

FREEDOM PRIMER

NO. 2



The Freedom Vote and The Right to Vote



What is The Freedom Vote?

The FREEDOM VOTE is a special election October 30 and 31 and November 1 and 2. Anyone who is 21 years or older and lives in Mississippi can vote in the Freedom Vote. In the Freedom Vote it does not matter whether you are Negro or white. You do not have to be Registered at the Courthouse to vote in the Freedom Vote. And you do not have to pay poll tax either. Everyone who wants to vote can vote in the Freedom Vote.

Why is The Freedom Vote Necessary?

The Freedom Vote is necessary because most Negroes in Mississippi cannot vote in the Regular Election on November 3. They cannot vote because they are not allowed to REGISTER TO VOTE at the Courthouse. Because only a few Negroes are allowed to vote, most Negroes cannot help choose the people who are in the government.

That is why the Freedom Vote is necessary. Because you do not have to be Registered at the Courthouse to vote in the Freedom Vote, everybody in Mississippi can vote in the Freedom Vote to say who they think should be in the government.

Who has the Right To Vote in The United States?

Before the Civil War, most Negroes could not vote because they were slaves. But the slaves were freed in 1863 during the Civil War. So, at the end of the Civil War in 1865, Negroes in Mississippi and



everywhere in the South began to vote. And in 1870 the CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES was changed to say that no one could be stopped from voting just because they were Negro.

Then why can so many white people vote in Mississippi when so few Negroes are allowed to vote?

Who Decides Who Can Vote in Mississippi?

The Constitution of the United States does not say that everybody has the right to vote. The Constitution says that each state can decide who should be allowed to vote in that state. That means that the Government of Mississippi decides who should be allowed to vote in Mississippi.

But in Mississippi the government is controlled by the Regular Democratic Party. So, the Regular Democratic Party really decides who can vote in Mississippi.

How Does the Regular Democratic Party Stop Negroes from Voting?

There are many ways that the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi stops Negroes from voting. The Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi makes people do many things before they can vote.

The most important thing that people have to do before they can vote

is to register at the courthouse. Both Negroes and whites are supposed to register before they can vote.

But most Negroes are not allowed to register at the Courthouse. Many times the sheriff or the police tells Negroes that they should not register. And sometimes the registrar or the county clerk won't let Negroes fill out the Registration Form.



The Regular Democratic Party put many questions on the Registration Form. They made some of the questions very hard to answer. You need to go to school many years to be able to know the answers to some of these questions. The Regular Democratic Party knows that many Negroes cannot go to school in Mississippi, and they know that the schools for Negroes are bad. They know that if they put hard questions on the Registration Form, it makes it hard for Negroes to pass the Registration Test.

Sometimes the registrar or county clerk just tells Negroes "You did not pass," and does not even say what answers were wrong on the test. Sometimes the registrar or county clerk even tells Negroes who have been to school for many years that they did not pass the test. The Regular Democratic Party does not want Negroes to vote, so the registrars tell Negroes that they do not pass the test, even if Negroes answer all the questions right.

And sometimes even if Negroes can register, they are not allowed to vote. To vote for sheriff or mayor or governor you have to pay the

poll tax. But many Negroes do not have enough to pay the poll tax. And sometimes the sheriff will not let them pay the poll tax even if they have the money.

So it is difficult and often dangerous for Negroes to try to Register and Vote in Mississippi. Sometimes people who try to register and vote are beaten at the courthouse. And sometimes they are arrested. And sometimes they are fired from their jobs.

Does the Regular Democratic Party Stop Negroes from Being in the Government?

To be in the government in Mississippi you have to be able to vote. So by stopping most Negroes in Mississippi from voting, the Regular Democratic Party also keeps most Negroes from running for government office. That means that it keeps Negroes from being candidates for sheriff, mayor, judge, governor, state representative and state senator.

But there are other ways that the Regular Democratic Party keeps Negroes from running for office. The Freedom Democratic Party candidates -- Aaron Henry, Fannie Lou Hamer, Annie Devine, and Victoria Gray -- all tried to be in the

REGULAR ELECTION on NOVEMBER 3. They got many people who can vote to sign a paper called a PETITION saying that they should be on the ballot in November.



But the Regular Democratic Party leaders told the Freedom Democratic Party candidates that they had to have the county clerk or the registrar say that the names on the Petitions were all right. For a name to be all right, the person who signed had to be able to vote. Many registrars refused to say that the names on the Petitions were all right. So, No

Henry, Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Devine and Mrs. Gray probably will not be on the ballot in the Regular Election on November 3.

What Would Happen if Negroes could Vote in Mississippi?

In Mississippi there are almost as many Negro people as there are white people. So if Negroes could vote there would be almost as many Negro voters as white voters. But because most Negroes cannot register, there are 522,000 white people in Mississippi who can vote and only 28,000 Negroes who are allowed to vote.

