

Helping Across the South

Operation Freedom, the organization which began early in 1961 to help evicted families in west Tennessee, almost immediately had to expand its help. Where the wrath of the west Tennessee white power structure in 1961 had taken the form of evicting families of those who had dared register to vote, the wrath of that power structure in Mississippi, Alabama (and other places) soon began to react to the expanding freedom movement with a vast variety of reprisals which included murder.

People were jailed, evicted, fined, threatened, denied relief, denied credit — all because they had participated in a march, had tried to sit in a restaurant, had sent their kids to a formerly all-white school, or tried to exercise their right to vote in local and federal elections.

Today these reprisals stretch across the entire south; and Operation Freedom, because it is the only group solely devoted to aiding the victims, has also had to stretch. Local committees of Operation Freedom now exist in several southern states. The hope is that this organization can continue to give the necessary assistance, and can expand when it becomes necessary to do so.



Ruth Carter points to window in her bedroom shattered by a bullet which nearly struck her as she lay in bed. Her mother, Mrs. Bertha Carter, looks on.

A few days prior to this shooting incident, Ruth Carter and six of her brothers and sisters applied for admittance to the formerly all-white schools of Drew, Mississippi. Drew is in Sunflower County, the county in which Senator James O. Eastland has his plantation and has wielded an immense amount of power.

In a further effort to get them to withdraw their applications, the plantation supervisor came to their door and told the parents of the Carter children that he was shocked they had enrolled the children in the all-white schools, and asked them

to withdraw the applications. The Carters did not withdraw the applications. The children entered the schools on opening day in September, 1965 and became the only children enrolled in formerly all-white schools in Sunflower County.

Rumor persisted that they would be evicted as soon as the cotton was picked. This rumor has been confirmed by their receipt of an eviction notice.

Operation Freedom (through its local committee there) has already been of some assistance to this family, as well as to many others in like circumstance; and hopes to be able to help more if and when the family is actually without a home.



Rev. J.F. McRee

Many places in the deep south are facing widespread hardships as Negro children begin to attend schools that up to now have been for white children only.

Rev. J. F. McRee, in the forefront of the freedom movement in the Canton, Mississippi area, and chairman of the local Operation Freedom committee, says: "We're having ourselves a time over the schools. People all over the state are

being beaten and evicted. We may as well prepare for a long, hard fight; but with God's help we will overcome."



The only Negro children (Carter) attending formerly all-white schools in Sunflower County, Mississippi. Family faces eviction.

Among those who have watched Operation Freedom since its beginning five years ago are those who have themselves been foremost in the freedom struggle.

"Operation Freedom is an emergency operation, set up to aid people while their tears are still wet and their minds and hearts are still seething with anxiety. It is the Red Cross of the civil rights movement, going immediately to the scene where the tornado of racial turbulence has unleashed its fury. I have witnessed time and again its selfless devotion and service."

Clarence Jordan
Co-founder Koinonia Community
Americus, Georgia

"I have personal knowledge of the work of Operation Freedom. I admire and respect the work it does. It has concern, concern in the true sense of the word."

P. D. East
Editor The Petal Paper

"Operation Freedom is playing a vital role in the struggle for a just and open society by providing the victims of economic and political exploitation the necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter; and in preventing mortgage foreclosures on livestock, farm equipment, land, and homes. Many families in the deep south, who have been evicted from plantations for registering to vote, will always be grateful to Operation Freedom for coming to their aid."

John Lewis
Chairman Student Nonviolent
Coordinating Committee

"Operation Freedom merits the support of all freedom-loving people because it serves a great purpose. Often without publicity, it works to sustain individual civil rights workers — and hence the movement itself — in the most dangerous and difficult areas of the south."

Fred Shuttlesworth
President Southern Conference
Educational Fund

"Operation Freedom has meant the difference between the darkness and the daylight for many struggling and oppressed people in Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, and Georgia. Operation Freedom is a Twentieth Century Good Samaritan, lifting wounded victims from their Jericho road to more hopeful stations of survival and security."

