

NEWS RELEASE
STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
6 Raymond Street, N. W.
Atlanta 14, Georgia
688-0331

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SNCC FIELD SEC'Y BLASTED IN GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI

GREENWOOD, MISSISSIPPI, MARCH 1 -- James Travis, a 20-year old field secretary for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, was gunned last night by three white men and is in a hospital here in critical condition.

Travis is in Greenwood-Lefflore Hospital with a shoulder wound and a bullet lodged behind his spine. He is scheduled to be transferred to University Hospital in Jackson this morning.

Travis was accompanied by Robert Moses, director of SNCC's Mississippi voter registration project and Randolph Blackwell, field director of the Atlanta-based Voter Education Project, when an untagged white Buick began following them about 9:30 p.m. Three white men were in the car.

The three Negroes had something to eat and drove to the highway in the direction of Greenville/ about 11 p.m. The white Buick was parked at the intersection of the highway and followed for seven miles.

Moses reported that the three fired into the car with pistols, and that bullets smashed both front windows and whizzed around them. Travis, the driver of the car, shouted that he had been hit. Moses grabbed the wheel and brought the car to a halt. Travis was given medical attention at Mississippi Vocational College and then brought here to the hospital.

Moses said early this morning, "We all were within inches of being killed."

He reported that at least 150 Negroes have attempted to register to vote in Greenwood in the past two days, "the first real breakthrough in Mississippi."

SNCC Chairman Charles McDew wired Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy early this morning and requested an investigation into the shooting. SNCC executive secretary wired President John F. Kennedy today:

Based on your speech yesterday on voting rights for Negroes in the South, we urge you to protect our workers in Mississippi. Last night James Travis, 20, was shot by three whites in an untagged white Buick seven miles from Greenwood and is in critical condition. Travis, Robert Moses, and Randolph Blackwell almost died last night. This incident is clearly connected with the fact that at least 150 Negroes have tried to register in Greenwood this week. We urge you to take executive action to prevent murder in Mississippi.

URGENT ACTION MEMORANDUM

On last Monday and Tuesday, February 25 and 26, over 150 Negroes in Greenwood, Mississippi tried to register to vote. This marks the first time that many Negroes in Greenwood - or any Black Belt county - have tried to register.

You have all read the enclosed press release which tells how Jimmy Travis was gunned down outside Greenwood last night. Greenwood is in Leflore County, in the Delta. There are 19,806 Negroes in Leflore County and 6,881 whites. Last summer, three of our field secretaries barely missed being lynched when they jumped from the second story window of their office to escape a mob of white men carrying chains, ropes and pipes.

Last week, three Negro businesses located one block from SNCC's Greenwood office burned to the ground. SNCC Field Secretary Sam Block charged that the unknown arsonists had meant to burn his office down.

Last Friday, February 22, Sam Block was arrested, taken to an unknown jail, and charged with "circulating breach of the peace." The charge was later switched to "issuing statements calculated to breach the peace". Sam was tried on Monday, February 25, and was sentenced to six months in jail and a \$500 fine. The judge who pronounced the sentence told Sam that he would reduce the fine to \$250 and would suspend the sentence, if Sam would leave Mississippi for good.

The white men who shot Jimmy, the policemen who arrested Sam, the people who burned the buildings, were all aiming for one goal: they want to stop - by any means possible, fear, intimidation, terror, brutality, force - Negro registration in Mississippi.

This is not the first time SNCC people have been shot at, or the first time one lies wounded - perhaps fatally - in a hospital. Two girls were shot - one through the head - in Ruleville last summer. Two SNCC staffers narrowly missed a shotgun blast fired into their bedroom in McComb two years ago.

We are asking you to:

- (1) Protest the shooting and demand an investigation from: the President, the Attorney General and the Justice Department, and the Civil Rights Commission.
- (2) Keep sending shipments of food and clothing to Sam Block at 115 East McLauren Street in Greenwood. Sam Block has told us that the food and clothing he has already distributed helped to boost morale in Leflore County.
- (3) We intend to intensify our efforts in Greenwood, in Leflore County, and in all of the Delta Counties. We intend to send more field workers into Mississippi. All of you have supported SNCC in the past. We are asking you now for all the support you can give us, and for the names and addresses of others who could help keep us in Mississippi.

We intend to stay in Leflore County until the job is done.

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