If Negroes could vote in Mississippi, they would have as much say about who could be in the government as the white people. And if Negroes could vote, they could run for government offices, too. Then there would be Negro sheriffs, mayors, judges, and congressmen, too.



Were Negroes Ever Allowed to Vote in Mississippi?

The leaders of the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi are afraid to let Negroes vote. They know there was a time when Negroes were allowed to vote in Mississippi. At the end of the Civil War, in 1865, a great many Negroes began to vote in Mississippi and all over the South. Then Negroes and whites decided together who should be in the government.

When Negroes were allowed to vote, they also had the right to run for government office. And after the Civil War many Negroes did run for Government office. There were Negro sheriffs as well as white sheriffs, and there were Negro mayors and judges as well as white mayors and judges. Negro people and white people sat together in the Mississippi Government in Jackson. And Negroes and whites went together to Washington to

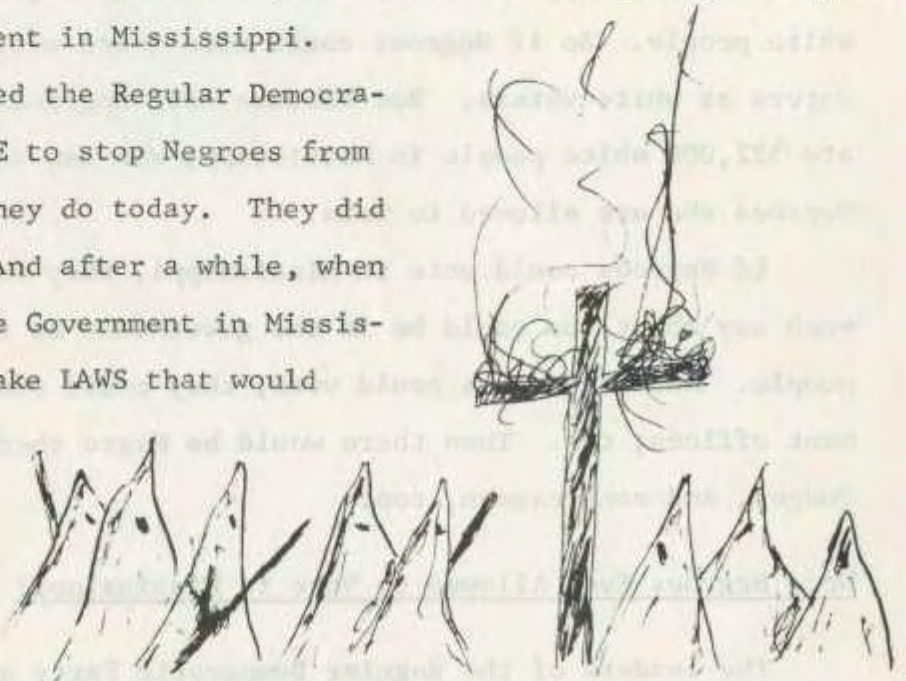
represent Mississippi in the House of Representatives and the Senate.

Why Did Negroes Stop Voting in Mississippi?

Negroes voted in Mississippi in all the elections for ten years -- from 1865 to 1875. But in 1875 the Regular Democratic Party began to get control of the Government in Mississippi.

The people who supported the Regular Democratic Party used VIOLENCE to stop Negroes from voting, just the way they do today. They did this for many years. And after a while, when they had control of the Government in Mississippi, they began to make LAWS that would

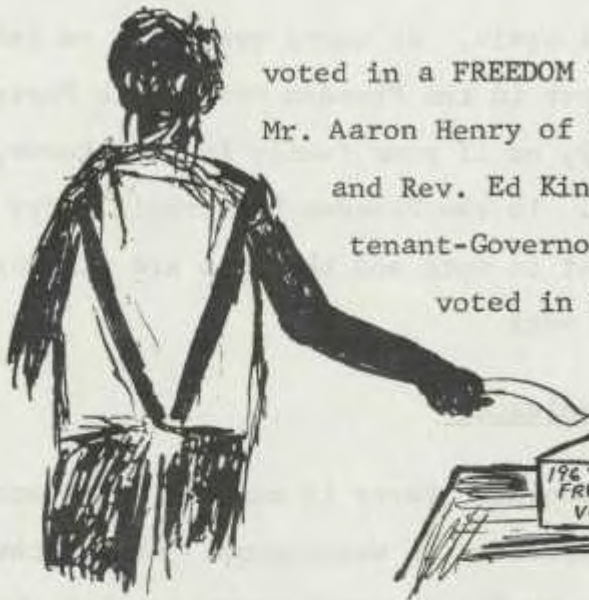
keep Negroes from voting. They made laws about registration and the poll tax so that Negroes and many poor white people would not be able to vote.



