SNCC Documents

This page provides a general overview and description of the papers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), 1959-1972. The SNCC document collection is currently stored at the King Center in Atlanta.

The papers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) are a rich and varied source for the history of SNCC, the saga of the civil rights movement in the 1960s, and the relationships between SNCC and other organizations. The papers provide detailed documentation of the founding of SNCC, the internal workings of the organization, local conditions throughout the South, white resistance to civil rights workers, and SNCC's increasing awareness of international affairs. Most of the papers date from between 1960 and 1968, the period of SNCC's active involvement in the civil rights movement.

The papers are arranged by group and series, in accordance with the offices and departments by which they were designated upon receipt by the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change, Inc. The files within each of the four groups and three appendices are arranged according to an alphabetical or chronological scheme, each described in the individual series descriptions.

Insofar as was possible, the original order of the files was maintained. The researcher should note, however, that filing by SNCC staff members was often inconsistent. For instance, the correspondence of an individual might be found under the person's name or organization, or under the subject discussed in the letter. Further, the researcher should expect to find some duplication of items — mostly printed materials like press releases, pamphlets, and memoranda — between series, since the various SNCC offices and departments received much of the same circulated literature.

Finally, the researcher should be aware that the SNCC Papers are arranged chronologically according to the date of the covering letter. Usually the covering letter is the latest in a series of letters and enclosures, but that is not always the case. Hence many of the chronological files often do not appear to be in chronological order. The researcher, therefore, must be flexible in approaching the SNCC Papers, and must realize that the occasional apparent lack of order reflects a great deal about SNCC's operations as an organization.

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Group A. Atlanta Office, 1959-1972

The seventeen series of the Atlanta Office files comprise the largest subgroup in the papers, and are arranged by department or function of the organization.

The records of the Atlanta Office of SNCC include correspondence, minutes of meetings, staff memoranda, press releases, reports, newspaper clippings, and a variety of printed material pertaining to all the departments coordinated from the national office. These records are divided into seventeen series, each corresponding to a department or function of the organization. The following are the largest series: Series IV, the Executive Secretary Files, 1959-1972; Series VII, the files of the Communications Department, 1960-1968; Series VIII, the files of the Research Department, 1959-1969; Series IX, the files of the Northern Coordination Department, 1959-1968; and Series XV, the State Project Files, 1960-1968.

The researcher should note that Series XVI, records relating to the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), 1960-1967, overlaps with Appendix A, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Papers, 1961-1972. While the files on the MFDP in Subgroup A include simply those records on the party’s activities that were kept in the Atlanta Office, the MFDP Papers go into much greater detail about the party’s formation, organization, and objectives. Hence the researcher who is investigating the MFDP and other political activities of SNCC should consult both Series XVI of Subgroup A and Appendix A. The researcher should also note that there inevitably occurs a certain amount of duplication between the two groups of records.

Within the Atlanta Office files is a wealth of information on SNCC activities: the protests in Albany, Georgia in 1961 and 1962; the 1963 March on Washington; the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964; and the 1965 voter education project in Selma, Alabama. More generally, the Atlanta Office files document SNCC’s voter registration and citizen education activities throughout the southern states; activities of the chairmen and executive secretaries; internal communications among SNCC members; and SNCC’s relationships with other organizations.

Series I. Chairmen's Files, 1960-1969

The chairman of SNCC was elected annually by the Coordinating Committee. The chairman represented SNCC to the public and frequently presented testimony at congressional and other hearings. The SNCC constitution stated no specific duties for the chairman, other than that he "shall devote full time to the work of SNCC" and "shall serve both as chairman of the Coordinating Committee and the Executive Committee." From 1960 until 1968, when the position was eliminated, five men held the post of chairman: Marion Barry, from April until October 1960; Charles McDew, from October 1960 until May 1963; John Lewis, from May 1963 until May 1966; Stokely Carmichael, from May 1966 until May 1967; and H. Rap Brown, from May 1967 until June 1968.
The Chairmen's Files deal with such topics as the origins of SNCC, the sit-ins and freedom rides, fund raising, the television appearances of Stokely Carmichael, and the imprisonment of H. Rap Brown. There is a quantity of material in the files for Marion Barry, John Lewis, and Stokely Carmichael; a lesser amount of material for Charles McDew; and very little material for H. Rap Brown.

