

# THE STUDENT VOICE

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## The Mississippi Story

# SNCC Staff Jailed as Greenwood Negroes Register in "First Breakthrough" in Miss.

**GREENWOOD, MISS.-** Eleven voter registration workers from SNCC - including Executive Secretary, James Forman - were arrested here and charged with "inciting to riot" and "refusing to move on" after Greenwood police turned a dog loose in a group of 150 Negroes on their way to register to vote at the LeFlore County Courthouse.

Nine of the SNCC workers were sentenced to four months in jail plus a \$200.00 fine. They have all agreed to serve their sentences, rather than appeal "illegal charges for crimes we have not committed."

Forman said from the jail that "the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee workers in LeFlore County are determined to stay until every eligible Negro is registered to vote!"

In jail are: Lafayette Surney, Lawrence Guyot, Curtis Hayes, James Forman, Robert Moses, Willie Peacock, Bobby Talbert, James

Jones, Charles McLauren and Frank Smith.

In Atlanta, the SNCC office protested the arrests and "intimidation of prospective Negro voters" to the United States Department of Justice, the Civil Rights Commission, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and with several U. S. Congressmen.

SNCC worker Don Harris who has been working in Southwest Georgia but who answered Forman's call for additional workers, was also jailed.

The 18-month old SNCC program in the state has provoked shootings, beatings, burnings and daily harassment of SNCC staff by whites, who grasp the challenge of Negro voter registration.

James Travis, a 20-year old SNCC field secretary was shot by three whites in an untagged car on February 28. A bullet grazed his shoulder, and another hit Travis in the back of the neck, where it became lodged

behind his spine.

Travis, a native Mississippian and former Freedom Rider, is recovering rapidly.

Robert Moses, director of the SNCC drive, and Randolph Blackwell, field director of the Atlanta-based Voter Education Project, were also in the car but not injured. Moses said, "We were all inches away from being killed."

But there have been other shootings. On March 6, Samuel Block and Willie Peacock, two SNCC field secretaries, and two young women from Greenwood, Essie Broome and Peggy Marye, were shot at by white assailants in another untagged car. Windows were smashed, but the four were not injured.

Moses explained the sudden rash of attempted murders when he described the increased voter registration efforts in Greenwood as "the first real breakthrough in Mississippi." Just two days prior to Travis' shooting, at least 150 Negroes had attempted to register in Greenwood within two days, and are continuing to try to register at the rate of 20 a day.

Special wrath has been directed against Samuel Block, who is in charge of the Greenwood office, distributing food and clothing to the 20,000 Negroes cut off welfare and surplus government food rolls. (LeFlore County officials announced the resumption of the county food program on March 20. However, SNCC field staff said that even when the program was operating, it was inadequate to take care of Negroes who need help.)



JAMES TRAVIS

(The Greenwood SNCC office was set on fire March 25; most of the registration figures and records were saved, but all office equipment completely destroyed.)

Last August, Block and three other field secretaries had to jump from a second-story window when a white mob, armed with guns, ropes and pipes, surrounded the building which housed their office.

On February 20, four Negro businesses were burned to the ground in Greenwood, just one block away from the SNCC office. Block stated publicly that he thought arsonists had meant to destroy it. Three days later Block was arrested on a charge of "circulating breach of the peace," which was later changed to "making statements calculated to breach the peace."

What differentiated this from the usual harassment against SNCC staff members was the reaction of Greenwood Negroes, who conquered generations of fear to protest. At Block's trial, on February 25, Negroes pack-



THIS IS THE CAR where death almost triumphed, Jimmy Travis, Robert Moses, and Randolph Blackwell sat in the front seat as bullets were pumped into the car. Travis, the driver, received a shoulder wound; a bullet penetrated the back of his neck and lodged behind his spine. Doctors said Travis would have died instantly if the bullet had entered his body with a little more force.

Continued on page 4

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## S. W. Georgia Voter Program Continues Despite Legal Losses

LEE, TERRELL AND SUMTER COUNTIES, GEORGIA -- Twelve Negro and white field secretaries, under the direction of Charles Sherrod, leader of SNCC's Southwest Georgia voter registration program, are continuing to register voters here despite harassment and loss of a suit against a county official who chased them at gunpoint.

John Churchville and Don Harris, two workers in Sumter county, were detained for an hour by Sumter County law enforcement officials, fingerprinted, and threatened with arrests for "vagranacy" March 18. The two said that "over 80" Negroes had made registration attempts in the county in the previous three week period.

In August, 1962, D. E. Short, a deputy town marshal in Sasser, shot at and chased three SNCC workers out of Terrell County. A Justice Department suit was filed against Short, who was accused of violating the workers' civil rights. Short was acquitted of the charge

in 33 minutes by a 12-man, all-white jury on January 25.