In 1890, the Regular Democratic Party changed the CONSTITUTION OF MISSISSIPPI so that most Negroes could not vote. And most Negroes have not been able to vote in the elections since then. For almost 75 years, Negroes have not been able to vote in Mississippi -- and the Regular Democratic Party has won all the elections.

What was the 1963 Freedom Vote?

But last year, in 1963, Negroes voted again in Mississippi. They



voted in a FREEDOM VOTE for Governor and Lieutenant-Governor. Mr. Aaron Henry of Clarksdale was the candidate for Governor, and Rev. Ed King of Jackson was the candidate for Lieutenant-Governor. Over 80,000 Negroes in Mississippi voted in the 1963 Freedom Vote to show that they were tired of not being able to vote.

They said they wanted Aaron Henry and Ed King to be in the Government in Jackson. And they said they did not

want Paul Johnson and the Regular Democratic Party.

The 1963 Freedom Vote was important in another way, too. Because after the Freedom Vote many people felt they wanted to keep on voting and running their own candidates. So they came together in Jackson in January of 1964 and they started the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

Why Was the Freedom Democratic Party Started?

The Freedom Democratic Party was started so that Negroes could say what they want the government to do -- just the way they did after the Civil War. The Freedom Democratic Party is working so that Negroes will be able to vote again and run for government office again in Mississippi.

The Freedom Democratic Party is open to all people in Mississippi -- black or white. And the Freedom Democratic Party says that all people should be allowed to vote in Mississippi, no matter what their color.

The Freedom Democratic Party wants



to give everybody a voice in Mississippi again. It wants everybody to take part in politics. That is why if you work in the Freedom Democratic Party it does not matter if you have any money, or if your family is well known, or if you have been to school very much. In the Freedom Democratic Party the only important thing is that you want to vote and that you are willing to work so you, and everybody else, can vote.

Who are the Freedom Democratic Party Candidates?

In the Freedom Vote the Freedom Democratic Party is running candidates for the Senate and the House of Representatives in Washington. All of the Freedom Democratic Party candidates have worked for many years so that they and everybody else can vote. They have all registered to vote. And they have all had difficulties because they tried to vote.

Aaron Henry, who is running for the Senate, has worked for many years to get people to register to vote. Mr. Henry has a Drug Store in Clarksdale. And because he has tried to get Negroes to register to vote, people have broken the windows in his drug store and shot into his house. But Mr. Henry keeps on working to get people to vote because he knows that that is the only way that Negroes in Mississippi can have a voice again.

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, in the Second Congressional plantation worker near Ruleto register to vote, the her she couldn't work there Winona beat Mrs. Hamer voter registration. But ing so people can vote -- the same way Aaron Henry does.



who is running for Congress District, used to be a ville. But when she tried plantation owner told any more. The police in because she works for Mrs. Hamer keeps on work-

Mrs. Annie Devine is a housewife in Canton. She knows how the police in Canton beat people who try to get Negroes to register to vote. And how people come at night to throw bombs and burn crosses at the homes of Negroes. But Mrs. Devine knows that she has to keep on working for the right to vote if Negroes are going to have a chance to help choose who is in the government -- the way they did after the Civil War.

Mrs. Victoria Gray knows about the problems of voter registration and bad bad education for Negroes in Mississippi. Mrs. Gray used to teach school in Hattiesburg. She knows that Mississippi has the worst schools of any state in the country. And she knows that that is why so many people cannot read, and why so many Negroes cannot pass the voter registration test. Mrs. Gray was one of the first people to allow civil rights workers to use her home in Hattiesburg. Mrs. Gray knows that Negroes will have to be able to vote again before they can get good education and good houses and good jobs in Mississippi.

Why is it Important to Vote in the Freedom Vote?

The Freedom Vote on October 30, 31 and November 1 and 2 gives Negroes in Mississippi a chance again to say who they believe should be in the government. The Freedom Vote is one of the first chances in almost 100 years for all the people in Mississippi -- black or white -- to say "No!" to the Regular Democratic Party. And to say "Yes!" to the right of everyone in Mississippi to register at the courthouse and to vote.

If you vote in the Freedom Vote, all the people in Mississippi and in the United States will know that you want to vote again -- just like Negroes did between 1865 and 1875. And if you vote in the Freedom Vote, then people everywhere will know that Negroes are working together again all over Mississippi -- just like after the Civil War.

And that is what the Regular Democratic Party of Mississippi is most afraid of. Because it knows that if Negroes start working together and voting in the Freedom Vote, they won't ever stop. They will keep on working until everyone in Mississippi -- black and white -- can Register at the Courthouse and Vote.

