

What I Learned from the Freedom Movement

The Freedom Movement taught me so much – how to see the inequity of American society, the absolute bravery and brilliance of the local Mississippi people, the amazing energy and value of activism, the system of structural racism in America and the value of organizing and teaching young people for any movement for freedom and justice. I also learned the importance of white people teaching and organizing other white people. In 1967, I went to Appalachia and worked with SCEF and the Appalachian Volunteers to organize the poor class of primarily white people there for 10 years.

These lessons have shaped my life: to live primarily to carry them out to others especially young people. When I speak, I carry my passion and my commitment for social change for a free, equal society. I believe that SNCC also called for action in organizing people and teaching especially young people how to make their lives and society better. This is what I've tried to do my whole life. While I made less money with this focus as my life goal, I am so grateful for all of it, even the hard, scary parts.

In this submission, I am including many of the ways that I have tried to reach out to young people, to teach them about SNCC and the wonders of being in a movement. I have included these ways precisely because SNCC always called for action beyond words.

Four Short Clips

One of the ways I reached out was to make a DVD in an actual classroom setting at Portland State University. It was filmed by a student and all the questions were from students – young freshman. I am including in this statement 4 short clips from this DVD, which were chosen by young people as the best clips to use with young people today.

Here are pictures of the young people that chose the clips:



Benito Juarez and Victoria Healy-Juarez



Lisa Anderson & Jake Cray

Here are the 4 short clips from the DVD that they chose:

 [In Rarefied Air With Karen Haberman Trusty Dire...](#)

My Website and DVD

I named my DVD “In Rarefied Air.” Here is what I wrote up for my website to explain why I named it that:

Rare-fied - rerə, fid

In Rarefied Air is what I call the consciousness that I as a civil rights worker sometimes reached, transcending my own personal self and my concerns of safety. I felt mostly part of a community fighting to end the huge injustice of racism in America. I was profoundly moved by the deep spirituality of the Black community. Indeed, to me the Southern Freedom Movement was spiritual as well as political. I joined together with the local Black community to stand up and right the racial wrongs of America, especially in the Deep South. We had a saying that if one of us falls, a thousand will take our place. I believed this and I went for it. To me, it was beautiful and indeed the air was different-it felt different- it felt like rarefied air.

Eight young freshmen from Portland State University helped me design my website.

Public Presentations

One of the ways I carry my SNCC experience forward is to do presentations at high schools, colleges, organizations, churches, etc. Here is a selfie I took at Lincoln High School in Portland with some of the students there:

Lincoln High
School:
5-13-2015



Dr. Roberta Hunte

Some years ago, Dr. Roberta Hunte approached me and asked me to do some presentations in her classes at Portland State University. Dr. Hunte teaches classes in Black Studies and wanted me to share with her students my experiences in SNCC and tie those experiences in to today so that these younger generations coming up will have that critical information about the personal and social value of activism.

Here is a recording I did with Dr. Hunte this past week that covers our work together. Through working with her, I literally reached hundreds of students:

 [GMT20240120-001551 Recording 640x360.mp4](#)

Here is Dr. Hunte's photo and brief biography:



[Dr. Roberta Suzette Hunte](#) is an Assistant Professor at Portland State University's School of Social Work. She received her M.S. in Conflict Resolution from PSU, and her doctorate from the University of Manitoba in Peace and Conflict Studies. She is affiliate faculty in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies and Black Studies. Dr. Hunte is a community engaged Black feminist scholar, whose academic interests include sexual and reproductive justice, cultural work for social change, and how Black, Indigenous, and People of Color navigate institutions: particularly construction, maternal healthcare, and higher education.

References

DVD

Below is a link to my DVD, "In Rarefield Air":

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TV-DVQcRQVtb3-qL_VJkMugdjsMr10Gz/view?usp=drive_web

In the DVD I talk about my SNCC experiences and answer questions the students asked me. The DVD was made as I did a presentation in a class at Portland State University.

CD

Here is the link to the entire CD:



The first time I presented with LaRhonda Steele, a blues and gospel singer in Portland was at a Unity new thought church. We continued to present my story intermixed with LaRhonda singing freedom songs and found that it was not only palatable but very popular. In fact, we were on the local NPR and we did concerts to at least a thousand people. In 2019, we cut a full CD with 10 songs and 8 brief movement experiences of mine before each song. And then COVID hit. My friend, Marshall Jones, personally gave me permission to use the song "In the Mississippi River" in any way I'd like. Here are links to my words introducing the song as well as the song itself:

https://www.icloud.com/icloudrive/014HfooukHbdg_u2tkk1CyPmA#Spirit_of_Freedom

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1. Everybody Wants Freedom	11. I Woke Up This Morning
2. Karen - The Rally	12. Never Turn Back SNCC's Mississippi Anthem
3. Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me 'Round	13. Karen - Freedom Summer
4. Karen - Segregation	14. Mississippi God Damn (Written by Nina Simone)
5. Guide My Feet	15. Karen - Murders in Mississippi
6. Karen - White Supremacy Then and Now	16. In The Mississippi River (Written by Marshall Jones)
7. Over My Head I Hear Freedom In The Air	17. Karen - Call To Action
8. Karen - SNCC	18. This Little Light Of Mine
9. Keep Your Eyes On The Prize	
10. Karen - Jail Song	

This CD centers on the Southern Civil Rights Movement of the 1960's and its relevance to today's social justice movement- Black Lives Matter. The narrative is written by Karen Trusty who worked with SNCC (The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee) in 1963 and 1964. Her story is woven into a narrative which focuses on the struggles of SNCC and local Black communities to end racist oppression in Mississippi. LaRhonda Steele, an award winning blues and gospel vocalist sings Modern renditions of Civil Rights songs most of which were originally Negro Spirituals.

Karen Haberman Trusty has spoken about the Civil Rights Movement for many years all over the U.S. and since presenting with LaRhonda she has been able to convey more fully the strong Spirituality of the Movement.

Mark Steele - Piano
Recorded and Mastered at Sherrett Studios
by Urei Tropets
Album Artwork by Lavi Hendin



Karen Haberman Trusty
Harvard Univ. graduate, blessed to work with The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in the 1960's. "It changed her life in the best of ways." She is featured in the film "In Rarified Air" and has spoken at the Museum of African Diaspora San Francisco and continues to speak out against injustice all over the country.



LaRhonda Steele
Award winning vocalist and recording artist. "These songs are the Battle Cry against the oppression of my people. I'm deeply moved by this project and its relevance."

