

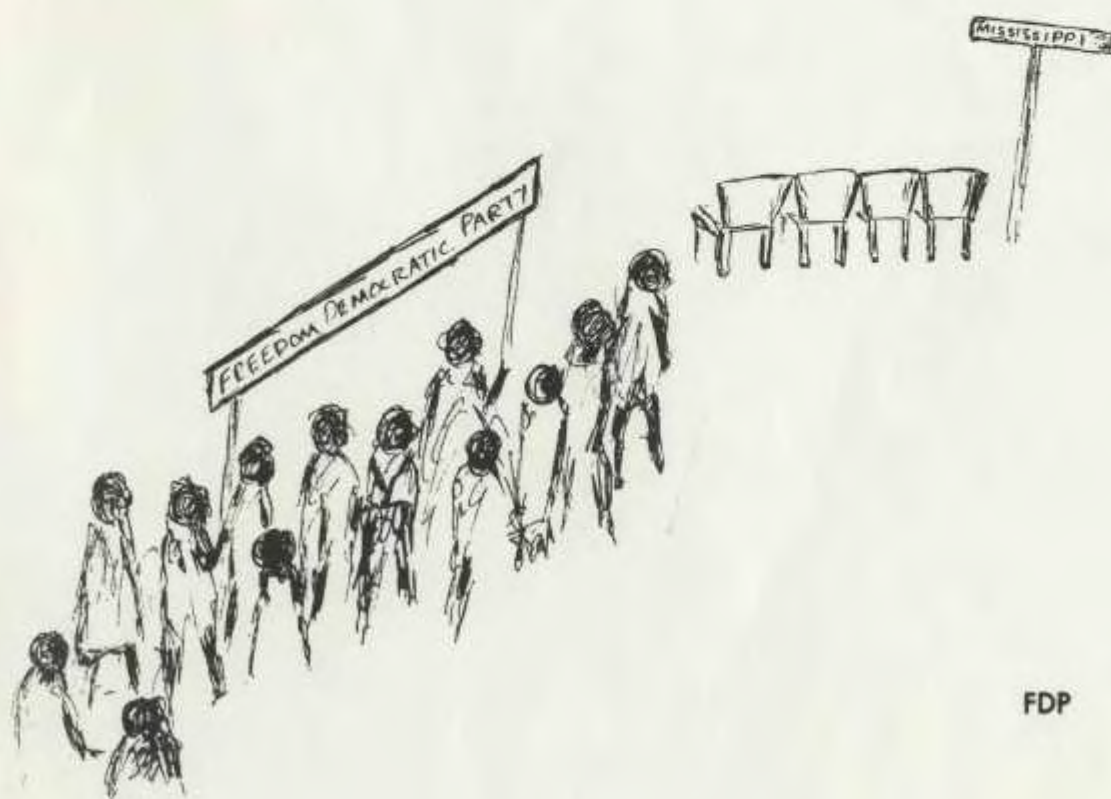
# FREEDOM PRIMER

## No. 1

### The Convention Challenge

and

### The Freedom Vote



FDP



## THE CHALLENGE AT THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

### What Was The Democratic National Convention?

The Democratic National Convention was a big meeting held by the National Democratic Party at Atlantic City in August. People who represent the Party came to the Convention from every state in the country. They came to decide who would be the candidates of the Democratic Party for President and Vice-President of the United States in the election this year on November 3rd. They also came to decide what the Platform of the National Democratic Party would be. The Platform is a paper that says what the Party thinks should be done about things like Housing, Education, Welfare, and Civil Rights.

### Why Did The Freedom Democratic Party Go To The Convention?

The Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) sent a delegation of 68 people to the Convention. These people wanted to represent you at the Convention. They said that they should be seated at the Convention instead of the people sent by the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi. The Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi only has white people in it. But the Freedom Democratic Party is open to all people -- black and



white. So the delegates from the Freedom Democratic Party told the Convention it was the real representative of all the people of Mississippi.

#### How Was The Regular Democratic Party Delegation Chosen?

The Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi also sent 68

people to the Convention in Atlantic City.

But these people were not chosen by all the people of Mississippi. Negroes were not allowed to attend the precinct, county, district, and state meetings where these delegates were chosen. Members of the Freedom Democratic

Party tried to go to these meetings, but they were turned away from the door because these meetings were for white people only. But even most white people could not go to these meetings. The Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi is not controlled by all the white people, but only by a few powerful people -- like James Eastland in Sunflower County and Billy and Gus Noble in Canton. They do not want to share their power. So they do not let most of the white people come to the meetings of the Regular Democratic Party either.

