



Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

6 Raymond Street, N.W.
Atlanta 14, Georgia

688-0331

February 18, 1964

It was good to have met you personally in Hattiesburg. On behalf of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and our Mississippi staff, I want to thank you for joining us in what we regard as an important strategic step in the Movement in Mississippi. Freedom Day in Hattiesburg has a significance which we think goes beyond that city and even Mississippi.

We hope that Hattiesburg's Freedom Day will serve as an example for local people in other parts of the state when they plan concentrated drives. We also hope that as a result of your participation we shall have gained some leverage in the North and that more people will know of and understand our voter registration projects.

We believe the entire nation has a claim on Mississippi. The state is a classic illustration of the southern system of economic, political, social and religious disenfranchisement. It is not appropriate for Americans to write off Mississippi as being simply extreme or irreparably lost. We believe when segregation and discrimination in America are fully acknowledged, Americans will realize Mississippi as the polarization of what is present throughout our nation.

As you may know, we have chosen to give top priority to Mississippi in our program, not only because it is necessary, but because it dramatizes -- perhaps better than any other state -- that it is not only the Negro who suffers from this system. The state has the lowest per capita income, the highest infant mortality rates and the lowest teachers' salaries of all 50 states. Mississippi whites have the lowest literacy rates in the country. In limiting opportunities for Negro education, all citizens suffer from the most inferior school system in the nation. Nigeria's overall literacy rate surpassed Mississippi's last year. Poverty for the Negro has

"One Man, One Vote"

meant poverty across the state for whites -- with the exception of a small powerful oligarchy. In preventing Negroes from voting, whites have been widely disenfranchised. In the 1960 presidential elections a total of 266,000 votes was cast, while Connecticut, with the same population, mustered 966,000. Finally, white Mississippians have effectively isolated the state from change occurring throughout the world in order to protect ignorance fostered simply to maintain white supremacy.

We have committed \$4,000. a month to the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) from our budget. COFO, an alliance of all civil rights groups in the state, administers our program. We have more than 80 field secretaries in twenty significant cities. This represents a sizeable investment of our very limited financial resources and personnel. We have done this because we are convinced that if the mistakes of the generations are to be rectified, we must begin at the most critical point.

We are grateful for your sharing with us on Freedom Day and the days that followed. We need agents of communication who can convey a sense of our situation and can interpret the needs of the Movement. We are always in need of funds, and since we are supported by individual contributions, we need persons who can present this need in their local communities.

Enclosed are some materials which we have available. The Student Voice is published each week, and goes to anyone who makes a contribution. The other materials are available in bulk for distribution. We are always ready to send these materials to persons who want more information about our work.

Your name has been placed on our mailing list to receive the Student Voice each week. If there is anything else that we can do to aid you in your interpretation of your experiences in Hattiesburg, please let us know. Miss Dinky Romilly, our Northern Coordinator, will be glad to correspond with you further. I understand that Sanford Leigh of our Hattiesburg office has already been in touch with you.

We shall overcome.

FREEDOM,

James Forman
Executive Secretary

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