Marion Barry was one of a number of students from Fisk University in Nashville who provided several of the group's most prominent leaders. The files of Barry, who was elected as SNCC's first chairman at the Raleigh conference in April 1960, include primarily reports and materials relating to several of SNCC's early organizational conferences in 1960 (also see Series V); and correspondence reflecting SNCC's reaction to the political environment in 1960.

The files of Charles McDew, a student at South Carolina State College who was elected chairman of SNCC at an October 1960 conference in Atlanta, consist primarily of correspondence. John Lewis, McDew's successor, had attended American Baptist Theological Seminary in Nashville and had been involved in SNCC's organization at the Raleigh conference. Lewis served as chairman during SNCC's most active years, and his files consist of correspondence, memoranda, and reports relating to SNCC activities.

In 1966, SNCC underwent a fundamental reorganization when Stokely Carmichael and Ruby Doris Smith Robinson were elected as chairman and executive secretary, respectively. Carmichael, who had become a full-time SNCC worker after graduating from Howard University in 1964, was a veteran of the militant Lowndes County, Alabama voter registration movement. He actively sought Lewis's position, and his election as chairman signified SNCC's ideological shift to black separatism. This shift is reflected in Carmichael's files, which include primarily correspondence, but also memoranda, reports, newspaper clippings, and leaflets. Carmichael was replaced as chairman in 1967 by H. Rap Brown, whose files consist mainly of correspondence.

**Series IV. Executive Secretary Files, 1959-1972**

The Executive Secretary, appointed by the Executive Board, was the chief executive officer of SNCC. Jane Stembridge and Edward King, two of the original founders of SNCC, provided leadership for the organization until the position of executive secretary was created formally in 1961. The Stembridge and King files, although small in size, contain significant correspondence and other materials pertaining to the early months of SNCC, and especially to its relationships with other organizations during its formative stages.

James Forman assumed the position of executive secretary of SNCC in 1961, and became one of SNCC's most effective and influential leaders. A Chicago school teacher who became involved in civil rights activities in the late 1950's, Forman provided the administrative and organizational skills that SNCC lacked. He offered strong leadership for the organization until the time of his resignation in May 1966, when Ruby Doris Smith Robinson was elected as the new executive secretary. Robinson served for about one year, after which Stanley Wise held the post until it was abolished in 1968.

The files of James Forman comprise the bulk of the Executive Secretary Files. Since the executive secretary was the single person most responsible for the daily operations of SNCC, Forman's files reflect virtually every aspect of the organization and its development. The files of Ruby Doris Smith Robinson were not found among the SNCC records, and there is very little material on the tenure of Stanley Wise.

These files consist primarily of correspondence, but there is also staff and personnel reports, memoranda, printed materials, financial records, and news clippings. The files of each executive secretary are arranged alphabetically, with items within each file arranged chronologically by year.
month, and day.

The researcher should note that there is a certain amount of inconsistency in the Executive Secretary Files. For example, SNCC field reports might be filed under: (1) name of the field worker; (2) location, followed by state; (3) state, followed by location; or (4) state general file. The researcher is advised to study the file headings very carefully to locate all files relating to an individual and/or an organization. For further field reports, see especially 42:9-23 and selected files in the state project files, A:XV.

Series V. SNCC Conferences, 1960-1964

SNCC was founded at a conference of student leaders at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina on April 15-17, 1960. Four conferences were held through 1960 as the Coordinating Committee took shape. Between 1961 and 1964, at least two conferences were held annually. The primary purpose of the meetings was to bring together student civil rights leaders from across the South in order to discuss the progress they made and the challenges they faced.

