

Patricia Urevith, Editor

*[Reprint from on-line version with article corrected from print edition to include a full set of attachments]*

# **"WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN SCHOOL TODAY? -- Mississippi Freedom Summer's Challenge for Teaching Now"**

**by Mark Levy**



## **ML's Warning:**

This is not just about history. The goal in telling the story of the Movement is to look at concepts of civic engagement and ask how they apply to you -- and to now.

## **“WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN SCHOOL TODAY? -- Mississippi Freedom Summer’s Challenge for Teaching Now”**

By Mark Levy<sup>i</sup>

(Reprint with full set of attachments from Association of Teachers of Social Studies (ATSS/UFT) Journal – Winter 2015, Vol. 52-Issue 1)

When I was in Meridian, Mississippi, doing civil rights work during the now historic summer of 1964, Mrs. Dessie Turner and her husband housed me and my wife, Betty, in their home. Picture it: two, white, twenty-somethings sheltered in a black family’s house in Mississippi, where the whole community – friends and enemies -- could see.

Mrs. Turner, born and raised in Mississippi, worked in a school’s cafeteria as her main job – she also worked cooking and cleaning in white people’s homes – and she could be fired at any time by the white school board and by any of the white women she worked for. Mr. Turner was a long- term employee in a shop-floor job at a local wood-products factory. Mrs. Turner was one of a tiny percentage of black voters who had registered well before the summer of 1964 – in addition, she had very quietly and independently held small, voter-training meetings for friends and neighbors in her home. During the summer of 1964, she assisted her more openly activist friend Mrs. Polly Heidelberg with a very secret committee of food preparers who brought lunch to us in the Freedom School -- every day! Mrs. Turner didn’t have kids of her own. Because she and her husband had regular jobs, they had a car and would drive their neighbors and their neighbors’ kids to various Freedom Summer events.

Mrs. Turner was a quiet person -- polite, lovely-looking, and gracious. Despite all the things she did, she wouldn’t speak at meetings, march in demonstrations, or carry a sign. She risked her job, her home, and possibly her life for doing what she did, but she never considered herself as especially brave or as any kind of “activist” or “leader.” She absolutely never thought that she was “teaching” the two white Freedom School teachers for whom she was providing shelter. Yet, what I was learning from her that summer (and from the kids and others like her I worked with) radically changed how I saw the world and how I thought about my role as a teacher.

So, my fellow Social Studies teachers, think about this: If we teach civil rights history from the “great man” perspective or as quick answers to multiple choice tests, how many of our students do we expect will become a new Martin Luther King, or a Malcolm X, or a Barack Obama? But on the other hand, with some encouragement and support, how many of them could contribute like Ms. Turner did? How many of our neighborhoods and communities have their own Mrs. Turners to learn from -- and about?

Valuing and teaching about “*Organizing*” -- or more specifically “regular and ongoing grassroots organizing” – and the related idea of “*empowerment*” of ordinary people – are the main concepts I would like to pass on to Social Studies teachers today from what I learned in my Mississippi Freedom School experiences.

So, I would say: “Look at (and teach) ‘civil rights’ history through the rank and file organizer’s lens. Learn and apply the lessons to today. Help students become engaged.”<sup>1</sup>

I agree wholeheartedly with Charlie Cobb, the SNCC activist and the original founder of Mississippi’s Freedom Schools: “The biggest misconception of the Movement is that it was a Movement of charismatic leaders engaged in direct action and in public spaces. The real tradition of the civil rights movement has to do with *community organizing*.”<sup>2</sup>

It might be trite, but necessary, to regularly remind ourselves: “Ordinary people, *working together*, can accomplish extraordinary things.” It should be that idea, along with the appreciation of nitty-gritty, person-to-person work and established trust that we try to pass on to our students as they confront the unfinished and always-threatened accomplishments of previous social justice movements -- and as they engage with those new issues of today that complicate and frustrate their lives.

When I was in my twenties, a newly minted college graduate yet to start my first year as a teacher, I didn’t know any of this. I was one of about 1,000 college students, teachers, lawyers, musicians and actors, doctors and nurses, and others from around the country who responded to a request by local, black Mississippians to help during the summer of 1964 with voter registration, Freedom Schools and other initiatives. As out-of-state, summer volunteers – idealistic and committed, but naïve – we had to be oriented and trained.

Those of us selected to work in the Freedom Schools attended sessions in Ohio, Memphis, or Jackson during June (and early July) of 1964 before heading south -- given guidelines and tools to help us become an unusual kind of teacher. We were told we would work in churches, on porches, in storefronts, or wherever students of all ages and their communities could find and designate as a “Freedom School.”

We were trained to listen, ask questions, help identify problems and needs, share experiences, fears, and hopes, and try to figure out, together, how to build a better world. We were told to respect and appreciate our students and what they brought to the Freedom Schools – and to see them as future leaders.

