

My name is Matt Suarez, formerly of CORE's Task Force in Mississippi. I am now working with a group that we call the New Orleans Community Organizers (NOCO). Our objective, which should be kept in mind, is to get people in motion. We work from the basic assumption that people have the ability and are willing to work for the betterment of their community. We are attempting to bring this about by sending in people to canvass and organize small discussion groups on community problems.

Our group has divided itself into teams that canvass an area, discussing what the people feel their local and immediate problems are. They try to tie the individual problems together through neighborhood discussion groups; consequently, people invariably come through some sort of community action, towards a solution.

At the present, we have managed to establish five small community groups ranging from 25 to 40 persons, each group operating independently in respect to neighborhood problems. These groups are working on problems such as rats, slum housing, and health conditions. Two of our more progressive groups are working jointly in boycotting a neighborhood store; complaints are: overcharging small children, raising prices for evening service, discourteous treatment to women, and charging of a penny per dollar in cashing checks.

Our meetings have proven to be most successful, we found people get a certain type of hope just discussing their troubles with their neighborhood friends, and are willing to do almost anything. Most of this is due to the fact that everyone wants to get their children out of the jungle they lived in. Perhaps I should explain something about the community in which we are working. It is in the 2nd Ward of New Orleans; an area where the average income per family white or black, is under \$2,500 a year. Common plagues are rats, slum housing and lack of education. Out door toilets are common, sometimes being shared by the members of eight families; one outdoor faucet serves the same number of people. Children, because of the living conditions, suffer continuously from rashes, sores and diseases- seldom, if ever, do they see a doctor. The average fellow of twenty, has had twenty jobs and probably looking for a new one now. It seems that everyone has been to jail for one thing or another. These are some of the problems we are trying to remove. We feel if they aren't solved here and now, they will spread to another part of the city. These problems, however, are not limited to the 2nd Ward alone, but are the most basic existing conditions.

Two professors of Louisiana State University are preparing a series of simplified educational booklets on City Governments, its departments, functions and responsibilities. A booklet of instruction sheets on methods of working community grievances into official complaints is being prepared by Miss Judith Fliess. This, we hope, we can reproduce in large quantities and have one person in each block hold weekly classes in elementary basics of City Government.

During the summer we operated a Freedom School which averages 100 students daily. Subjects taught were Negro History, current events, French, Spanish, and Math. There was much contact established with the adult community and we would like to continue work with both children and adults in a tutoring program. That area is not fully planned out yet.

The special situation of a Southern urban community provides a unique staff problem. For example, although we don't have to deal with the boredom of a rural community, we must worry about the difficulties of transportation, the distractions of a large city, and the higher cost of living. To meet this

challenge, we have attempted to develop a loosely knit group of full time, part time, and occasional workers, with each person made to feel that his contribution is needed and desired no matter how large or small. This seems to be effective and we have been able to maintain a good rapport among ourselves. There is a daily gathering of workers to discuss and plan activities and weekly meetings are often attended by members of the community. As one of our goals is to eventually replace ourselves by community people, we constantly encourage this and have included three such people already.

Following is a break-down of staff, its background and present activities. It is arranged for convenience according to amount of time spent, although this will vary according to project needs and the need to provide personal income.

Full Time

Marge Jennings--Recent graduate of Dillard University, working on the organization of a group in a 3 block area. The activity of the group centers around improvement of housing conditions, streets, and small business.

Matt Suarez--Long time veteran of the Movement, organized the project last winter, runs the office, maintains contact with New Orleans Civil Rights leaders, beginning to form a community organization in the Calliope Project, organized around political education.

Ton Valentino--Another veteran of the Movement, working with an organization of taxi cab drivers, beginning to develop contacts with local high school and college students.

Part Time (Roughly 25 hours per week)

Euc Ballard--Graduate student, taught in Freedom School, will organize a tutoring program in the Fall.

Kathy Barrett--Works part time 830C, works on the Melpomene Project organization, and on developing contact with students.

Cathy Cade--Graduate student, volunteer Movement work in Mississippi, works on community organization with Marge Jennings.

Donald Crockett--Lives in the community, seminary student, attempting to organize his friends and neighbors around police brutality.

Ed Dubinsky--Tulane U. faculty, volunteer work in Mississippi, co-ordinates staff activities, works with Donald Crockett on his organization.

Pat Morrow--Loyola U. student, works on Melpomene Project organization.

Jesse Thompson--Lives in the community, painter, works on Melpomene Project organization.

Rosemary Williams--LSU student, developing organization in Calliope Project.

Roy Crawford--High school student, developing contacts with students.

Occasional

Bernadine Porch--Xavier U. Student, works on Calliope project organization.

Jo Ann Forman--Free Southern Theater, will help out with tutoring program.

Kay Heyman--New Orleans housewife, will help with nursery program.

Steve Rosencrans--Tulane faculty, will help with tutoring program.

Dianne Joseph--Loyola student, works on Melponene Project organization.

all staff members are residents of New Orleans.

In addition to those persons who now work with us, we would like to put on staff for the next six months, Mrs. Dottie Vance, a local housewife who acted as offic. secretary during this summer; Miss Judith Fliess, who is beginning to work on developing educational material; and Miss Joyceelyn McKissick, an experienced organizer from North Carolian, and myself--all who are in need of subsistence, meaning \$25 a week if housing arrangements can be obtained free for those who need it.

Our office space is being donated by a local businessman and all of our office equipment has been donated. Small cash contributions from the community, along with some supplies, have kept us operating until now. This has been our sole means of obtaining financial support of any kind. We are asking for your help to continue with our work, since it is growing every day and becoming more costly. Any contribution you can make will be appreciated. Checks should be made out as follows.

New Orleans Community Organizers
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