The files of the SNCC Conferences are in chronological order by the date of the conference, with items in each file arranged chronologically. The following conferences are represented in this series:

- Raleigh, April 15-17, 1960
- Atlanta, May 13-14, 1960
- Atlanta, June 10, 1960
- Atlanta, October 14-16, 1960
- Atlanta, February 3-5, 1961
- Charlotte, April 21-23, 1961
- Monteagle TN, August 11-13, 1961
- Atlanta, April 27-29, 1962
- Nashville, November 23, 1962
- Atlanta, April 12-14, 1963
- Unknown, November, 1963
- Waveland MS, March 27-29, 1964

The various conference files are uneven with regard to contents. Generally the types of materials found include correspondence, minutes of the meetings, various departmental reports, and lists of participants. Researchers can check files 1:1-10 and 2:3 for additional conference files.

Series VI. Bookkeeping Department, 1960-1967

The Bookkeeping Department had two basic responsibilities. It kept track of much of SNCC's financial operations, and it was responsible for keeping personnel records for the organization. The files of the Bookkeeping Department, especially the financial records, are not complete. The Bookkeeping Department's financial records are arranged alphabetically by type of record, with materials in each file arranged chronologically by year, month, and day. The personnel files are arranged alphabetically by subject or type of material, with items in each file in chronological order.

Lists of SNCC and COFO staff and field workers can be found in files 27:20, 28:6, and 29:5. These lists are invaluable in identifying SNCC and COFO workers, particularly those taking part in the Mississippi Summer Project of 1964.

For further financial records and information on SNCC's constant efforts to raise funds, see especially...
Boxes 69:71, B:I, B:III, and C:VI.

**Series VII. Communications Department, 1960-1968**

The Communications Department was responsible for public relations and internal communications for the entire organization. Much of the correspondence pertaining to public relations is that of Julian Bond, who became SNCC's first communications director at the request of James Forman in early 1962. The press releases in the public relations files give a good overview of SNCC's activities from 1962-1965, but are weak for the earlier and later years of the 1960's. Also included in the public relations files are lists of press contacts, and miscellaneous correspondence and near-print material relating to the Communications Department.

The Communications Department also acted as coordinator of intra-staff communications. Two different newsletters are located in the internal communication files. The Staff Newsletter, which is incomplete, covers the period from November 1962 to October 1965. Both the New York and Atlanta offices published a newsletter entitled News of the Field, which provided abstracts from field reports. It could not be determined whether the field reports from the twelve states in the internal communication files were used in the preparation of News of the Field. The field reports in these files should be used in conjunction with those found in A:IV and A:XV.

The internal communication files also contain two distinct sets of WATS line Reports. The first and primary set, in Boxes 37-41, is arranged chronologically by year, month, and day. This set includes daily typed reports on the telephone calls received on the various SNCC WATS lines, such as those throughout Mississippi and in Atlanta. The second set of WATS Reports, found in 42:1-8 covers seven Mississippi counties. The reports were clipped out and organized by county. Supporting materials such as voter registration lists, affidavits, reports, and some correspondence were added to these WATS Reports.

**Series VIII. Research Department, 1959-1969**

The Research Department was the information-gathering unit of SNCC. Although only a portion of the department's files have survived, they nevertheless provide an accurate indication of how the department functioned and the kinds of information it collected.

The Research Department files are divided into four parts. The Africa Files, 43, 44:1-12, contain primarily printed research matter on individual countries, liberation organizations, and Afro-American groups. There is little correspondence or SNCC-generated material in these files.

The files relating to the Southern States, 44:13-18; 45-50, consist mostly of information on Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, and Mississippi. These files contain materials gathered by the Research Department, as well as reports prepared by the department either on states or on specific countries and localities within states. The files are arranged alphabetically by state, and then usually by county or city name. These informative files include, in addition to research materials and reports, correspondence, memoranda, news clippings, and legal documents.

The General Files, Boxes 51-59, are the largest group of materials in the files of the Research Department. Included here is information on individuals, and topics and organizations of interest to SNCC. Consisting of printed materials, correspondence, memoranda and reports, speeches and essays, and news clippings, these files touch upon such subjects as the Black Panthers, civil rights, farm workers, freedom schools, the Ku Klux Klan, segregation, and Vietnam.

http://crmvet.org/docs/sgccdocs.htm
The files on Court Cases, Boxes 60-61, consist of legal briefs, petitions, affidavits, and decisions for both state and federal courts, most of which directly or indirectly relate to SNCC activities. Each case is listed by title, and dates are supplied when given on the legal document. Most of these files are not complete since only one or two documents exist for each case. For other legal files relating to SNCC, the researcher should consult Appendix A, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Papers, especially the county reports on Mississippi ( ) and court cases ( ).

