



FREEDOM NORTH



A PUBLICATION OF NORTHERN STUDENT MOVEMENT
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CONFLICT * IDEOLOGY * AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION

ALINSKY * ARONOWITZ * STRICKLAND * LYND



It's cold, people are scared and lonely and huddling around fires, waiting for the Lord to make them free, and we're waiting for that, too, I guess, in so many places. It's depressing how depressed we get by the way the people are brainwashed and crippled, and how paralyzed we become by the people's fear. What a terrible state Mississippi is, and how I hate this system that has turned people so against their own selves.

From a letter from Liz Fusco,
COFO Freedom School Coordinator,
Jackson, Mississippi

"PROGRESS" MUST INCLUDE PEOPLE

by Bill Strickland,
NSM Executive Director
Dan Schechter, Editor,
Freedom North

Liz Fusco's letter from Mississippi might have been written by any one of a number of NSM Field Secretaries working among other people who in their way are also scared, lonely, and victimized. As they work in the streets and unheated tenements of the Northern Ghettos, they too are confronting the apathy of the deprived, and the "terrible" system which through its racism and inadequacies is just as deadly in its deprivation.

The New Year is upon us, and the NSM staff is struggling to persist and continue its organizing efforts. At work among the welfare poor in Boston, against police brutality in Detroit, and the indifferent slum lords in Harlem, NSM Field workers approach the new year with less despair but with a realistic sense of anticipation. 1964 was a year of growth and explosion. The ghettos in many of the communities in which we are working exploded in anger and rioting, a frightening confirmation of the condition we are seeking to change. White Americans have begun to comprehend and acknowledge -- if only begin to confront -- the realities of poverty and powerlessness; the two deeply institutionalized sources of black oppression.

The American Government passed a "civil rights bill" in 1964 for White America, and declared a "War on Poverty" for Negroes. But that Civil Rights Bill promises token changes, and that War is a blatant sham. As so many commentators have observed, the War on Poverty is far more a War on the Poor than a War on the Poverty Makers. It operates on the premise that poverty can be abolished through education and training; but that premise ignores the reality of economic and political forces and is false. Poverty, unlike a headache, cannot be eliminated with aspirins. Only a substantive commitment to basic economic and social change can begin the task of bringing the "culture of poverty" into the American society.

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In This Issue . . .

SAUL ALINSKY, community organization expert, attacks Stanley ARONOWITZ' last piece in Freedom North. His own work is further supported by WARREN HAGGSTROM, of the Youth Development Center at Syracuse University. ARONOWITZ responds with a discussion of the need for political ideology in community organization efforts. (pp. 8-10)

RICHARD CLOWARD, Research Director of Mobilization for Youth, and Professor of Social Work at Columbia University School of Social Work, discusses "Conflict, Power, and Community Organization." (p. 9)

STAUGHTON LYND, Professor of History at Yale University, coordinated the Freedom Schools in Mississippi during the past summer. He traces the beginnings of ideology among SNCC workers. (p. 12)

FRED POWLEDGE, civil rights Reporter for the New York Times, investigates what has been done in Northern cities since last summer's riots and concludes: Almost Nothing. (p. 5)

CHARLES SILBERMAN, editor at Fortune Magazine and author of Crisis in Black and White, attacks the "romantic notion that the Government is going to launch a revolution." The next issue of Freedom North will feature a longer article by Mr. Silberman (p. 7)

WILLIAM STRICKLAND is the executive Director of the Northern Student Movement (NSM). In this issue, he discusses the relevancy of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party to the North (p. 1)

WILLIAM STRINGFELLOW, author of My People Is the Enemy, speaks to the "white people of America" and asks them to understand the explosive depths of the racial crisis. (p.3)

COVER PHOTOGRAPH by Ken Thompson.

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The Northern Student Movement (NSM) is a non-profit, tax-exempt interracial organization committed to ending the economic, political, and social inequities which have created and maintain racial ghettos in the North. NSM works to build democratic community organizations so that the deprived can use their power for change,

THE RACIAL CRISIS IN AMERICA

THE EYE OF THE HURRICANE

BY WILLIAM STRINGFELLOW

I for one am sick and tired of the racial crisis in America.

