

11 June 1964

MEMO TO ACCEPTED APPLICANTS (#3)

To: Mississippi Summer Project Workers  
From: Mississippi Summer Project Committee

It has occurred to us that we have perhaps not been forceful enough in impressing upon project workers the importance of alerting the federal government and local officials across the country of our plans for the next few months in Mississippi. The federal government is, we think, aware of the fact that several hundred young people from across the nation will be joining the freedom movement in Mississippi this summer, but awareness is not enough. We must move our government to action. We must insist that some sort of protection be provided for those hundreds of Americans who travel to Mississippi and work here within the grounds of their constitutional rights. We must further insist that the government protect through-out the year citizens who every day are denied their constitutional rights in Mississippi.

On June 8th three white young men visited the city of McComb in south-east Mississippi. They were en route from New Orleans to Jackson, and the purpose of their visit to McComb was to ascertain from the Mayor of the city and from several Negro citizens details concerning preparations for the summer project, both on the part of local officials and the Negro citizenry, with the intention of eventually writing some magazine articles about their experiences. Their appearance in the city was quickly noted, as they drove a car with a Massachusetts tag. Note that the purpose of their visit was purely to gather information, and that they travelled as a disinterested party. At any rate, they were granted a comparatively cordial interview by the mayor of McComb and by some members of the colored community, and then proceeded on their way to Jackson. Just outside of McComb their car was stopped by two carloads of white men and they were badly beaten. They were accused of having visited "nigger town," having talked to "niggers" and having come to McComb to stir up trouble. They were considered by the mayor of McComb to be the "advance guard for the summer invasion."

This incident occurred on June 8th, not a week ago. It is essential that federal officials recognize the nature of the opposition we are faced with, and be prepared to offer the protection the situation demands. To this end we are urging everyone who is planning to come to Mississippi this summer to appeal in every way possible to his senators and representatives and, in addition, to local officials. Wherever possible visits should be made to congressmen. Perhaps your Freedom Center will coordinate an emergency visit. Those volunteers whose route south will take them through Washington D.C. should at all costs make plans to stop and visit their federal representatives. The Washington SNCC office at 3418 11th Street, N.W. will be able to aid you in this direction. You should advise relatives, friends, and all interested parties to continue your appeal once you have left for Mississippi. Telegrams, letters, and all the usual means of appeal should be employed.