All materials in each part of the Research Department files are in alphabetical order, with items within specific files arranged chronologically by year, month, and day.


The records of the New York Office are divided into two main series--one on fund raising and the other on the International Affairs Commission--and a short series of financial records.

**Group C. Washington Office, 1960-1968**

The records of the Washington Office are arranged in six series which reflect much about SNCC's involvement in politics at the federal level.

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policy which need action." The files of the Executive and Central Committees, which are very incomplete, include correspondence, minutes of meetings, memoranda, and policy statements.

Executive Committee, 1961-1965
Box 6, Folders 1. Correspondence, Apr. 23 - Nov. 11, 1965
2. Lists of Committee Members, n.d.
7. Miscellaneous materials, n.d.

9. Reports, Dec. 1963
10. Requests for Affiliation, Feb. - Apr. 1964

Central Committee, 1965-1967
22. Miscellaneous notes, n.d.

SERIES III. STAFF MEETINGS, 1960-1968

This small series of records consists primarily of minutes of staff meetings, as well as position papers and proposals prepared by staff members for discussion at the meetings. Although they cover several SNCC staff meetings, these records are not comprehensive. Topics taken up at the staff meetings included finances, program priorities, the structure of SNCC, personnel problems, and white involvement in the organization and the civil rights movement.

15. Miscellaneous, n.d.
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June 10, 1960
October 14-16, 1960
February 3-5, 1961
April 21-23, 1961
August 11-13, 1961
April 27-29, 1962
November 23, 1962
April 12-14, 1963
November 1963
March 27-29, 1964

Raleigh
Atlanta
Atlanta
Atlanta
Charlotte
Monteagle, Tennessee
Atlanta
Nashville
Atlanta
Unkown
Waveland, Miss.

The various conference files are uneven with regard to contents. Generally the types of materials found include correspondence, minutes of the meetings, various departmental reports, and lists of participants. Researchers can check files 1:1-10 and 2:3 for additional conference files.

In this series, submitted applications to attend the April 1963 Atlanta conference were not filmed.

Box 25, Folders

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For further financial records and information on SNCC's constant efforts to raise funds, see especially Boxes 69:71, B:1, B:III, and C:VI.
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Box 49, Folders

5. Georgia, Cordele, Mar. 31 - July 8, 1966, n.d.
6. Georgia, County data, n.d.
7. Georgia Voters League, Aug. 13, 1966
8. Georgia, Griffin, Nov. 9, 1963

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4. Mississippi, Delta Farm Strike, Aug. 16, 1965
11. Mississippi, Leflore County, report, Apr. 9, 1963
14. Mississippi, Madison County Sewing Firm, n.d.
16. Mississippi, Natchez, Dec. 21, 1964
19. Mississippi, reprints, May 18, 1964 - July 1, 1965
20. Mississippi, Shaw, n.d.
22. Mississippi, Sunflower County, May 7, 1965
23. Mississippi, Voter Registration, n.d.
24. Mississippi, "Whatsoever a Man Soweth ..." transcript, n.d.
25. Mississippi, Young Democrats, Apr. - June 4, 1965
   General Files, 1959-1969
| Box 53, Folders | 1. Bosell, Kenneth, Sept. 18, 1967  
2. Boynton, Amelia, n.d.  
8. Chase Manhattan Bank, [July 3]-Dec. 11, 1967  
10. Christianity and Crisis, Apr. 11-19, 1962  
15. Civil Rights Workers, 1966  
23. Credit Unions, July 1965  
25. Dominican Republic, Aug. 1967  
26. Dove Counterbalance General Intelligence Test, Jan. 21, 1966  