Martin Luther King
President Southern Christian
Leadership Conference



Mr. and Mrs. Calvin Turner and their children (Crawfordville, Georgia) have suffered hardship because of school integration. Mr. Turner was jailed for two weeks when he, as a leader in the movement, gave assistance to the children trying to board the all-white busses when schools opened in the fall of 1965. Three of the Turner children are now in formerly all-white schools. Mr. and Mrs. Turner lost their jobs as teachers because of their civil rights activities. Three bus drivers also lost their jobs at the same time. Operation Freedom is helping them and the Turners through their financial crisis.

After Rev. C. T. Vivian, SCLC staff member and Operation Freedom board member, had reported that "the situation in Wilcox County, Alabama is now tragic and getting worse," Rev. Maurice McCrackin, treasurer of Operation Freedom, went to that county.

The county seat is Camden, a city not far from Selma. Hundreds in Camden had taken part in marches, including the march from Selma to Montgomery last spring. Before marching, some were told: "If you march now, you will march right out of your house and off our land." Mr. McCrackin found that at least 60 families had received eviction notices.

Operation Freedom immediately made available several hundred dollars, mostly for food, rent, and overdue notes.



Camden, Alabama family and their house. Rent was past due but this beleaguered family did not have the \$40. Operation Freedom gave the family immediate aid.



This elderly couple lives in Camden, Alabama. He, 82, still lives on the place where he was born. His mother, before him, had been a slave on this land. Because of activity he was told recently he must get off the place. Operation Freedom hopes to be able to help when and if the couple is evicted.



Mrs. Annie Devine, Canton, Mississippi. She says the Madison County freedom movement could hardly have continued if in the critical period help had not come from Operation Freedom.

What Civil Rights Leaders Say about Operation Freedom

Three of the people helped by Operation Freedom early in the Mississippi freedom struggle were Mrs. Hamer, Mrs. Gray, and Mrs. Devine. They later were elected to the U. S. Congress by the Freedom Democratic Party (although not seated).

"To me, Operation Freedom is one of the greatest things in the world. If Operation Freedom had not helped, we could not have survived. Only because of its assistance were we kept going. It stood by us and helped to see us through."

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer
Ruleville, Mississippi

"For the people in my county, more than once Operation Freedom was the difference between absolute despair and hope for the future. Operation Freedom has filled a very great need at times where there was nowhere else to turn."

Mrs. Victoria Gray
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

"Without the help of Operation Freedom, the movement here could not have survived. It has been the backbone of the movement in Madison County."

Mrs. Annie Devine
Canton, Mississippi



OPERATION FREEDOM BOARD: Ross Anderson, Ella Baker (SNCC, SCEF), Anne and Carl Braden (SCEF), Amos and Polly Brokaw, Ernest Bromley, Conrad Browne (Highlander), Lloyd Danzeisen, Robert B. Fulton, Rev. Frank Gordon (NAACP), Lesha Greengus, Enid and Ephraim Gugel, George Gulick, Richard Haley (CORE), Virgie Hortenstine, Myles Horton (Highlander), Clarence Jordan (Koinonia), Carleton Mabee, Rev. Maurice McCrackin, Jack McKart, Janet Meyers, Pat and Ed Morin, Rosemary Moss, Rev. Clarence Nelson, Wally Nelson, Miriam Nicholas, Roger Phenix, Walter Tillow, Rev. C. T. Vivian, Rev. John Wilson. (Initials in parentheses are listed for identification only.)



Amzie Moore, left, and Mrs. Lueveda Harris. Mr. Moore, a most important man in the Cleveland, Miss. movement, is local Operation Freedom chairman. He has traveled and spoken in several states. Operation Freedom has aided Mrs. Harris who has four children and has been fired from several jobs for her civil rights activities.



Calvin Turner, left, and Robert Billingsley, key figures in the Crawfordville, Ga. movement, where Operation Freedom recently began giving aid.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

All contributions to Operation Freedom go directly to the people you are trying to help, none going to defray administrative costs.

Send your contribution to Operation Freedom, 932 Dayton Street, Cincinnati, Ohio 45214

Also, if you can use additional copies of this brochure to do your own mailing to a list of friends or to enclose in a regular mailing to your own organization, please write. We can send all you need without charge. * Feb. 1966

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