

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI PROJECT

Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has had active projects in all of the deep Southern states, it has achieved its most dynamic success in the state of Mississippi. A state where individual political life is non-existent, where the economic condition of a vast majority of the population is appalling, the home of white supremacy, Mississippi has become the main target of SNCC's staff and resources.

In August, 1961, SNCC went into Mississippi (McComb) under the leadership of Project Director Bob Moses. Overcoming violence and hardship, SNCC workers have been able to expand their activity into all five of Mississippi's Congressional Districts. By fall, 1963, SNCC had joined with other national groups working in the state to support a state-wide organization of local civic groups--the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO); through COFO, a Freedom Vote Campaign was begun wherein disenfranchised Negroes cast their ballots in a mock election. The purpose of such an election was to show the country and the world that Negroes in Mississippi are interested in political action and would participate if allowed to do so by the state of Mississippi. Out of this protest evolved the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party which challenged the seating of the regular Mississippi Democratic delegation at the National Convention in Atlantic City.

But preparation for real democracy calls for a much more comprehensive program to combat the terrible cultural and economic deprivation of Negro communities in Mississippi. This summer saw the combined talents of over 1000 persons in a massive effort to broaden the base of democracy in Mississippi. The six primary areas encompassed by the summer project were: community centers, federal programs, research, freedom schools, voter registration, and legal coordination. Personnel consisted of 100 staff persons from civil rights organizations, 78 from SNCC: lawyers, doctors, nurses, ministers, and performing artists, in addition to the large core of SNCC volunteers. Enclosed is an overview of the summer project which is being planned to include other areas in which SNCC is presently working for summer, 1965.

DIRECTOR OF MISSISSIPPI PROJECT: ROBERT MOSES

Freedom Schools: SNCC Coordinator, Ralph Featherstone

41 established in 20 communities
over 3,000 students
200 full-time teachers

Locations:

Columbus	Holly Springs	Madison County
Cleveland	Hattiesburg	Meridian
Carthage	Laurel	Vicksburg
Clarksdale	McComb	Shaw
Canton	Ruleville	Batesville
Greenwood	Gulfport	Jackson
Biloxi	Holmes County	Greenville

Community Centers:

15 established in 15 communities
 61 full-time workers
 Programs: literacy, recreation (art, music, dance), day care, health and hygiene, community organization, and libraries

Locations:

Greenville	Vicksburg	Canton
Ruleville	Meridian	Harmony
Cleveland	Mileston	Holly Springs
Greenwood	Batesville	Biloxi
Clarksdale	Shaw	Hattiesburg

Voter Registration: Director, Lawrence Guyot

Exact figures are not available for voter registration attempts; however, the total number of ballots cast in the Freedom Election was more than the total number cast in the Regular Election for the Democratic Party.

Federal Programs Research: Director, Jesse Morris

15 workers engaged in research on existing or potential federal programs for Mississippi. Most of the research is now being used by the staff in local areas in an attempt to involve the total community in the development of all federal programs.

Locations:

Greenwood	4 workers researched school lunch programs, social security benefits, and federally assisted child day care centers.
Canton	5 workers researched farmers' unions, cooperatives, and other programs related to farmers.
Itta Bena	1 worker researched the development of community center facilities.
Jackson	6 persons researched public health programs, small business government assistance,

Jackson, cont. cooperatives and agricultural development programs.

Carthage 3 workers researched farmers' loans and social security benefits.

White Community Project: Director, Ed Hamlett

25 staff and summer volunteers, most Southerners, worked in a pilot project in Mississippi white communities. They were based in Jackson, Greenville, Biloxi, Meridian, Vicksburg, and Tupelo. The Tupelo project is still in existence.

Aim: to bring about some awareness of the rapidity of social change in America, to find white Mississippians willing to work to achieve social change with a minimum of friction, and possibly to bring about some kind of meaningful liaison between the white and black community.

Legal Project: Coordinator, R. Hunter Morey

Law Student's Project: 15 law students provided by the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council worked on assignments from COFO around the state. They were primarily responsible for gathering data on arrests, collecting evidence on voting discrimination, taking affidavits and contacting federal agencies. In addition, they clerked for lawyers handling COFO cases in various areas.

Supplementary Programs:

Medical Committee:

Worked on a rotating basis with teams based in Clarksdale, Greenwood, Hattiesburg, and Jackson. Team usually includes 1 physician, 1 psychiatrist, 1 technician or registered nurse, and 1 dentist.

Since medical staff are not licensed to practice in the state, their work is mainly: giving advice, developing rapport with local doctors, arranging with local doctors to make immunization available to staff and volunteers, in some cases training project staff in first aid and home nursing.

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES:

By the end of the summer, nearly 400 ministers had participated in a program directed by the National Council of Churches' Commission on Religion and Race. The largest number worked as counselors to volunteers in projects around the state. Others worked in addition to develop rapport with local clergy in making visits to jails, and to boost northern support; still others worked along with local projects to provide additional manpower.

In Hattiesburg and Canton, ministers worked on a one-week rotating basis adding man-power to the voter registration drives. The efforts in Hattiesburg have been continuous since SNCC conducted the first Freedom Day there last January.

FREE SOUTHERN THEATER:

The theater was first conceived of by three SNCC workers last spring. Two of them, Gilbert Moses and John O'Neal, are now directors of the theater, along with Richard Schecter, editor of the Tulane University Drama Review.

An integrated company of eight persons made a tour of thirteen areas throughout the state of Mississippi performing "In White America." All performances are free and offered in connection with the Freedom Schools.

They are now touring five Southern states with two plays: Purlie Victorious and Waiting for Godot.

MISSISSIPPI CARAVAN OF MUSIC:

Over 25 professional singers and musicians toured the state performing and teaching workshops in Freedom Schools, Community Centers, and churches under sponsorship of the New York Council of Performing Artists. Bob Cohen directed the project.

Some artists who have participated in the project thus far are: Julius Lester, Len Chandler, Pete Seeger, Jackie Washington, David Segal, Dick Davy, Bobby Dylan, and Theodore Bikel.

LEGAL AID:

Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee--supplied about 40 volunteer lawyers on a two-week rotating basis through the Jackson Office. Others through offices in Memphis and New Orleans.

NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.--provides coordination for LCDC (above), and handles some cases on their own.

National Lawyers' Guild for Legal Assistance in the South--provided 60 volunteer lawyers on a rotating basis.

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law ('President's Committee') --officially represents ministers connected with the National Council of Churches Program.