

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING
COMMITTEE

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MISSISSIPPI DIRECTOR
ROBERT P. MOSES

Robert Parris Moses has directed SNCC's Mississippi project since he first went into the state in August 1961 and set up a pilot voter registration project in McComb.

He was teaching in New York City when the student sit-ins broke in 1960, and decided to come South to work for SNCC in 1961.

Moses was born in New York City in 1935 and grew up in a Harlem housing project. He was awarded a scholarship to Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y. upon graduation from Stuyvesant High School.

Moses received the A.B. degree from Hamilton College in philosophy with honors in 1956, and graduated as vice-president of his class and captain of the varsity basketball team. Resuming active association with the American Friends Service Committee under whose auspices he had participated in work camps in Europe the summer of 1955, he worked in a similar program in Japan in 1956.

In September of that year he began one and a half years' study at Harvard University and at the end of one year received the M.A. degree in philosophy. His mother's death and hospitalization of his father drew him to New York City again where he tutored privately before beginning three years' teaching of mathematics at the Horace Mann School.

Moses came South "to stay" in time to be the first representative of a civil rights group to attempt rural voter registration work in what was then, and still is, the most economically and politically depressed state in the nation.

He has remained in that state since 1961 - a major factor in conquering some of the fear that many Mississippians have: civil rights workers will come into a community, "stir up trouble" and then leave. For this reason also, scores of native Mississippians have either been placed on SNCC staff or work actively with "the students" as SNCC workers are widely called by the local people with whom they live and work.

Moses began a vote drive in the hazardous southwest area of Mississippi, stronghold of white terrorist activity, and was beaten by the cousin of the Amite County sheriff when he accompanied two farmers to the courthouse in the town of Liberty in 1961. When SNCC workers moved North to the planter country of the Delta in 1962, Moses and SNCC worker James Travis were shot at. Travis was almost killed.

In 1962 Moses helped draft a plan to combine local groups across the state which had formed in response to vote drives, into the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). Moses, who directs COFO, also heads the Mississippi Summer Project.

