

April 3, 1965

Mr. Leslie Dunbar
Southern Regional Council
Five Forsyth Street, Northwest
Atlanta 3, Georgia

Dear Mr. Dunbar:

Professor Howard Zinn of Boston University recommended that we write to you about a project that we are organizing. Last summer, we, two editors of the Harvard Crimson, worked in Mississippi as volunteers for the Council of Federated Organizations in the voter registration activities of the Mississippi Summer Project. While in the South we observed the way in which the local press often distorts or omits news concerning racial problems there. This unethical journalism makes it difficult for both the white and the Negro communities to understand -- much less solve -- the problems that confront them.

After the summer we began discussing the idea of setting up an independent newspaper in the Black Belt area, devoted to printing an honest account of civil rights activities in the South. We hope to have more thorough coverage and wider circulation than the few Southern papers which now report racial news accurately.

Our paper will be called the Southern Courier. It is now being incorporated as a nonprofit membership corporation for educational purposes. Application will shortly be made for tax-exempt status.

We already have the use of a photo-offset press (28" x 22"), located in Atlanta, Georgia, and owned by the Student Voice, Inc. Our plans are to print five weekly editions, one each for the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, and Mississippi. Thus on Monday we might print 25,000 copies of the Mississippi edition; on Tuesday 10,000 copies of the Louisiana edition, and so forth.

The paper will be sent from Atlanta by rail, air, and car, and distributed free of charge, at least initially. It will not be difficult to reach the Negro community by utilizing local people and civil rights centers as distributors. Reaching the white community will present a more serious problem. To solve this, we intend to seek the advice of journalists like Hodding Carter, published of the Greenville, Mississippi, Delta-Democrat-Times; Ralph McGill, publisher of the Atlanta Constitution; and Pat Watters and yourself.

The staff of the paper will consist of thirty people, mostly students, all of whom have had journalistic experience, either as reporters, editors, or photographers. We will have no trouble in recruitment and already have received over a dozen applications from interested student journalists.

Since the Courier is designed to continue after the summer, we will give preference in recruitment to those who can stay in Atlanta for a year or more. In addition, we intend to recruit fifteen young Negroes and whites in Atlanta to train so that they can assume the responsibility for the paper. Eventually we hope that the Courier will provide a voice for the millions of people across the South, particularly Negroes, who now have no voice in the press.

We plan to purchase five automobiles and to assign one car, with three reporters and a photographer, to each state. This method of coverage was used successfully by the Crimson to report the recent events in Selma and Montgomery. (We are sending you a sample of this coverage under separate cover.)

Will will purchase wither AP or UPI wire service. In addition, by being located in Atlanta, we will have access to news from the headquarters of both the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Since the paper will be a weekly, it will not be the first with the news; but there is no reason why it should not equal any national paper in depth and accuracy of coverage.

Because it will be distributed free and advertising will be, at least initially, limited, the Courier will have to rely for support on donations from individuals and organizations. We estimate the permanent starting costs as follows:

Automobiles (five)	\$12000
Automobile insurance	750
Typewriters	2000
Cameras (five)	2000
Citizens' Band Radios (five)	1000
Tape recorders	200
Office supplies and furnishings	<u>1000</u>
TOTAL	\$19450

Monthly operating costs:

Paper and printing	\$ 4450
Distribution	2500
Telephone and wire service	4500
Subsistence pay for staff	2700
(\$20 per week for 30 people)	
Photographic costs (film and printing)	300
Gasoline, oil, and repairs for cars	1250
Office supplies	450
Legal and accounting fees	100
Insurance (liability, compensation, libel)	<u>100</u>
TOTAL	\$16350

This means that total operating costs for the period from June 15 to September 15 would \$68,500. We hope that this sum can be raised before June 15 so that the paper will be guaranteed a three-month period in which to get established. (It should be noted that at least some of this material, such as cameras, radios, and tape recorders, might be obtained free from individuals, or private retailers. We intend to explore these possibilities.)

The following people can supply references for us:

John U. Monro, Dean of Harvard College
University Hall, Harvard University
Cambridge, Massachusetts, 02138

Mark deWolfe Howe, Professor of Law
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Thomas F. Pettigrew, Associate Professor of Social Psychology
William James Center, Harvard University
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James Forman, Executive Secretary
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6 Raymond Street, NW
Atlanta, Georgia, 30314
Howard Zinn, Assistant Professor of Government
Government Department, Boston University
Boston, Massachusetts

We would be grateful for any financial aid or advice that
you would give us for this project.

Sincerely yours,

Ellen Lake
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