

TITLE: Grenada County

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DATE OF INVESTIGATION: July 13 - 18, 1966

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DATE OF REPORT: July 21, 1966

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INVESTIGATED BY: Tom Scarbrough, Investigator

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TYPED BY: Elizabeth Arnold

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The title of this report could very well be "the collapse of civil rights demands on the City of Grenada by Martin Luther King's organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference." My reasoning for this is the fact that Martin Luther King singled Grenada out for a trial run on integrating everything from the pool room to the churches and City Hall and sent his biggest allies to Grenada to fire up local Negroes to a high pitch to create division, hate, and chaos among the races.

King sent Rev. Ralph Abernethy, his first lieutenant, Hosea Williams, Leon Hall, and Joseph L. Hankerson into Grenada to accomplish the purposes just stated. Thus far, these highly touted racial agitators, along with the assistance of a few white peaceniks, have failed to stampede local Grenada County Negroes into doing the things King and his cohorts had hoped to accomplish.

They have managed to recruit only teen-agers and children for their movement. Of course, older Negroes have attended the rallies at the meeting places, mostly the Bell Flower Baptist Church, but when the meetings are over, they go back to their respective places of abode and do not participate in the marches.

It seems that the Bell Flower Church has been selected for the rallying point for all of the civil rights drives. Bell Flower is located about three blocks west of Grenada County courthouse and one block east of Highway 51 in a heavily populated Negro section of town.

On Monday night, July 12, Hosea Williams addressed a crowd of about 350 Negroes in this church. Williams stated in the course of his address that beginning the next day all public facilities in Grenada and in the county would be integrated. Some eating places were integrated and the swimming facilities at Hugh White Park were integrated by 20 or 25 Negroes, who swam around in the lake for about 30 minutes. Since then, very few places where food is served have been integrated.

No incident of any kind occurred at any of the places where the Negroes made their test runs and so far as I know they have not returned to the eating places for the past several days. Perhaps the reason they have not returned is because some of them complained about the high prices charged them.

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Instead of testing the various public places for integration, they now appear to have settled almost entirely on picketing, and from my observation the picket line lacks local interest as I have counted ~~more than~~ 30 participating at any one time with one exception. Out of the group of pickets, I would say 50 percent are not Grenada County people.

It seems that two Italian places of business down in the Negro section have been their main places to picket. Forty-five were arrested in front of one of these places Tuesday night for blocking the sidewalk and refusing to move. This particular place is run by a middle-aged man and his wife, who do not hire any help. I was told the reason they were picketing these two Italian places was the fact they catered almost 100 percent to Negro trade and had refused to contribute anything to pay the civil rights workers' fines who have been jailed in Grenada County since July 4.

The pickets I have observed marching around the square in Grenada and back to the Bell Flower church do nothing more than march, carrying various placards expressing their grievances.

Stokely Carmichael of SNCC attended the meeting at Bell Flower church the night of July 12, but for some reason did not speak. It has been said that he was not invited to speak and was more or less slighted. Carmichael stated his organization would have nothing to do with what was going on inside the city limits of Grenada, but would carry on a voter registration campaign of Negroes outside the City of Grenada separate from King's outfit. Evidently, he is not meeting with too much success in his project as only a few Negroes have applied to register at the courthouse since July 4. I have not seen or heard of what Stokely Carmichael is doing in Grenada County. He is one of the main advocates of "black power" and is far more militant than Martin Luther King's gang.

No incident of any kind has happened except the shooting at Henry Aronson, a white New York attorney for SCLC, and two other white men, one a civil rights worker and the other a government public relations man. No one was hit. B. C. Bennett, who lives across the Montgomery County line, ten or twelve miles out of Grenada, and Hobby Todd, of Grenada, were arrested and put in jail and charged with attempted murder.

Unless more interest is shown by the adult Negro community, Martin Luther King's efforts to turn Grenada wrong side out as he stated he was going to do are doomed to failure. I also do not believe that the boycott of all white merchants in Grenada which has been sponsored by King's group will be too successful either as the business of the City of Grenada is supported mainly by white people's trade. A boycott against Grenada will not be nearly so successful as the recent boycotts carried on against Fayette and Canton as these two places depend very much on local Negro trade to sustain their places of business.

I expect King and his agitators to carry on the boycott and some demonstrating at Grenada for some time, but from my observation at this time, it is thus far very ineffective.