God knows how Negroes must feel, but I, as a white man, am now almost overwhelmed with the feeling that I do not want to hear anything more about it, or see anything more of it, or do anything more in it. I wish it could be somehow escaped or evaded or avoided. I wish it would end without my being any longer or any more deeply involved. I would rather escape from what now happens to this nation. Yet I am certain both in my mind and in my guts that this exhaustion will not hasten the resolution--much less reconciliation--of the racial crisis: it can only frustrate and compound it.

A MATTER OF SURVIVAL

There is no one in the land who is not now involved in the racial crisis. If there ever was an option about that, which I doubt, it has expired. The only issue that remains is how one is involved: obstinately, stupidly, irrationally, or with concern, intelligence, and compassion. On that matter, let the white people in America at last face some simple truths:

The dimensions of the Negro Revolution are such that the very survival of the nation is at issue, and, therefore, the life and livelihood of every citizen is also at stake. I suppose this nation can survive and continue to exclude from the mainstream of its political and economic life, for instance, the American Indian. Such exclusion will not disrupt politics or threaten the economy in a way quickly noticed by most citizens, however damaging such an exclusion may be for the country morally and psychologically. The exile from American society of the Indian is hardly noticed, but the segregation of 22,000,000 Negro citizens from decent housing, educational opportunity, gainful employment, political responsibility, and free access to public accommodations is bound to threaten the survival of the nation for everybody.

The Negro revolution is the eye of the hurricane, but it is not the whole storm. It is the most intense focus of contemporary social crisis but that crisis involves many other citizens: all those who are poor, all those who are sick and uncared for, all those who are old and unwanted, all those who are young and neglected, all those whose skill and labor made obsolete by automation, all those, in other words, who have either been cast off in America--all those for whom the promises of freedom and humanity and society remain unredeemed in America in the 20th century.

That the crisis is acutely dramatized in the situation of the Negro citizen does not mean that if there were no Negroes in America or if the Negroes continued to acquiesce in their own humiliation and oppression that this nation would escape the reformation that history forces upon it, much less that this nation could somehow retreat from reality in romanticism for the 19th century--such nostalgia for the past is in fact nihilism.

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It is now about ten years since the Negro Revolution has been notorious and has had organization and direction. There have been all these years of peaceful protest: sit-ins and Freedom Rides and picketing and prayer vigils and marches. In that time, thousands of citizens have been arrested, thousands have lost their jobs, thousands have suffered abuse and humiliation in the churches, in schools, in the courts, in hotels and parks and other public places, even in their own homes, in the pursuit of their rights as citizens.

The question has now seriously and urgently arisen as to whether the tactics and ethics of non-violence are vindicated in results. What does the American Negro citizen have to show for these long years of unparalleled dignity and humanity and restraint?

They have to show the decomposed remains of three boys who sought to help some citizens to register to vote.

They have to show the body of Medger Evers--rotting in its grave in Arlington National Cemetery.

They have to show the graves of the children of Birmingham.

Hundreds of citizens can show you the scars on their bodies where they have been branded by cattle prods or bruised by police clubs or bitten by dogs.

More than 40 churches and homes have been bombed and burned in the past six months in one jurisdiction alone and there is still to be a significant conviction of a single white racist crime of violence.

And there are still the children of Harlem and all the other black ghettos who every night risk being devoured by rats which infest the shacks and tenements to which their families are consigned to live.

There is token integration now in many schools and colleges and universities of the South, There is the same in the North, but that's all there is.

There is voluntarism in the churches, as well as tokenism in many businesses and public places but virtually the only unsegregated premises in the nation are those in communities with no Negro residents at all.

And the Civil Rights Bill has taken more than two months to be enacted and the Congressional handling of the matter--on both sides--seems cynical or cavalier or indifferent to the gathering peril of bloodshed and anarchy.

In other words, the ethics and tactics of non-violence have not yet yielded significant changes in the practical day-to-day lives and livelihoods of the ordinary Negro citizens, while only that sort of change can possibly sustain non-violent Negro leadership in the revolution.

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