

MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM SCHOOLS

Picture yourself in Mississippi. You are a high school student. You are a Negro. Segregation limits you to the poorest schools in a state where the educational system is the worst in the land. Most of the libraries, theaters, and recreational centers in your community are closed to you. Your teachers are not qualified, having been trained in the same schools which stifle your educational desires.

What you may or may not learn is decided by a government dedicated to maintaining "white supremacy." Any activity you engage in which is designed to gain your constitutional rights, including the right to vote, is crushed by brutal police action. You have learned no heritage but the broken bones of lynchings which stretch back as far as anyone can remember. Unless things change, you can see nothing ahead but poverty and deprivation, a life in which you are denied all access to the fruits of technological progress, or perhaps an "escape" to a Northern ghetto where conditions will be no better.

WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?

As a part of the Mississippi Summer Project 25 Freedom Schools will be established in various areas of the state. Each school will accommodate about 50 students and will have 15 teachers assigned to it. The students will come largely from the 10th, 11th, and 12th grades, and sessions will run for five days each week. Curriculum for these schools will cover a wide area: remedial work in reading, math, and basic grammar; seminars in political science and history, humanities, journalism, and creative writing.

The most important part of the Freedom Schools is the reason for which they were established and the hopes of what they will accomplish. Initially, it is important to understand that the level of state education for Negro students is abysmally low. In addition, the character of education is such that it never fosters a sense of dignity, a notion of personal worth or hope for the future in the students.

The aim of the Freedom Schools, then, is to refocus the students' educational experience and to provide politically emerging communities with new, young leadership. The first goal is to cut through the stifling nature of present public education, to motivate students to learn by challenging the student's curiosity about the world, introduce him to his particularly "Negro" cultural background and teach him basic literacy skills in one integrated program. That is, students will study problem areas in their world such as the administration of justice or the relation between state and federal authority. This will be accomplished by using case studies which are closely related to the experience of the student's life in the state.

In order to build local leadership, the hope is to teach specific skills as the students undergo the process of re-education about their world. For example, a student newspaper emanating from the Freedom Schools will give students an opportunity to write, to run a press or mimeograph machine, to organize a complete project on their own. In addition, students will participate in the statewide drive to register voters (on Freedom Registration books) and in community organizational work.

WHAT IS NEEDED TO RUN THESE SCHOOLS?

In order of priority, the following needs are urgent:

1. Funds so that Southern Negro College students can act as teachers in the Freedom Schools. Normally they would work during the summer to acquire funds so they can return to college in the fall. Therefore we need funds to provide them with subsistence wages and a little extra so that their financial situation during the 1964-5 school year will not be overwhelming.
2. Funds for the operation of the schools.
3. Equipment: top priority needs are tape-recorders, phonographs and records, movie projectors, sports equipment, arts and crafts supplies, typewriters and so forth.
4. School Supplies: paper, pads, pencils, pens, paper clips, folders, crayons, and so forth.

FLASH ☆ FLASH ☆ FLASH ☆ ☆ ☆ IMPORTANT NEWS BULLETIN

As this memo is being written a bill was introduced in the State Legislature in Mississippi to require that any school operated in the state be properly licensed. The Bill reads as follows:

SENATE BILL NO. 1969 : BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

SECTION 1: Any person, groups of persons, associations and corporations conducting any school in any county within this state shall first apply to the county superintendent of education for a license to conduct such school. If after due examination, said county superintendent of education shall determine the said school is in fact for bonafide educational purposes, that said school does not intend to counsel and encourage disobedience to the laws of the state, and that the conduct of said school is in the public interest, [a license shall be issued].

SECTION 2: Should any person, groups of persons, etc. conduct any type school without obtaining a license...they shall together with any individuals acting as professors, teachers, or instructors in said school, be guilty of a misdemeanor which shall be punishable by a fine of not less than \$100 nor more than \$500 and/or confinement in the county jail for a period of not less than 30 days nor more than 6 months.

The implications of this bill if passed need hardly be stated here: This is an obvious attempt to undermine the operation of the summer Freedom Schools which are so necessary to the development of decent education and leadership skills among the Negro population of the state of Mississippi.

WE NEED YOUR HELP...CAN WE COUNT ON YOU FOR MONETARY AND MATERIAL SUPPORT FOR FREEDOM and the FREEDOM SCHOOLS?