

[May 7, 1963]

REPORT OF JAMES AUSTIN ON THOMASTON AND UNIONTOWN ALABAMA pp. 1-2

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high school student

BERNARD LAFAYETTE ** JESSE GRAHAMS OF SLEMA pp. 14 to 26

Austin: This is James Austin, field secretary for the SNCC and I am about to give a short report from May the 7th.

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May 7th, 1963

I left Selma, Alabama, about 10 o'clock to go to Thomaston, Alabama. I arrived in Thomaston, Ala. about 11:15. And I went around talking to the older people there. And they said that they was very interested in the SNCC program. And that they had no excuse for being not a registered voter. Lots of them said that they were veterans and they feel that they should be a registered voter. One man was very active in the program. His name is Mr. Willie Young. He said he been tryin' to ask himself the question: why he is not a registered voter? And he said that ~~he~~ he finds no answer. That he feel like it's his job to be a registered voter. Later on, Mr. Young introduced me to some more of his friends who responded the same way about the SNCC program. And that night, they were having a concert at the Marengo High Training School. So, I was on the outside of school talkin' to a bunch of high school kids. And these kids wanted to know what had taken us so long to come to their area. And I think it was approximately maybe from 150 to 200 students that was gathered around me. And they said that they would like to have a SNCC worker to work in their area. They said that they would be willing to canvass their whole city. Said that they would like for someone to come there and to work along with them. That if there's anything else they can do to help the program out, such as sit-in demonstrations, boycott and so forth -- which I have a list of segregated places there is in ~~town~~ Thompston. Thompston is a very small place. I don't think there's no more than maybe, in the town of Thompston, there's maybe 4 grocery stores, maybe a post office. No bus station; you catch the bus station on the outside of the highway. These kids said that they know there's not too many place to go. But there are some places that white go that they doesn't go. And they'd be willing to

participate in these demonstrations. Alot of the kids said that they would even like to come into Selma to work.

I left Thomaston this morning about 1 o'clock, this afternoon that is. And went to Uniontown. I also went to the high school in Uniontown. Talked to some kids. And they're interested in our program. They're interested in seeing their county move out. And I met Mr. Moore there. And he said that they already have voter registration clinics out there in Perry County. That they have at least 500 or more Negroes register to vote, right now. He said that they had maybe 400 to go down in the last 3 months, to get registered. And that they have filed affidavits -- sent 'em in already -- for the people. And lots of them haven't filled them out so far. He said that he don't think that it's right to date. But there's nothin' that we could do to help him. And he say: if things get any harder, he'll be more than gladly to ask us to come into his area.

I left Uniontown and went to a little place we call Dayton, Alabama. Which only has two grocery stores. And one of them is includin' a grocery store along with the post office. And I talked to some Negro mens there. And they was tryin' to find their excuse for not being a registered voter. And I left there and came to a place called Fawnsdale??, Alabama. And the people there responded the same way. So that's that.

End Report