#### How Was The Freedom Democratic Party Delegation Chosen?

When the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi told Negroes they could not come to its meetings, the Negroes held their own meetings. They called their party the Freedom Democratic Party. They held precinct, county, district, and state meetings just like



the Regular Democratic Party. But the Freedom Democratic Party meetings were open to anyone, black or white. At their meetings the Freedom Democratic Party also chose delegates to the National Convention in Atlantic City. Most of the delegates were Negroes. But some white people were chosen too.

#### Who Decided If The Freedom Democratic Party Could Sit At Atlantic City?

At Atlantic City the delegates from the Freedom Democratic Party went to a Committee that decided who could sit and vote in the Convention. This Committee was made up of two delegates from each state. The Regular Democratic Party asked the Committee to let them sit and vote in the seats for Mississippi. But the Freedom Democratic Party said that they should be allowed to sit and vote for Mississippi. People like Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer and Dr. Aaron Henry told about the things that happened to them in Mississippi, how they had been arrested and beaten and how their homes had been shot into. They told how badly all the Negro people in Mississippi are treated. And they told how they had tried to go to the meetings of the Regular Democratic Party. They told too how they had held meetings open to everyone to choose the Freedom Democratic Party Delegation to Atlantic City. They were on television, and many people everywhere in America saw them. Many people in Mississippi saw them too.



#### What Did The Committee Decide?

The Committee made its decision by a vote. It voted that



the Regular Democratic Party in Mississippi should represent Mississippi at the Convention. This means that the Regular Democratic Party would sit in the Mississippi seats at the Convention and cast all the votes for Mississippi. The Committee said that the Freedom Democratic Party could not represent Mississippi at the Convention. The Committee said that only Dr. Aaron Henry and Rev. Edwin King from the Freedom Democratic Party could sit and vote in the Convention. But Dr. Henry and Rev. King would not be allowed to sit in the Mississippi seats or cast the votes for Mississippi. The Committee did not say who Dr. Henry and Rev. King would represent. The Committee also said that the members of the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi would have to promise to support President Johnson and his vice-president in the election November 3. If the delegates from the Regular Democratic Party refused to promise this, they would not be allowed to sit and vote in the Convention.

#### Why Did The Committee Make This Decision?

Many members of the Committee were afraid. Many of them wanted to support the Freedom Democratic Party. But they were afraid they would lose their jobs in Washington or back home in the state where they lived. In other parts of the United States it is often just like in Mississippi. You can lose your job if you stand up and say what you believe in.

President Johnson supported the all-white Regular Democratic Party. He wanted the Regular Party to be the only official party back here in Mississippi. President Johnson was afraid, too. Freedom Democratic Party delegate Hartman Turnbow of Holmes County said the President was afraid he would lose his job too if he

stood up and said what he believed in.

Lyndon Johnson wants to be elected President again this November. He wants to get as many votes as possible in as many states as possible. President Johnson was afraid that if he supported the Freedom Democratic Party, the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater would get most of the votes in the Southern states and then President Johnson would lose his job as President.

President Johnson knows that in the Southern States there are many, many Negroes. But very, very few of them are allowed to vote. So most of the voters in the Southern states are whites. The President knew that if he supported the Freedom Democratic Party he might lose white friends in the South, and then he would not win the election in the Southern states. President Johnson was also afraid of the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi. He knows that they do not like Civil Rights, or Aid to Education, or more Medical Care. He is afraid that the white politicians from Mississippi like James Eastland, Jamie Whitten and John Bell Williams will stop these programs in Washington. So President Johnson is afraid of these men.

But President Johnson had a lot of power at the Convention. He could tell many of the members of that Committee how to vote. The President can make many people judges or put them in other important positions. Since many members of the Committee want to be judges or important officials, when the President told them to vote against the Freedom Democratic Party, that is what they did.



### What Did The Freedom Democratic Party Do?

The Freedom Democratic Party did not accept the decision of the Committee. They said that all the people at the Convention should be able to vote on who should have the seats for Mississippi. They knew that most of the delegates at the Convention, and people all over the country, believed what the Freedom Democratic Party said about Mississippi. They knew these people wanted to vote at the Convention, just as Negroes from Mississippi wanted to vote at the Convention.



The President did not want all the delegates to vote at the Convention. He knew that if all the delegates voted he might lose, and the Freedom Democratic Party would be seated. He wanted to tell the delegates what to do.

But the Freedom Democratic Party stood together. And when people stand together they become strong. When you are strong you have some power, too. So President Johnson was not the only one at the Convention with power. The Freedom Democratic Party's power came from standing up and talking about what it believed in. People believed what Mrs. Hamer and Dr. Henry said, and they wanted to support the Freedom Democratic Party. For three days, the Freedom Democratic Party and its friends were strong enough to keep the President of the United States from doing what he wanted. But the President used all the pressure that he could, and finally he was able to stop all the delegates from voting about Mississippi.