We were encouraged to “teach not as we had been taught but as we would have liked to have been taught” and that our teaching was not just the banking of information but also an

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<sup>1</sup> For models of this kind of teaching, see: A) The teacher resource book: Jenice View, Alana D. Murray, and Deborah Menkart’s Putting the Movement Back Into Civil Rights Teaching, (2001) <http://www.teachingforchange.org/> and Teaching Tolerance booklet “The March Continues: Five Essential Practices or Teaching the Civil Rights Movement” [http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TTM%20Essentials\\_0.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TTM%20Essentials_0.pdf); B) the academic paper: “Framing the Questions: An Interview with Adam Green conducted by Rachel Mattson” and its related “Essay: The Transformation Nature of the Mundane: Teaching the Civil Rights Movement through the Lens of Community Organizers” by Diana Turk with Stacy Brensilver Berman and Ryan Mills in Robert Cohen Teaching U.S. History: Dialogues Among Social Studies Teachers and Historians, Routledge, (Date TK); and C) the work of activist historians like Howard Zinn, Charles Payne, and Vincent Harding who bring rank and file organizing’s role in shaping the world into the classroom and connect it back to continuing Movement and community struggle.

<sup>2</sup> Brown University – Choices Program: “Freedom Now: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi” Scholars OnLine: Charles E. Cobb, Jr. <http://www.choices.edu/resources/scholarsonline/cobb/cc17.php> “What was the civil rights movement?” (Filmed 2012).

important part of building a Movement and of developing a new generation of activist students. After the summer, the teachers scattered all over the country – and hoped to carry and spread that kind of community-based and activist-oriented teaching and learning.

To make the connections relevant between Freedom Summer and now, I emphasize that Mississippi Freedom Summer was *one moment in a long -- and still ongoing – struggle for social justice*. I add that it: a) was broader than just acquiring and enforcing legislated, legal civil rights, b) was black led, and c) to a large degree, was a youth movement. For me personally, the Freedom Schools shaped my teaching throughout the rest of my life – and I continue to look to those experiences for inspiration and ideas. I know that I learned as much or more than I ever taught. I have come also to appreciate that an organizer’s work is never done because built into the job description is an essential mandate of “passing the torch.”

Our Freedom Schools dealt with art, poetry, history, politics, writing, etc. – but underneath all of those courses, it was about “empowerment” – both personal and organizational empowerment. Current-day educational writings call it “civic engagement,”<sup>3</sup> I see this concept simply as “common sense, basic skills, and active, democratic participation.”

Think about this: On their own and outside of school, students know how to hold social parties, organize sports teams, form musical groups, get involved in religious and community service activities, participate in clubs, take care of siblings/elders; and, in school, join student government and clubs. Teachers can get students to tell their personal narratives to reveal that they already possess many skills.<sup>4</sup> Articulating, acknowledging and supporting the strengths and awareness that the students bring are powerful first steps for teachers to do. Adapting and adding new skills for “civic engagement” projects are thus more familiar and easily done. It’s more about encouragement – ‘*Yes, you already know much of what you need to know, so go figure out and start doing what you want to do*’ -- than it is about any sophisticated training.

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<sup>3</sup> See academic papers, for example: A) Beth C. Rubin and Brian F. Hayes, ““No Backpacks” versus “Drugs and Murder”: The Promise and Complexity of Youth Civic Action Research” Harvard Educational Review Vol. 80 No. 3 Fall 2010. B) Meira Levinson, “The Civic Achievement Gap,” Circle, Working Paper51, January 2007. C) Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne “Educating the “Good” Citizen: Political Choices and Pedagogical Goals” PSONline [www.apsanet.org](http://www.apsanet.org), April 2004. D) James Youniss, Jeffrey A McClellan, Miranda Yates “What We Know About Engendering Civic Identity” American Behavior Scientist, Vol 40, No 5, March/April 1997. D) Jeffrey M.R. Duncan-Andrade “Note to Educators: Hope Required When Growing Roses in Concrete” , Harvard Educational Review Vol. 79 No. 2 Summer 2009. E) Jennifer Levin-Goldberg, “Five Ways to Increase Civic Engagement” Sept/Oct 2009 15 Social Studies and the Young Learner 22 (1), pp. 15–18 2009. National Council for the Social Studies. F) Jon N. Hale, “Early pedagogical influences on the Mississippi freedom schools: Myles Horton and critical education in the deep south,” American History Journal 34:1-2 (Annual 2007). G) Democratic and civic engagement are not new educational ideas. See, for example: John Dewey, Myles Horton, and Paulo Freire.

<sup>4</sup> Marshall Ganz was a summer volunteer in Mississippi in 1964 who then went to work with Cesar Chavez doing Chicano farmworker organizing in California. Ganz is now at Harvard’s School of Public Policy. See the materials his organizing institute developed for using the “personal narrative” in teaching, training, and organizing: <http://neworganizing.com/toolbox/training/story-of-self/> and <http://neworganizing.com/toolbox/training/story-of-us-and-now/> . (Both can be found under: “organizing and leadership. <http://neworganizing.com/toolbox/organizing-and-leadership/> of the organizers tool box at (home) <http://neworganizing.com/> .)

