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SPECIAL TO THE STUDENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE OF RULEVILLE, INDIANOLA, AND DREW

THE FREEDOM SCHOOL

All over the state of Mississippi this summer there are Freedom Schools. Over 1500 students are for the first time reading about and hearing about things that the regular schools do not teach.

Which Civics text book, for example, explains about how some states can decide for themselves whether or not they will conform to the Constitution of the United States? And what Civics text book, in its explanation of the electoral system, explains why the 40% of the population that is Negro in the state of Mississippi cannot vote even though these people are American citizens and Mississippi citizens?

What Ancient History text book, in describing ancient civilizations, talks about Mali, Ghana, and Songhai when it talks about empires? Why does it talk only about Rome and Byzantium, and not about African empires? What History text book, in its excitement about Roman law, tells also about the highly developed systems of law in the early African kingdoms? And what History text book talks about the splendor of Ethiopia when it talks about the splendor of Egypt, or about the smelting of iron in West Africa when it talks about the amazing technical skill of the pyramid-builders in Egypt? And what History text book, in its discussion of Egyptian and Greek and Roman art, also talks about African art?

Are these things not part of the American heritage, too?

When we study Modern History, do we study the revolutions in the new African nations against their colonial oppressors, or do we just study World War I and World War II? When we read about the Treaty of Versailles, do we see it only as a triumph of the Allied powers or as a sell-out to

Russia, or do we also see the damage it did to Africa? When we read about war heroes, do we read about Jomo Keryatta as well as about Douglass MacArthur?

And when we learn from our textbooks and society, do we learn obedience to law? Do we learn that going to jail is a shameful thing? Do we learn that the policeman is our friend? Do we learn that the mayor of a town and the governor of a state and Senators from a state are just, righteous, and intelligent, concerned responsible men? Do we learn to trust our leaders? Do we learn about the rule of the majority at the same time as we realize that in Sunflower County the Negro population is 68% of the whole county population, but the white minority rules? Do we learn about the way the fathers of our country set up a careful system of checks and balances so that no single person or organization or branch of government should have too much power? Do we learn about checks and balances at the same time as we see who owns the property and the businesses in Sunflower County, and compare those names with the names of people who govern the towns?

Do we learn, when we study the heroes of the American past, that a Negro, Crispus Attucks, led the first battle of the Revolutionary War? Do we hear of the courage of Harriet Tubman, the intelligence and speaking skill of Fredrick Douglass, the poetic skill of Phyllis Wheatley? Do you recognize the name of W.E. B. du Bois as easily as you do that of Booker T. Washington? Do we read about Sojourner Truth when we read about crusaders for women's rights? Why do we read about Uncle Tom in connection with the Civil War but not about the Negroes in Congress during Reconstruction?

Why do we read about Eli Whitney

and Thomas A. Edison, but not about inventor Jan Matzeliger, whose ideas and whose machine revolutionized the shoe industry? Why do we know about the minstrel shows and the shuffling Negro entertainer but not about the serious poets Paul Laurence Dunbar and George Weldon Johnson? Why do we read about the Ku Klux Klan and how patriotic that organization is, and not about the nationalism preached by Marcus Garvey, and lately by Elijah Mohammed and Malcolm X?

And who in Mississippi has heard of its own native son, Richard Wright? Who in Mississippi, white or Negro, reads James Baldwin?

The Freedom Schools in Mississippi may be the beginning of a change in the nature of education all over America. Students are beginning to ask questions.

FREEDOM SCHOOL CONVENTION MERIDIAN, MISS. AUG. 8-9

Students in the Freedom Schools, out of their study of such things as Negro History, are becoming aware of themselves as human beings and as Negroes. They are also studying the way Mississippi laws and practices do not live up to the Constitution of the United States of America. They are learning to ask questions about why Negroes in Mississippi live the way they do. They are beginning to look for ways to answer these questions.

On the weekend of August 8-9, in Meridian, there will be a chance for young people from all over the state to come together and talk about these questions. More important, it will be a chance for these young people to try to form meaningful answers to these questions, and so to begin really working to change the life of the Mississippi Negro. At the Freedom School Convention a platform will be drawn up combining the ideas of all the students about how to change Mississippi.



In order to prepare for the Freedom School Convention, the Freedom Schools in Ruleville and Indianola will begin to focus on these political and economic questions. The students will form answers and directions which the delegates can take to Meridian. Everyone is needed to take part in the preparation, because it is important that the delegates really represent their towns in Sunflower County.

How would you do it? How would you run Mississippi if you were Governor instead of Paul Johnson? Who would you like to see as Senator from this state, and what would you expect him to do in the U.S. Government? How would you go about keeping law and order if you were a member of the Drew Police Force, or if you were Sheriff of Indianola? What role do you think the Federal Government should play in a well-run state? What Federal laws would you like to see enforced in Mississippi? How would you go about doing it?

And what would you do about what you find to be the economic problems of the Mississippi Negro? Do any whites have any of these same problems? How would you solve them?

How does your new understanding of yourself make you more able to think about Mississippi as a state within the United States of America?

These are only some of the questions that will be raised in the Freedom School classes between now and the August 8 convention.

COME TO THE FREEDOM SCHOOLS!