### Why Did the Freedom Democratic Party Reject the Committee's Decision?

The Committee offered two token seats to the Freedom Democratic Party. And the Committee chose the two people to sit in them, Dr. Henry and Rev. King. The Committee said this offer was the best they could do.

The Freedom Democratic Party delegation also voted. They voted whether or not to accept the decision of the Committee. They voted NOT to accept the decision of the Committee. The Freedom Democratic Party delegation said the offer was not good enough. They insisted that the Committee had to do better.

The Freedom Democratic Party said it was tired of tokens. It wanted 68 votes, not two votes. It wanted to vote for Mississippi. And it wanted to choose its own leaders -- it did not want the Committee to say who could vote from the Freedom Democratic Party. The Freedom Democratic Party wanted its delegation to sit and vote with Democrats from all the other states in the country.

So the Freedom Democratic Party delegation said "No!" to the Committee. The delegation talked about the offer for many hours and voted several times. Each time the delegation said "No!". President Johnson and Hubert Humphrey could not understand why the Freedom Democratic Party would not give in. And many of our Negro and white friends could not understand either. Very few people in the country understand what it means to say "No!" to what is wrong and to say "Yes!" to what you believe in.

Most people think that you have to give in at some point so that other people will not be mad. They think that you are supposed to accept what you are offered by powerful people because that is the way things are done in this country. That



is the way things have been done in Mississippi, too, for a long time.

It takes courage to stand up for what you believe in. That is why the Freedom Democratic Party was started. So that people could stand up for what they believe in in Mississippi. But because the Freedom Democratic Party stood up for what it believed in in Mississippi, it knew it had to do this everywhere. So when the President and the Committee said "No!" to the Freedom Democratic Party in Atlantic City, the Freedom Democratic Party continued to say "Yes!" to what it believed in.

#### What Did The Regular Party of Mississippi Do?

The Regular Party of Mississippi did not like the Committee's decision either. They were mad because Dr. Henry and Rev. King had been able to get seats in the Convention. They were mad too because they did not want to promise that they would work for President Johnson and Hubert Humphrey in the election. So Gov. Johnson of Mississippi told the Regular Democratic Party delegation to come home. And that is what they did, all except four of them who said they would support President Johnson and Hubert Humphrey.

#### What Happened To The Mississippi Seats At The Convention?

The four delegates from the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi who promised to support President Johnson took their seats at the Convention. But the Freedom Democratic Party delegation also tried to take the Mississippi seats. When the Freedom delegates walked in, the four delegates from the Regular

Democratic Party walked out. Then they went home too. So the Freedom Democratic Party delegation sat in some of the seats from Mississippi. For four days they kept coming to the Convention. In this way they showed that they felt they should be a part of the Convention, and that they wanted to support the national Democratic Party.

#### THE FREEDOM VOTE

##### What Will The Freedom Democratic Party Do Next?

The Freedom Democratic Party will keep working and spreading all over Mississippi. It wants more and more Negroes in Mississippi to take part in politics. It wants to grow and grow until it is stronger than the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi.

The Freedom Democratic Party will also campaign for President Johnson and Hubert Humphrey in the November election. The Freedom Democratic Party is supporting Johnson and Humphrey even though Johnson and Humphrey supported the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi at Atlantic City. The reason is that the Regular Democratic Party is fighting hard to get the Republican candidate Barry Goldwater and his conservative program into the White House. To support Johnson in Mississippi, therefore, is to help fight the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi and the conservative program it supports.

The Freedom Democratic Party will also support other candidates in November. Dr. Aaron Henry is running for Senator from Mississippi, and Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Mrs. Victoria Gray,



and Mrs. Annie Devine are running for the House of Representatives. They are running as Independents, but they will have the support of the Freedom Democratic Party. The Freedom Democratic Party wants everyone who is registered to vote for Lyndon Johnson, Hubert Humphrey, Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Gray, and Mrs. Devine in November. But for those people who are not registered there will be another vote -- the FREEDOM VOTE.

### What Is The Freedom Vote?

The Freedom Vote is a special vote for all people, Negro or white who are at least 21 years old and live in Mississippi. This year the Freedom Vote will be October 30 and 31 and November 1 and 2. The same candidates will be on the Freedom Vote as are in the Regular Election on November 3. People can FREEDOM REGISTER anytime to vote in the Freedom Vote.



The Freedom Democratic Party will try to get more votes in the Freedom Vote than there are in the regular election. This will show that Negroes want to vote and would vote if they were allowed to. It will also show that if Negroes were allowed to vote in Mississippi, there would be different people representing Mississippi.

The Regular Democratic Party does not like the Freedom Vote. But the Negroes of Mississippi want to stand up and be counted. They know that if they vote in the Freedom Vote their voices will be heard. And they know that if they vote for President Johnson, he will have to listen.

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