| Box 54, Folders | 1. Bosell, Kenneth, Sept. 18, 1967  
2. Boynton, Amelia, n.d.  
8. Chase Manhattan Bank, [July 3]-Dec. 11, 1967  
10. Christianity and Crisis, Apr. 11-19, 1962  
15. Civil Rights Workers, 1966  
23. Credit Unions, July 1965  
25. Dominican Republic, Aug. 1967  
26. Dove Counterbalance General Intelligence Test, Jan. 21, 1966  

| Box 55, Folders | 1. Bosell, Kenneth, Sept. 18, 1967  
2. Boynton, Amelia, n.d.  
8. Chase Manhattan Bank, [July 3]-Dec. 11, 1967  
10. Christianity and Crisis, Apr. 11-19, 1962  
15. Civil Rights Workers, 1966  
23. Credit Unions, July 1965  
25. Dominican Republic, Aug. 1967  
26. Dove Counterbalance General Intelligence Test, Jan. 21, 1966  
10. Illiteracy, 1962 - 1963
11. Intelligence Gathering, n.d.
14. Johnson, Lyndon, "Life with Lyndon in the Great Society," nos. 3-44, incomplete
  4. Legal Peace Corps, n.d.
  5. Lodge, Henry Cabot, Nov. 1966
  6. Los Angeles, 1965
19. Police Brutality, May 26, 1965
22. Puerto Rico, May 1, 1967
23. "Pyramiding Echelons of Tens, Reynolds Moody, July 24, 1965
4. Southern Regional Council, Nov. 15, 1964
7. Soviet Union, Aug. 1, 1966
14. Student Peace Union, Nov. 20, 1960
16. Texas Southern University, n.d.
17. Theatres, n.d.
21. United States Department of State, Jan. 28 - Feb. 16, 1966
22. University of Mississippi, Apr. 9, 1964
3. Vine City, May 1966
SERIES VIII. RESEARCH DEPARTMENT, 1959-1969

The Research Department was the information-gathering unit of SNCC. Although only a portion of the department's files have survived, they nevertheless provide an accurate indication of how the department functioned and the kinds of information it collected.

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All materials in each part of the Research Department files are in alphabetical order, with items within specific files arranged chronologically by year, month, and day.
SERIES XII. PRINTING DEPARTMENT, 1963-1965

This series of three small files consists of correspondence, equipment inventories, and samples of work done by SNCC's Printing Department, which was responsible for producing printed materials for public distribution.

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2. Equipment, Nov. 1963 - Sept. 25, 1964

SERIES XIII. SOJOURNER MOTOR FLEET, 1963-1965

The Sojourner Motor Fleet served the transportation needs of SNCC. It owned the cars and light trucks used by the field staff. Correspondence, memoranda, and miscellaneous records indicate the difficulties involved in providing transportation for a direct-action organization in the South. There are also a few documents concerning attempts by support groups to raise money to buy cars for SNCC.

Box 91, Folders

SNCC conducted projects in each of the southern states. These activities are reflected in the correspondence, reports, memoranda, and news clippings found in the valuable State Project Files. In this series, there are files on each of the southern states, with an especially large amount of material on Mississippi. (There is also one file, 150:7 on Ohio). The State Project Files are in alphabetical order by state, and then usually by locale or program, with materials within each file arranged chronologically by year, month, and day.

Major project areas covered in these files are Lowndes County, Alabama; Selma, Alabama; and the State of Mississippi. Especially well-documented is the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project (see also A:XVI and Appendix A) which, for the first time, involved numbers of white volunteers from the northern states. It was during this project, in June 1964, that Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney were murdered. Other important activities documented in this series include very early SNCC work in southwest Georgia--especially in Albany and Americus--and the 1966 disturbance in Atlanta.

There are also several field reports in this series. The researcher can locate these by looking under the state, then the county or city. More complete sets of field reports are located in A:IV and 42:15-24. Similar files for selected southern states can be found in Boxes 44-50.

When using the State Project Files, the researcher should carefully study the subject headings, since there is a certain amount of overlap between the files on Mississippi and those on the Mississippi Summer Project. For information on Mississippi freedom schools, for example, the researcher should consult both the files under "Mississippi, Freedom Schools" and those under "Mississippi, Mississippi Summer Project, Freedom Schools."