Rather than spell out the lessons I learned in the Freedom School in a didactic way, I would like to share with teachers (and teachers-in-training) some documents from “**before,**” “**during,**” and “**after**” that summer that may be stimulating, provocative, and still possibly helpful these days.

Attachment # 1 (“Teacher Training Notes for Mississippi Freedom School Teaching from Oxford, OH, Orientation – June 1964”) reflects ideas we were presented with that I took down on 3 x 5 cards at a 1964 teacher training session in Ohio – **before** we got to the Freedom Schools. Think about all those suggestions and challenges! Compare the approaches there with the standard teacher training and directions given these days. Every time I read these notes, I am reminded about what teaching can be.

The second (Attachment # 2 “The House of Liberty”) is a poem written by a 16-year-old Mississippi girl **during** the summer about what it took to get her school going and surviving in McComb. Read it and wonder about her – and what it took to create and maintain a Freedom School that summer. Recognize her challenges to both the local black and white communities. Think, also, about the Freedom School teacher and situation that encouraged and gave her the space to write that poem.

The next (Attachment # 3 – “Freedom School Teaching”) is a set of PowerPoint slides (illustrated with some of my 1964 photos) that I made that highlight the core questions we used **during** Freedom Summer and on which we based much of our teaching and curriculum. Whatever the subject was that we formally taught, we always came back to looking at the better world we were trying to make, encouraging critical thinking, discussion, and expression - - and seeing Freedom Schools not as a place to fill empty vessels, but as an organic and important part of the Movement. As Charlie Cobb, Staughton Lynd, and Noel Day taught: “Once a student learns to ask ‘Why?’ – the system is starting to change.” Included also in the set of slides are suggested teaching resources.

The Freedom School’s emphasis on student questioning not only encouraged critical thinking, but also empowered students to feel the right to question, the right to discuss, and the right to challenge – and provided practice doing those things.<sup>5</sup>

The last two documents (# 4 “What Makes You Pissed Off? What Can You Do About It!” and # 5 “Are Cars Speeding – Working with the Community”) included here come **after** the summer – in trying to apply experiences and insights I gleaned in Mississippi to teaching in New York. When I taught eighth grade social studies back in NYC, in Harlem, I started by asking a simple set of open-ended questions: What do you like about your neighborhood? What don’t you like? What would you like to preserve? What would you like to change? How can we go about doing that? The student investigative and action committees that grew from those discussions led to all sorts of exciting, year-long projects, such as working on the conditions of neighborhood housing, heat during winter, recreational facilities, retail stores, and government services.

The attached “Action Curriculum” worksheet (Attachment # 4) is a step-by-step discussion paper based on my experience teaching in junior high<sup>6</sup> along with what I recently

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<sup>5</sup> See also: DAN ROTHSTEIN AND LUZ SANTANA, “Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions: One small change can yield big results” Harvard Education Letter: Volume 27, Number 5, September/October 2011.

<sup>6</sup> JHS 43 Manhattan – Center for Urban Education and Architects Renewal Committee in Harlem (ARCH-CUE Project with NYC Board of Education 1967). See “Focus on Urban Education” NYC Education, Vol. 1, No. 1, Spring 1967). See also Levy 2014 oral history interview with Viola Huang, Teachers College/Columbia University.

adapted from what a NYC high school teacher does with his class.<sup>7</sup> I put those school-based experiences together with some of my community and union organizing work to develop a guide for a classroom-oriented, “civic engagement” teacher- training. The second, 2014 document (Attachment # 5) is a simple, very practical example<sup>8</sup> I found being used at a NYC public elementary school. Amazingly, it was developed by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYC/DOT)!

Look at these five attachments. Does this commentary or the accompanying documents resonate with you? I know and appreciate that much of what I am putting forth may run counter to educational directions mandated these days. Does it make you want to argue – with me, or with those dictating schooling methodology? Do they generate your own questions? Inspire you to use some of these approaches – in some kinds of way? Encourage you to find ideas for resources and activities?

The Civil Rights Movement is not over.<sup>9</sup> In 1964 in Mississippi, the parents, students, local Movement organizations and activists – with a little help from us summer volunteers -- brought about many changes, but not all that were needed. Some of what was won is being undone these days. The struggle for social justice continues.

Teachers are important people. Classrooms are dynamic places. Take what you want from this discussion and its attachments. Classroom-initiated civic engagement can run the gamut from participation in school clubs, charity or service work, to solidarity and struggle activities. Artists can make signs and posters; writers can make leaflets and produce newsletters; anyone can make phone calls, send texts, or get petitions signed; musicians can lead a parade or give a party; a range of students can do research, fact finding, write proposals – and together they can make plans for what they want to do.

We really can get beyond the conformist and stultifying schooling and static worldview that were portrayed in the critical Pete Seeger/Tom Paxton 1964 folksong<sup>10</sup> (“What Did You Learn in School Today?”) that I remember so viscerally from back then-- and make what we teach in school today into true, engaged education -- and into an empowering experience.

