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"The nigras are happy and satisfied." "You ought to go back to Massachusetts and leave Mississippi alone." Over and over again, white citizens of Mississippi -- if they will talk to you, or comment on you -- will say this: "Our nigras are happy". I suppose it was through this twisted & thought process that the "good" white people in Leflore County Mississippi decided that the Negroes there were so happy, that they would cut 22,000 of them from the relief rolls so that they could ~~starve~~ <sup>starve</sup> to death while they were still happy. After all, there were "agitators" in that county making the Negroes unhappy, and disturbing them with talk of becoming first class citizens. Thus, 22,000 "happily" ~~starving~~ <sup>starving</sup> Negroes in Leflore County alone.

The hero of James Michener's The Fires Of Spring, commenting on America and it's people says: "When I think about them I want to sing." I, thinking on the same subject, want to cry.

Here in Mississippi I get a clear - sometimes a too clear - picture of "America". I see America, it's denials, it's hypocracies, it's "freedom". In this & "land of opportunity", that says to the world: "give me your tired, your poor, your hungry, your oppressed", I wake up every morning <sup>knowing</sup> that about thirty or forty people will come by the office seeking food and clothing, and I know that most will have to be told to come back again because we have run out of food and clothes. I see the same person who told me several week ago that he couldn't "mess with that votin stuff, cause that's white folks business", overcome this fear, or suppress this fear, with desperation. I hear the White Citizens Council call for the "banded intelligence of a free community" to halt the "looming shadow of Negro political domination". <sup>AND WONDER WHAT FREE MEANS</sup> I see that the tragedies and terrors and

denials, spawned here in Mississippi, are infecting the entire United States. We now have national political leaders who have attained their positions of power and prominence on the basis of how effectively they can present doctrines of hate, ~~injustice~~ injustice, and intolerance; and in the name of "freedom", they lead us along paths that will ultimately destroy this country.

This is America, supposedly governed "of the people, for the people, and by the people", but a man can still be shot and killed for trying to become a part of "the people". Our congressional leaders ~~make plans for making~~ make plans for making American type democracy attractive to the world, failing to realize that this American type democracy is not democracy; it is more like government for the few, of the few, and feeling the many. Ask a black man in Mississippi what America means to him.

In this land of "liberty": A high school principal tells me that because I work on voter registration, I am too controversial to speak in the high school; a small town mayor says, "we don't need no one teaching our nigras how to vote"; two men <sup>are</sup> killed as a Negro ~~knows~~ enrolls in a formerly all white university in Mississippi; a man in a rural Mississippi town says that he will go down to register when it was possible to go right up and get his name on the book without harrasement or fear of harrasement.

In this land of "opportunity": A Negro <sup>in Mississippi</sup> finds himself forced to participate in an educational system that affords him only a minimum chance of becoming - while attending state schools - anything but a teacher, preacher, or farmer; an educational system that ~~stifles~~ stifles the intellectual development of both Negro and white - a creative vacuum.

and "yassuh"

From this land of "white makes right"/come the congressional leaders who control the key committees in congress; the people who are going to explain and show to the world what democracy is, and how it works. I wonder if these leaders will show the world the hundreds of Negroes in Leflore County waiting for food and clothing denied them by the state of Mississippi because of voter registration efforts among the Negroes in that county; or the hundreds of starving, clothless Negroes in that county afraid to take advantage of the food and clothing distribution program because it's tied up with that "votin mess". Will they show the bullet holes in Joe MacDonald's door in Ruleville, Mississippi? Will they let the five men recently beaten in Rankin County Mississippi as they attempted to register to vote tell the world of democracy in Mississippi? Let the thousands of Negroes in rotting houses on rutted roads tell how happy and satisfied they are.

It is frightening to realize that one of the most powerful senators in the senate was elected on the basis of his racism and reaction. In a world of emerging nations of the darker race, I wonder what they think of our "freedom and "liberty", when they hear this same senator condemn as blasphemous "blasfemous", a play which portrayed God as a Negro.

In a world on the brink of war, these are the men we depend on for clear, unemotional thinking as we search for solutions to our domestic and foreign problems. These are the men who create the image of democracy.

Almost a million Negroes in Mississippi; almost a million persons in Mississippi being told every day, in some way, that they are



inferior beings.

But, Mississippi is changing. Adamant as Mississippi is in its resistance to change, it is being forced to change by a world that will no longer tolerate the hypocrisy of separate but equal, human but black, "they're happy"; and by a handful of young people, willing to walk dusty roads, enter rotting houses, to make a suppressed people aware of their role in the development of a true democracy in the United States.

The change is reflected in the words of a much harrassed, much intimidated, rural Mississippi Negro ~~day~~ worker: "I'm in the B class, I'm gonna ~~stuck~~ ~~be~~ here til it's over."; or in the voices of twenty or so rural Mississippi Negro teenagers walking home from a mass meeting singing, "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Roun' "; or in a lady standing up at a meeting of a newly formed Voters League and saying, "we'll go down (to the county courthouse to register to vote) by ourselves, to show him we're just not satisfied".

Change comes slowly, and in order to effect this change with the rapidity that is now so necessary in order that we may ~~save~~ <sup>veer</sup> off from the road of our own self destruction ( which begins with the perversion of freedom and the compromise of principles), the United States - even more than Mississippi - needs to take a deep honest look at itself, and find out what it has become. Why should a Negro in Mississippi have to ~~manifester~~ <sup>(this includes life)</sup> decide if losing what little he has, <sup>AFFORD TO</sup> is worth making an attempt at registering to vote? How much longer can the people and the government of the United States <sup>1</sup> close their eyes to the tragedies and injustices that occur ~~every~~ here in Mississippi, every day? How many more Leflore Countier, Till's, and Lee's.

Eyes are closed in the name of Freedom, compromise, and security. Benjamin Franklin once said: " He who would compromise a little freedom, in order to gain a little security, deserves neither freedom or security." He should have added, can get neither freedom or security. How secure are we today? How much freedom have we compromised?

The chains that bind the Negro in Mississippi, are the chains that bind the United States. The mutilated body of a Negro found dead on a Mississippi highway, is another chunk from the soul of a United States, that is slowly rotting. With the first excuse made about the first mob-hanged Negro, the United States began to strangle. The forgers of the chain, and the excusers of the mobs, still define "freedom", and "democracy" for us, and make plans to spread their "freedom" and "democracy" into a world that wants no part of it. Our America to the world, is Oxford Mississippi; a demented army general, leading a brick and bottle brigade of children against an attempt to grant 114 years of opportunity denied. And we're to lead the world along the paths of peace and freedom?

South of the Mason-Dixon Line, there is a reservoir of hope, and hope is almost as infectious as hypocrisy, but who will join the ~~thousands~~ young people in tapping this reservoir by saying, "get thee behind me Eastland"?

"Happy and satisfied", are <sup>two</sup> of Mississippi's most often used word perversions. The meanings of these two words <sup>have</sup> become as distorted as "Freedom and democracy". These four distortions have been the very foundation of do nothing by the federal government since Mississippi gained its reputation as a tyranny.