their State Mississippi Teachers Association meetings. I think that unless free

and open elections are called in this State, what is going to happen is that instead of simply totally disenfranchising Negroes and a certain economic level of whites, a few qualified Negroes and a very few qualified whites are going to be taken into what is called, quite falsely, the political activity in the State of Mississippi. And I really believe that unless the voting bill is tied with actually effectuating the congressional challenge and these people are unseated, and in fact free and open elections are called in every State in which that voting bill is implemented, then what will have been done by the United States, the House of Representatives and the Senate is that they will have condoned and participated in, by the lack of activities or by omission, the work of individuals illegally elected in representing this State on the city, county and State level for 4 years, even after the vote was given legally to people who would not have a chance to vote in an election for the next 4 years unless special elections are called.

Q. Mr. Guyot, as executive chairman of the FDP, did you have plans to attend the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City in August of 1964?—

A. That's right. I was elected to the delegation at the State convention of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Three days before the National Democratic Convention I was called by members of the police department in Hattiesburg and told that either I surrender myself to be placed in jail for 30 days or Mr. Bishop, who had placed \$700 bond for my release on appeal, would have to pay the \$700.

Q. This was a prior arrest?—**A.** That was from a prior arrest; right. I was arrested in the month of January twice, once on the charge of contribution to the delinquency of a minor, at which time the bail was \$1,600, and it was proven that at that time, first of all, I didn't know the individual that I was supposed to have contributed to the delinquency of, and her mother didn't know me, and yet I found guilty. That was appealed and that is pending appeal now before the Mississippi Supreme court. The second arrest that occurred in Hattiesburg was in the same month and it dealt with interference with an officer because we were picketing in front of the Forrest County courthouse, attempting to give attention to the fact that Negroes had been systematically excluded by Theron C. Lind, who was in fact guilty under the Federal decree. Three individuals were arrested in front of me and I asked the arresting officer what the charges were, and he placed me under arrest immediately. I asked him for the charges of my arrest, and he said, "Interfering with an

Movement History (continued)

arresting officer.” And that case was appealed. And I asked that a continuance be granted until I get the attorney and this was not granted. Finally, there were three of us and we simply stood mute and plead innocent, at which time we were found guilty nevertheless. The \$700 was then placed by Mr. Bishop to appeal that case, that we would be released on bond pending appeal.

Q. Where did you spend the time when the Democratic Convention in Atlantic City was going on? Where were you?—

A. I was in Forrest County jail because the attempted appeal had been unsuccessful, because my attorney at that time was John Conner, who was at that time running for Congressman in Michigan and he found it impossible to return because of the necessity of him participating in his campaign there.

Q. Do you plan to go on with your activities?—

A. I think that the plan of people, not only myself but of people in Mississippi, is quite evident. And I think we now recognize that the political—well, in the same manner in which the lily white traditional Democratic Party has been the legal arm to systematically disen-

franchise and to starve and deprive people of education, that if in fact it is opened up to people who have this interest and who have the interest of labor being brought into Mississippi and unions being allowed to organize here, I think then that the plans are quite evident. We will challenge the so-called government of the State of Mississippi on every level, and that includes Judge Cox because this September we will attempt to initiate proceedings to impeach him. We will do this on every level of the government in this State, and we will operate politically as long as this country allows us to, and I believe that the outcome of this congressional challenge will really point out whether or not this country is prepared to say quite factually that Mississippi is a part of the United States. Once we point out that to the United States, then we have to point out to Mississippi itself that it is a part of the United States. And that we intend to do.

Mr. Laskin: Thank you very much, Mr. Guyot. I have nothing further.

(The witness was excused by the hearing officer.)