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<sup>7</sup> Montclair HS in NJ has integrated civic engagement into many aspects of the school program. Ms. Shana Stein, a social studies teacher there, recently introduced me to the work of two important academic groups doing inspiring and helpful research and program development: **YELL** (Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning) from the John W. Gardner Center at Stanford (CA) University ([http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/our\\_work/yell.html](http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/our_work/yell.html)) and **YPAR** (Youth Participatory Action Research building on the initiatives of, among others, Rutgers (NJ) Prof. Beth Rubin and CUNY (NY) Prof. Michelle Fine . See: Fine, M., Torre, M., Burns, A., & Payne, Y. (2007). Youth research/participatory methods for reform. In D. Thiessen and A. Cook-Sather, (Eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary schools*. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers. Schultz, B. D. (2008). Spectacular things happen along the way: Lessons from an urban classroom. New York: Teachers College Press. Rodriguez, L.F., & Brown, T.M. (2009). From voice to agency: Guiding principles for participatory action research with youth. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 123, 19-34. Institute for Community Research. (2004). *Participatory action research curriculum for empowering youth*. Hartford, CT: Institute for Community Research. Also, see the NYC community-based, educational and organizing initiatives of **The Brotherhood Sister/Sol**: <http://brotherhood-sistersol.org/programs/organizing>.

<sup>8</sup> NYC Department of Transportation: “Safer Streets Program: Educator Guide. Session 4: “Working with the community”

<sup>9</sup> Mark Levy text at Teaching for Change: <http://www.teachingforchange.org/mark-levy-speech-at-aft>

<sup>10</sup> Music by Pete Seeger: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vucczlg98Gw> Lyrics by Tom Paxton: <http://www.mydfz.com/Paxton/lyrics/wdylis.htm>



(Attachment # 1)

Abstracts from Mark Levy's Notes<sup>i</sup> on Freedom School Teaching<sup>ii</sup>

Oxford, OH – Orientation – June 1964

Freedom school not to educate to move north and get job - but to form and motivate leadership.

Most important thing to teach is that students -- must think, ask questions, respect themselves.

Not impose way we have been taught, but way we would have liked to have been taught. Also, Mississippi students will be coming expecting something different.

We will start building schools from the moment we get off the bus and get into the homes and meet the families.

There are a lot of people in the community who want the freedom schools. Get them to help recruit.

You will be often the first white person the students know well. Must be honest - explain why there. Watch out for "Yes sir's." Students must question and talk back to teachers.

Learn "un-freedom" before you can teach "freedom." Learn from students how to survive in a totalitarian state.

Certain basic shared emotion is "FEAR." Good starting point.

Don't teach what's in your mind - but find out what is in student's.

Develop on-going programs. (Find and) train people who can take over later.

Must encounter people as people - not as "students" and "teachers."

Once a student learns to ask "Why?" - the system is starting to change.

Get an understanding of the students' own schools.

Compile history of Negro in the county and on the history of the movement in the area.

Not black and white but "people" coming down. No insider and outsider. Eastland makes laws for all.



Dual responsibility of teachers to prepare for school - but also to be close to students and their activities.

If afraid of the unknown, should back out now - can't predict. Can't play game by their rules.

Everything going on in the community is a subject for discussion.

Curriculum becomes a crutch for a frightened teacher who runs out of words - but (aim is to) deal with students' desires.

Examine words often used:

"The system"

"The man"

"Mr. Charlie"

Get to know the needs of the community: Its general issues and the function of the freedom school in relation to those issues (and the ability of people to attend).

Handicraft co-ops growing out of community centers.

Let teachers teach out of own strengths - both in content and in style.

Medger was not killed just because he was leader of NAACP - what was he doing was the challenge.

When the press does a story, the story is not about you -- but about the community, the project, and the local people.

Far easier for northern whites to work in Negro community where we feel accepted -- than to step out of shell and go where we are also needed.

Q: "Would you marry a Negro?"

A: "Which one?"

[Emphasis on point is that it is a person, a human being, that we are concerned about - not a stereotype.]

Instead of tests for the pupils, there should be evaluations of the teachers by the students and discussions to see if they are getting what they want because the teachers are down there to help. The most important experience this summer for the students will be their relationships with their teachers.

( Attachment # 2 )

**“The House of Liberty” \* Joyce Brown (Age 16)  
1964 McComb, Mississippi -- Freedom School**

I came not for fortune, nor for fame,  
I seek not to add glory to an unknown name.  
I did not come under the shadow of night.  
I came by day to fight for what's right.  
I shan't let fear, my monstrous foe,  
Conquer my soul with threat and woe.  
Here I have come and here I shall stay,  
And no amount of fear, my determination can sway.

I asked for your churches, and you turned me down,  
But I'll do my work if I have to do it on the ground;  
You will not speak for fear of being heard,  
So you crawl in your shell and say, "Do not disturb."  
You think because you've turned me away,  
You've protected yourself for another day.

