

SUMMARY OF MAJOR POINTS IN TESTIMONY BY CITIZENS  
OF MISSISSIPPI

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TO PANEL OF:

JUNE 8, 1964

Dr. Robert Coles; Psychiatrist, Harvard University.  
Noel Day; St. Mark Social Center, Roxbury, Mass.  
Paul Goodman; Author, New York City.  
Joseph Heller; Author, New York City;  
Murray Kempton; Writer, New Republic, Washington, D.C.  
Judge Justine Polier; Family Court, New York City.  
Gresham Sykes; Exec. Director, American Sociological  
Society, Washington, D.C.  
Harold Taylor; Educator, N.Y.C. Chairman of the Panel.

MASSIVE RESISTANCE BY WHITE OFFICIALS AND CITIZENS TO VOTER REGISTRATION  
BY NEGROES \_\_\_\_\_

Among tactics used to prevent Negroes from registering to vote are technical violations of court orders, threats through publication of registrants, economic reprisal, and violence.

In Forrest County, Mississippi twenty-two questions are asked of the registrant, and a registrar may require an applicant to answer questions on over 200 sections of the Mississippi code. In that same county, the first suit to compel registration was started in 1961. The case was heard in 1962, and a ruling given in 1963. The county requires that the names of applicants be published in the local paper for fourteen days before they are given consideration. In the meantime, applicants become the target for police action, and are subjected to economic reprisal and personal danger. Of 1,000 Negroes who have had the courage to face these conditions, only 150 have been registered.

One witness testified that after she applied to register to vote, the owner of the plantation where she had worked for eighteen years and where her husband had worked for 30 years, ordered the family to leave unless she withdrew her application. She fled that night.

A white student from Tougaloo College, active in voter registration, testified that while driving in a car with a Pakistani student she had been followed and then blocked by two cars. They had been forced out of the car and their lives threatened. After saying that the non-white student was an Indian, they had been permitted to proceed. The student believes killings by whites will occur this summer, and that only intervention by the Federal Government will prevent them.

A field secretary for Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee was shot in the back of the head and shoulder while driving home from a voter registration meeting. The three men who had shot at him from a passing car and who had been arrested were released on bond. The incident occurred early in 1963. The trial was set for November, was postponed, and has not yet been held. This witness urged that only United States marshals could prevent further tragedies.

One elderly man testified that after registering to vote his home had been bombed, shots had been fired through the window, and his house put on fire. After asking the FBI to investigate, he was charged with arson by the sheriff and arrested. He continues to be harassed and threatened.

#### POLICE BRUTALITY

Witness after witness testified to the brutality of the police against any man, woman or child who participated in the struggle for civil rights. They were marked for attack at times when they were not participating in any group action or demonstration.

Thus, a man active in voter registration was stopped on the highway at night by a hostile group of men with chains and guns who threatened beatings and death to him and his friends. The witness testified that beatings by police and State Highway Patrolmen were common.

A young man travelling from Cleveland through Ruleville on his way to Jackson was arrested and charged with violation of the local curfew. When he insisted he was only traveling through, he was hit in the ribs with a pistol and punched on the street by the police officer. He was told, "Nigger, you're lying" and was threatened with death. After a night in jail he was fined for violating curfew and driving past a non-existent stop light.

A middle-aged woman testified that on her way back from a student registration workshop, she had been arrested while sitting inside the bus for having asked where she could buy food at a bus stop. She was kicked by police on the way to the county jail. She was moved by the police from one cell and taken into another where the police gave two male Negroes

blackjacks and ordered them to beat her. Her skirts were pulled up by the police to expose and degrade her.

Two boys, aged thirteen and fourteen, testified to intimidation and bullying by police. One was arrested, imprisoned and had his arm twisted by the police when he participated in a school demonstration in June, 1963. The second, while participating in a NAACP silent march to the courthouse, had been beaten and kicked by the police and then put in jail.

A young worker for CORE testified that he was ordered out of Yagoo City by the police and gratuitously kicked by a police officer. His driver's licence had been taken, and the police had written across it the word 'agitator' before returning it.

A CORE worker testified he was hit on the head and across the face by a gun for having asked the police why his car was being held. He was then taken to jail and charged with resisting arrest and intimidating an officer. This young man was told by a City detective, who warned him that he would be killed if he did not leave town that night, that he was misleading "happy people". The next night, on his way to Jackson, he was stopped by police and kicked.

A young Negro woman was taken out of her home and whipped by the sheriff, after he had forced her to undress, on the charge of her employer that she had stolen some money. The white doctor to whom she went refused to treat her, and she had to go to a Negro doctor to get help.