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2. Alabama, Choctaw County, n.d.
7. Alabama, Etowah County, July 17, 1963
16. Georgia, Southwest Georgia Project, reports and proposals, Dec. 1963
17. Georgia, Southwest Georgia Project, applications, 1966
18. Georgia, Sumter County, Dec. 7, 1963
22. Maryland, Cambridge, Disturbance, July 1967
25. Maryland, Caroline County, July 16, 1965
26. Maryland, Chestertown, June 19, 1963
27. Maryland, Civic Interest Group, n.d.
29. Maryland, field reports, Jan. 5, 1962 - June 20, 1963
31. Maryland, Princess Anne County, n.d.

6. Mississippi, Bail for Belzoni, n.d.
7. Mississippi, Batesville, n.d.
16. Mississippi, Campus Mailing, Oct. 21, 1965
21. Mississippi, Coahoma County, Aug. 1963
22. Mississippi, Community Centers, n.d.
23. Mississippi, Council of Federated Organizations, n.d.
25. Mississippi, Doar, John, July 20, 1965
27. Mississippi, Field Foundation, n.d.
1. Mississippi, Free Southern Theater, clippings, Feb. 11, 1965 - July 31, 1966
6. Mississippi, Freedom Schools, applications
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10. Mississippi, Freedom Schools, "Retrospect and Prospect," July 26, 1964
14. Mississippi, Friends of the Mississippi Project, 1965
15. Mississippi, General Condition of the Mississippi Negro, Oct. 1963
16. Mississippi, Greenville, July 31, 1963
23. Mississippi, Handbook for Political Programs, n.d.
25. Mississippi, Hinds County, June 1963
26. Mississippi, Holmes County, Sept. 4, 1965
29. Mississippi, Itsequena County, n.d.
30. Mississippi, Itta Bena, June - Aug. 1963

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1. Mississippi, Jackson, clippings, Feb. 9 - May 16, 1964
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7. Mississippi, Leflore County, Voter Registration, 1963
8. Mississippi, Lewis, John, Aug. 20, 1965
10. Mississippi, Lovett, Willie Joe, June - July 1963
11. Mississippi, Lynd, Theron, Jan. - Feb. 1964
12. Mississippi, MacLaurin vs. The State of Mississippi, Jan. 1967
15. Mississippi, Marshall County, n.d.
17. Mississippi, Meridian, July 22, 1964
20. Mississippi, "Mississippi Delta" n.d.
21. Mississippi, Mississippi Freedom Labor Union, Nov. 1965
22. Mississippi, Mississippi March, n.d.
23. Mississippi, Mississippi Newsletter, Feb. 12, 1963

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1. Mississippi, Mississippi Summer Project, Administration, Sept. 28, 1964, n.d.
2. Mississippi, MSP affidavits, July 1962-1964
3.-5. Mississippi, MSP applicants
6. Mississippi, MSP, Applicants, Procedures, 1964
8. Mississippi, MSP, Brutality, Apr. 8 - June 27, 1964, n.d.
9. Mississippi, MSP, Churches, July 1964 - Feb. 3. 1965
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11. Mississippi, MSP, Jackson, June 1964
14. Mississippi, MSP, Letters from Volunteers, 1964
17. Mississippi, MSP, Medical Committee for Human Rights, July 5 - Oct. 7, 1964
18. Mississippi, MSP, memorandum, June 3, 1964

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4. Mississippi, MSP, Operation Mississippi, n.d.
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3. Mississippi, NAACP, July 30 - Aug. 4, 1964
4. Mississippi, Neshoba County, Feb. 1, 1965
6. Mississippi, Newton County, Nov. 12, 1965
7. Mississippi, North Mississippi Folk Festival, n.d.
8. Mississippi, Organizing, 1965
9. Mississippi, Parents Committee, Feb. 4-8, 1965
19. Mississippi, Rust University, n.d.
20. Mississippi, Shaw, n.d.
21. Mississippi, Southwest Mississippi, n.d.
22. Mississippi, Speaking Tours, 1964

Box 105, Folders

1. North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Jan. 6, 1964