But tomorrow surely must come,  
And your enemy will still be there with the rising sun;  
He'll be there tomorrow as all tomorrows in the past,  
And he'll follow you into the future if you let him pass.  
You've turned me down to humor him,  
Ah! Your fate is sad and grim.  
For even tho' your help I ask,  
Even without it, I'll finish my task.

In a bombed house I have to teach my school,  
Because I believe all men should live by the Golden Rule,  
To a bombed house your children must come,  
Because of your fear of a bomb,

And because you've let your fear conquer your soul,  
In this bombed house these minds I must try to mold;  
I must try to teach them to stand tall and be a man,  
When you their parents have cowered down and refused to take a stand.

\* Published in the July 30, 1964, Freedom Star - a student newspaper of the Meridian (MS) Freedom School. Source: the Mark Levy Collection - Queens College/CUNY Civil Rights Movement Archives

[NOTE -- After the building that housed the McComb, MS, Freedom School was bombed during Freedom Summer of 1964, no one was willing to provide another place, so the teachers and students conducted classes on the scorched earth of the burned building. The poem above by 16-year-old Joyce Brown, a Freedom School teacher/student/activist, inspired community adults to rise above their fear and reopen the doors of churches to Movement activity, begin donating money and food to freedom fighters, and participate in voter registration. [See: [www.crmvet.org](http://www.crmvet.org) ]

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<sup>i</sup> Original notes are on file In the Mark Levy collection at the Queens College/CUNY Rosenthal Library Civil Rights Archive.

<sup>ii</sup> My hand written notes do not indicate who the teacher-training orientation speaker or speakers were in Oxford, OH. A 2012 email to me from the 1964 Statewide Freedom School Coordinator Staughton Lynd says he thinks he was probably the speaker -- and I think that he is the likely source. See Herbert Randal pix of Lynd at orientation in Oxford, below.



For digitized teacher training materials distributed prior to orientation at Oxford, OH, see mailing sent by COFO to prospective Freedom School teachers before orientation:

<http://digilib.usm.edu/cdm/compoundobject/collection/manu/id/2956/rec/14> (originals)

[http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/FSCfiles/B\\_10\\_NotesOnTeachingInMS.htm](http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/FSCfiles/B_10_NotesOnTeachingInMS.htm) (re-typed)

Originals of Freedom School teacher materials and some Meridian student writings are also on file in the Mark Levy Collection at Queens College/CUNY Archives.

# ML PowerPoint Slides: 1964 Freedom School Teaching


( Attachment # 3 )  
ML PowerPoint Slides: 1964 Freedom School Teaching

**FREEDOM SCHOOL: BASIC QUESTION SETS**



**"Why are we here today"  
"Why are we fighting segregation?"  
"What is it we want?"**


**Question Set 1: *Theirs?***



- What do **THEY** have that is **GOOD**, that we would want too?
- What do **THEY** have that is **BAD**, that we don't want?

**Question Set 2: *Ours?***


- What do **WE** have that is **GOOD** that we want to know more about -- and build on?
- What do **WE** have that is **BAD** that we wouldn't want to keep?



**Question Set 3: *Neither?***


What do **NEITHER** we nor *they* have now,  
-- that we could **IMAGINE** in the future ...

***For everybody?***




**Question Set 4: *Do?***

- Why are we in Freedom Schools?
- What's this "**Freedom Movement**" all about?
- Why did we choose to use "**non-violent**" tactics and strategies (in the face of violent reactions) as a way to struggle for change?
- Why was **voting** an important right to fight for?




**Students Critiqued Local News -- Wrote Their Own School Newspapers**








**Freedom Schools used:**  
**CREATIVITY**  
 (Poetry, Art, Movies, Acting, Music, Dance, Role Playing)  
 and  
**QUESTIONS!**



**“We (the teachers) learned as much as -- or more -- than we ever taught.”**



**Question: What did it take for young people**  
**to:** recruit, train, house, feed, protect, coordinate, communicate, transport, focus, raise funds, and find local bases for 1,000+ summer volunteer teachers, lawyers, voter registration workers, musicians, doctors, etc. in communities in Mississippi -- while also lobbying and doing publicity nationally to put pressure on the federal government!

**Answer: IT TOOK ORGANIZERS AND ORGANIZING**  
 (with Skills, Commitment, Vision, Relationships, Respect, Trust)

**QUESTION:**  
**What do these have in common?**



- a school dancing party
- a local basketball league
- a church breakfast
- a union meeting
- a civil rights march




**ANSWER:**  
 The *organizing skills* it took to make each happen. Teachers mainly need to say: “Yes, you know how do organize, if you want to”

It took a community ...