A young boy, active in civil rights, had been injured in a demonstration during the summer of 1963. He was left on a stretcher in the hospital after the police had demanded he be discharged without medical care. When the nurse left the boy he was beaten and threatened with dogs by the police.

A woman active in a sit-in demonstration in CORE was beaten while police watched. She was then arrested and taken to the police station before she was sent to the hospital.

#### FALSE ARREST AND FALSE CHARGES AS HARRASSMENT

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Persons active in civil rights are constantly subjected to false arrest, high bail bonds, unjust fines, and persecution for complaining against violence done to them.

One witness testified that the Chief of Police had entered her home while she was having coffee with her neighbor and arrested her on the charge of conspiracy not to buy in the downtown stores. She was handcuffed and held in \$2,000 bond. The case was later dismissed.

When a witness was denied use of the rest-room at a gas station where she had stopped to get gas, and was also refused change for the \$10 bill with which she had paid, she then threatened to report it to the police. She was told by the attendant that he did not cater to the Nigger trade. She was struck on the temple and in the face. Fifty minutes after having reported this to the Chief of Police he arrived at her home and arrested the complainant on the charge of disturbing the peace. She was denied the medical care she needed as the result of her injuries, was convicted and fined.

A CORE worker, driving home legally and correctly, was stopped by a Highway Patrolman, arrested for reckless driving, handcuffed, and kicked. A complaint to the Department of Justice, sent in November 1963, has never been answered.

#### THE ABSENCE OF EQUAL PROTECTION AND JUSTICE IN THE COURTS \_\_\_\_\_

Despite action by the Department of Justice against white men who had beaten five Negroes who applied to register, and despite the testimony of 43 witnesses to sustain the complaint, the case was dismissed by Federal Judge Clayton on the ground the evidence was insufficient.

When a witness who had been beaten by a gas attendant complained to the Chief of Police, she was arrested and fined. Although she took out a warrant against her assailant in June, 1963, he has never been brought to trial.

The trial of three white men charged with shooting a SNCC field worker early in 1963 has been postponed repeatedly, and still has not been held.

A man whose home was bombed and set on fire was charged with arson and held in jail under high bond. The charges were ultimately dropped.

#### THE F.B.I. AND DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE HAVE FAILED TO PROVIDE PROTECTION OR SUPPORT THE NEGRO OR WHITE AMERICAN IN THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS \_\_\_\_\_

A white man was beaten up for working in the civil rights movement. His face was swollen and bleeding. When he went to the FBI, accompanied by a well-dressed University Professor and by a lawyer, the FBI agent asked which of the three was the one who had been beaten up.

Witnesses testified that local FBI agents said they could not take action, but could only forward complaints. On complaints to the Department of Justice, not even answers were received. In March 1964, a complaint was filed with

the Department of Justice after students had been subjected to police brutality and after four students had been shot at on the Jackson State College campus for protesting the absence of a stop-light. To the date of the citizens' panel on June 8th, 1964, no answer has been received.

TESTIMONY ON THE F.B.I. \_\_\_\_\_

One witness active in the NAACP testified that although she had notified the Department of Justice of an assault in the summer of 1963, she had never received an answer.

One CORE witness testified that statements on police brutality were taken by the local FBI men, who claimed that the statements had been sent on to Washington. Since then, nothing has happened. Complaints made directly to the FBI or through the Council of Federated Organizations or to the Department of Justice have received no response.

A brutal attack by two white men on two Negroes, resulting in permanent injuries, was reported to the FBI. The FBI agent stated he could do nothing more than send a report to the Memphis office. The witness, one of the injured men, was told by the FBI to report the attack to the Sheriff, whose answer was "Your family's supposed to be dead". There has been no response to the complaint to the FBI made on February 5th, 1964.

One incident testified to at the hearing concerned a Negro who had been killed, when unarmed, by a member of the Mississippi legislature. A Negro witness to the slaying refused, when arrested, to perjure himself by testifying that the victim had been armed at the time; because he refused, his jaw was broken by jailors. After further threats, he was coerced into revising his testimony and gave a false statement at the trial to the effect that the victim had been armed. Later, he went to the FBI and told the true facts, and asked for protection. He was subsequently shot. His widow, testifying at the hearings, stated that the Sheriff had told her that her husband would not now be dead if he had not gone to the FBI.

A student from Tougaloo College testified to the constant burning of crosses at the College and to frequent shootings from passing cars - shots aimed at faculty houses, dormitories, etc. When the police and State Patrol were asked for help but gave none, efforts to get help from the FBI proved fruitless for three weeks. The FBI arrived, and expressed interest, only after a picture of the burning crosses had been published in the New York Times.