**Who were Meridian’s Ms. Dessie Turner and Ms. Polly Heidelberg –**

**How many people did it take to get our lunch to the Freedom School every day?**



**Differentiating Leadership Styles and Goals:**

**A) “Organizing” vs. “Mobilizing”**

**B) “Group-Centered Leadership” vs. “Leadership-Centered Group”**

**Some Resources for Teaching about Freedom Summer and The Civil Rights Movement**

Videos/Films about Freedom Summer

Then (1964): **"Freedom On My Mind"**

Now (2008): **"Prom Night in Mississippi"**



**FREEDOM ON MY MIND**

**Double Feature:**

Then and Now

• New June 2014 PBS Documentary by Stanley Nelson:

**"Freedom Summer"**



**PROM NIGHT**

**PS: About Birmingham but powerful: "The Children's March"**

**Teaching for Change**




**MOVEMENT**

BACK INTO CIVIL RIGHTS TEACHING

foreword by CONGRESSMAN JOHN LEWIS

<http://www.teachingforchange.org/>  
<http://zinnedproject.org/>

**Brown University: Choices Program**



**Freedom Now: The Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi**

THE CHOICES PROGRAM

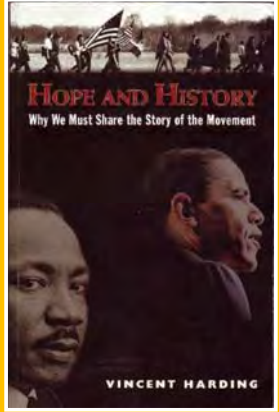
YouTube Intro: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Kvk8BcUcc4>  
 PDF: <http://www.choices.edu/resources/detail.php?id=203>  
 iTunesbook: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/book/freedom-now-civil-rights-movement/id57178237?mt=13>

**Facing History and Ourselves**



**Choices IN LITTLE ROCK**

<http://www.facinghistory.org/>



**HOPE AND HISTORY**

Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement

VINCENT HARDING

**Vincent Harding's Hope and History –**

For all who “teach” and share.

**More Good Teaching Resources:**

- *The Fog Machine* – A novel by Susan Follett
- *Risking Everything* -- A Reader from U/Wisconsin
- *The March Continues: Five Essential Practices* -- from Teaching Tolerance



**On-Line Info -- Background**

**Two Favorite Websites:**

**CRM Articles, Memoirs, Photos:**

[www.crmvet.org/](http://www.crmvet.org/)

**MS Freedom Schools:**

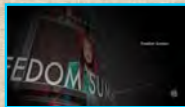
[www.educationanddemocracy.org/](http://www.educationanddemocracy.org/)



**Examples of High School Student Work**

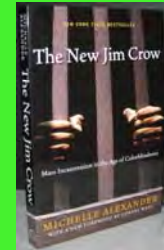
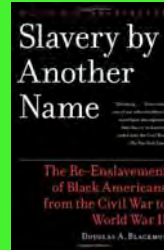
(where I was interviewed)

1. Published **oral history** with D.C. Everest Area Schools (Wausau, WI) 10<sup>th</sup> graders: <http://www.dceorahistoryproject.org/he-nations-longest-struggle.html>
2. National prize winning **website** by Masterman School (Phila, PA) 10<sup>th</sup> graders: <http://15531809.nhd.weebly.com/>
3. **Video** interview and documentary done by 12<sup>th</sup> grade senior at Bayonne (N.J.) High School: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkPBIV\\_6HmY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkPBIV_6HmY)



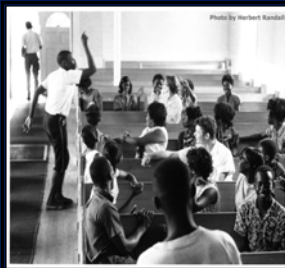
Victories and gains can not be taken for granted!

People with power and privilege never give up trying to regain what they feel they lost.



See also: Ta-Nehisi Coates in *The Atlantic* 6/3/2014: <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>

**Mississippi Freedom Schools**



Slide Adapted from J. A. Ligon and G. W. Chilcoat

- "The overall theme of the school[s] would be the student as a force for social change in Mississippi."
- The goal was to prepare young citizens to undertake solutions to community problems and create a better society for both African American and white citizens.
- Freedom school "as a place where students could freely ask questions about those things, political as well as academic, which troubled and excited them."

"Now it's your turn!"



Mark Levy's photographs and posters from personal collection as well as from donated materials in the Queens College/CUNY - Rosenthal Library Civil Rights Movement Archives

Presentation prepared by and credit to: Mark Levy -2014

( Attachment # 4 )

**Ask your students: “What makes you pissed off?  
What can you do about it!”**

**A Workshop for Developing an Action Curriculum: or ...  
Would You Like To Teach A Semester’s Course or Project Like This One?**

A history teacher I know in a NYC public high school recently taught a whole semester’s elective class based on his first day’s question: “**What makes you pissed off?**” I taught eighth graders in NYC 1966-8 using a similar model asking what they liked and what they didn’t like in their Harlem community – and then developed action projects based on that. This approach incorporates elements from the 1964 Mississippi Freedom School Curriculum. The steps below from the two experiences include critical thinking, inquiry, research, communication and advocacy skills, and personal and group empowerment. <sup>i</sup>

**Step 1** – Let’s go around the room and put on the board a list of things that “make you pissed off.” (Or what you like, what don’t like about your community?) Explain a bit what you mean.

**Step 2** – Let’s go down that list and see how many people feel the same way.

**Step 3** – Which of these problems are “personal” problems? Which are “shared” or “public issues?” Tell a little bit about yourself. Explain why you see this as a shared problem.

**Step 4** – If we, in this class, were try to do something to change or improve conditions on any of these problems, which ones would might be “doable” and lend themselves to some sort of action? Which ones can we not deal with in this class and/or the way they are framed and why?

**Step 5** – What would be your “vision” of how things would be if the problem could be fixed? Can you think of examples where it is better?

**Step 6** -- Of the issues that we have identified so far that: a) piss us off, b) are shared and not just personal, and c) lend themselves to a doable project, what would you most like to work? How would you rank them on a priority scale to take action on? Why that way?

**Step 7** – For each of the ranked issues, what do you see as its:

a) Causes

b) History and Scope

c) Who is impacted? i.e., Who is hurt or suffers? vs. Who benefits? Who would benefit from making a change? Who would benefit from maintaining the status quo?

d) Where can we learn more?

**Step 8** – For each of the ranked issues: Who has the power or authority to make the change? Are there laws, rules, or regulations involved?



**Step 9** – Who might be some friends or allies in trying to accomplish our goals? Why? What might you expect from them?

How can we involve skills and talents of other classes and teachers for our project? e.g., Communications (Media, Literature, etc), Art, Music, Accounting, Math?

**Step 10** – Who might you anticipate could be some opponents? Why? What might you expect from them?

**Step 11** – Who might be “neutral” when you start? Will you need to win any of them over to your side? Might the opponents win any of them over to their side? Why bother?

**Step 12** – For the project you pick to work on (with others in a committee), make an Action Plan. As you do that:

- a) Make a “Time Line” for short term and longer term actions.
- b) Identify resources (materials, skills, money, people) you might need.
- c) Reach out to potential friends (and make a plan for dealing with potential enemies).
- d) Identify and assign responsibility for specific tasks and work. Talk about how you’ll work as a team.
- e) Start work based on your plan. Two slogans to remember:
  - “Steps in a plan: Investigate, Negotiate, Demonstrate.”
  - “Plan your work – Work your plan.”
- f) Keep records, pictures, accomplishments. List problems that need resolving.
- g) Build in methods and ways to evaluate how things are going.
- h) Evaluate and re-evaluate your plan, make adjustments. Work your new plan.

**Step 13** – At the end:

- a) Make suggestions to the school, teacher, etc. based on your experiences for how to improve the class and project next time;
- b) **Have a party!** -- to celebrate your learnings and accomplishments.
- c) **Tell the world!** Publicize and share your accomplishments (and future plans) so others can use your ideas, work, and momentum to build on. Tell others about what you did and tried to do – and what is left to do.

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<sup>i</sup> See also: “Freedom is a Constant Struggle”: The Story of the Bushwick School for Social Justice and Make the Road by Walking” by Hollyce C. Giles in Charles Payne and Carol Strickland (editors) Teach Freedom (TCP/NY 2008). Under the pressures of “teaching to the test” and of focusing on “mandated and testable curriculum,” one obvious and easy way to fit in this kind of course is as an “elective” -- but that often leaves out those students who don’t get to take “electives.” The Bushwick School came up with a creative alternative -- they integrated it into “homeroom” time. An “outside-the-box” solution!

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

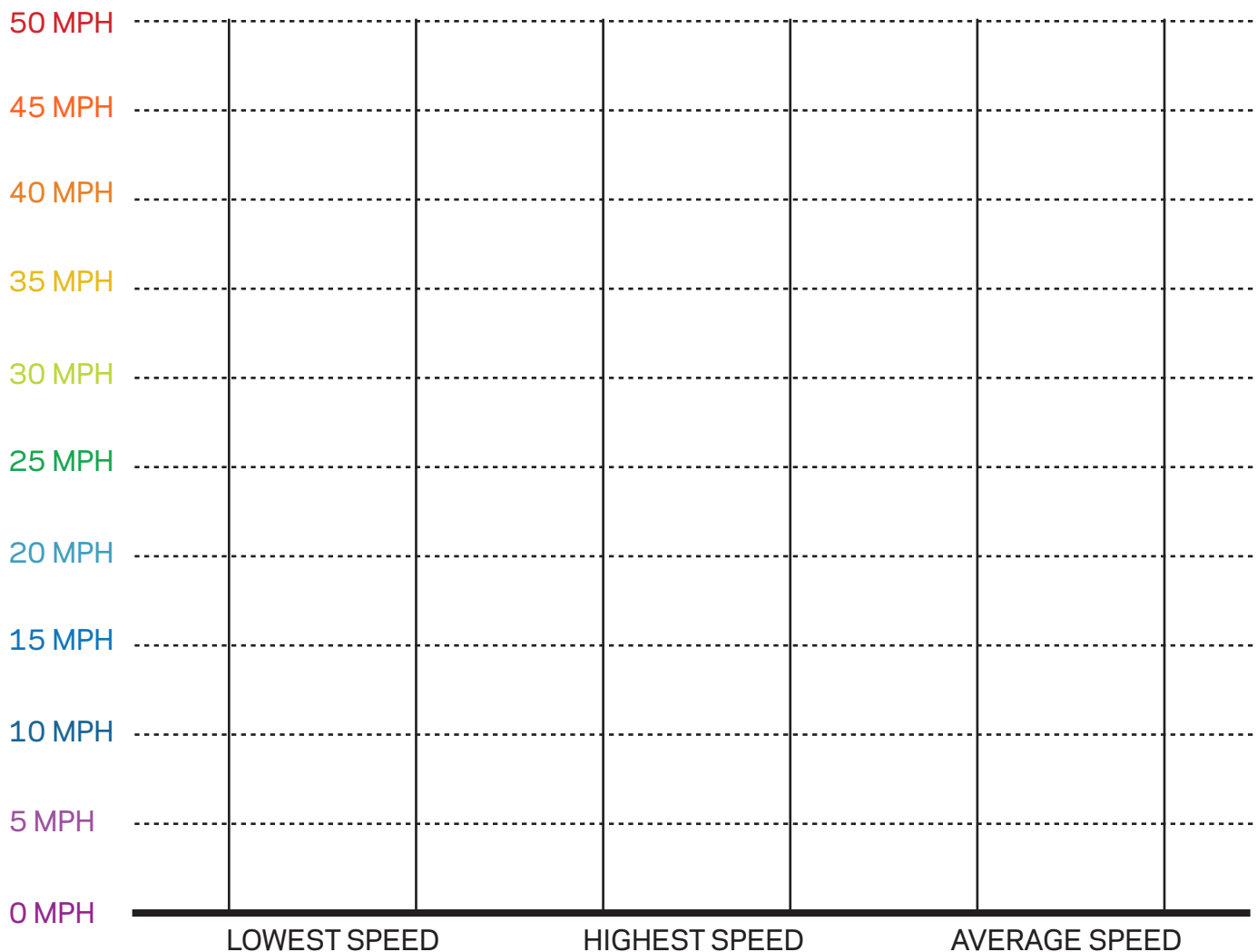
Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Are Cars Speeding?

## Comparison of Speeds Around Our School

Look at your data sheet with the results from our speed study. Fill out the graph with the lowest and highest speeds the speed detector read. Find the average or mean speed and show it here.



## SAFER STREETS PROGRAM - SESSION 4

# Working with the Community

## Some Big Ideas for Session 4

This program provides teachers and students with the opportunity to connect their work in the classroom to their larger community. Through English Language Arts skills, the students will share what they have learned from their study with other students, teachers, school administrators, neighborhood representatives, and/or elected officials. Teachers and students can then work for tangible improvements to the streets around their school.

## Objectives

- To use the observations and data from the first three sessions to come up with an action plan to make improvements in the neighborhood.
- To take scientific observation and use it to create powerful messaging for peers, adults and people of influence in the community

## Materials

- Depending on presentations, anything from Powerpoint, to inexpensive digital filming and editing tools, to or posterboard and markers, to model-building supplies

## Activities

### BRAINSTORMING NEXT STEPS (15 MINUTES):

- Ask the students to list all of the things they think need to be changed on the streets around the school. Make a list in front of the class in the rug area.
- Which of these actions are most feasible? Which ones are we most concerned about? Narrow down the list to the top concerns.
- Who would we need to work with to make these changes happen? Who do we need to present our findings to?
- Based on interest, students can be put into groups to develop certain ideas further.

## Safer Streets Program Outline

- Session 1: The Streets Around Us
- Session 2: Driver Observation
- Session 3: Speed and the Community
- Session 4: Working with the Community

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<sup>i</sup> MARK LEVY served in 1964 as the coordinator of the Meridian, Mississippi, Freedom School. He is a born, bred, and educated New Yorker who worked at two careers after returning from Mississippi. First, he taught social studies in a West Harlem junior high school and Third World Studies in the Queens College SEEK Program. He then left classroom teaching to become a union organizer in the electrical manufacturing and health care industries. After retiring from his union position, he became involved in civil rights archival and preservation work and in teaching about the Movement and its relevance to today's issues. During 2013-14, he served as Special Assistant to the President of Queens College for the Civil Rights Movement 50th Anniversary Commemoration Initiatives. He was invited to be a guest speaker at the 2014 AFT National Convention in Los Angeles. Many of his 1964 Mississippi photos appear in the Spring/Summer 2014 issue of Jewish Currents, and in a number of books. They can be seen online at: <https://picasaweb.google.com/QCCRMVETS/MeridianMissFreedomSummer1964PixByMarkLevyAndDonnaGarde>).