Sherrod and other workers cabled the President after Short's acquittal, saying that if the Justice Department did not protect voter registration workers in the Southwest Georgia counties, "our blood will be on your hands." They also protested the behavior of Justice Department lawyers, who asked them to say "colored folk" instead of "Negroes," sit segregated, and would not allow one young Negro woman field secretary, Prathia Hall, to wear a hat in the courtroom.

Despite the legal setback and the intimidation, the group continues to hold voter registration meetings in each county, and are taking groups down to register each week. Some field secre-

taries use a red-white-and-blue bus to carry them throughout the Negro communities, where they distribute voter registration material to citizens.



DEMONSTRATORS BEING HERDED into police van after a sit-in at Cross Keys Restaurant in downtown Nashville March 5. On left, John Lewis, chairman of the Nashville Nonviolent Movement. All 16 sit-inners, including a 61-year old minister, were charged with disorderly conduct, resisting arrest and conspiracy to obstruct trade and commerce. Lewis had led demonstrations at the same restaurant during the SNCC Fall Leadership Training Institute in Nashville. Prior to the arrests, students had staged sit-ins and protest marches at the downtown (segregated) branch of the YMCA.

# Freedom in the air "Rich with Immediacy," says Harper's

## FREEDOM IN THE AIR ALBANY, GEORGIA



1961  
1962

Incorporating "The Eagle Street No. 2" and "The First Day"



The April issue of Harper's Magazine says of FREEDOM IN THE AIR, a SNCC - produced documentary on Albany, Georgia, "...the sound of protest can be heard alive and quick..."

The review says, "It (FREEDOM IN THE AIR) is a 'documentary,' which means there are repetitions, and voices are mixed in with the music, but its materials are rich with immediacy and danger. It is called FREEDOM IN THE AIR and you can get it by sending a minimum contribution of four dollars to the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee, 6 Raymond Street, N.W., Atlanta 14, Georgia. The standards set by reality are sometimes higher than we are entitled to."

FREEDOM IN THE AIR has received excellent notices from the San Francisco Chronicle, which called it "an inspiring album." The Reporter Magazine said, "powerful and exhilarat-

ing," and the New York Times, in a review by Robert Shelton, said, "the most effective documentary recording to grow out of the integration movement..."

James Forman, SNCC executive secretary, said, "FREEDOM IN THE AIR is not only a record -- it is the means by which we are able to raise funds independently to support our 50 part-and full-time staff members."

Forman commented, "In addition to raising funds to support our staff, we consider the record an excellent way of people from other areas to hear for themselves, in on-the-spot recordings, what the excitement and dignity of the Albany Movement sounded like."

SNCC field secretaries came to Albany, Georgia in October, 1961, to set up a voter registration program, and were instrumental in forming the Albany Movement.



ATLANTA'S MAYOR IVAN ALLEN (center) meets with some 400 students from the Atlanta University complex who staged a protest march from the campuses to the steps of City Hall March 14. Two students had been arrested the day before at the Henry Grady Hotel after refusing to move when they could not obtain rooms. The students opened suitcases, removed pillows and blankets, and went to sleep in the lobby.

Mayor Allen lauded the tradition of progress in Atlanta, and said he was glad to hear the desires of the students.

Picketing resumed on March 15 in front of the Henry Grady, which is on property owned by the State of Georgia.

Students said, in a letter presented to Mayor Allen, they would "use every legal and nonviolent method" at their disposal to achieve integration in the city of Atlanta, and said more demonstrations were forthcoming.

## SNCC Confab Set Easter Weekend in Atlanta, Ga.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA -- The Annual Spring Conference of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee will be held here April 12-14. At least "300 students", SNCC spokesman said, would attend workshops and strategy discussions on the theme, "Emancipation Then -- Freedom Now."

Students will be housed at the Gammon Theological Seminary here for the Easter Weekend. While there is still time, representatives are urged to write to the SNCC office, 6 Raymond Street, N.W., Atlanta 14, Georgia, for applications to attend the conference.

Workshops are scheduled on "Southern Influence on National Politics," "The Hidden Structure and Social Action," "Negro Protest: A History," "Nonviolence: Past and Present," "Community Involvement," and "Problems of the Movement."

## Support SNCC

### 48 Jailed In Pine Bluff sits-in

PINE BLUFF AND LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS -- SNCC field workers, in Arkansas since last October, have helped to integrate most public facilities in Little Rock, and are now in Pine Bluff where continuous sit-ins at Woolworth's and Walgreen's are underway.

Most Little Rock lunch counters, some hotels, some restaurants, and a bowling alley desegregated their facilities on January 2, 1963. No incidents occurred and the desegregation was announced publicly two weeks later.

Bill Hansen, and Ben Grinnage, and interracial SNCC team, moved from Little Rock to Pine Bluff and were arrested there for vagrancy just after they arrived. About a week later, the two succeeded in organizing the first sit-ins in the history of Pine Bluff.

On February 11, fifteen Arkansas AM & N students were suspended by college

# NEWS IN BRIEF

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS -- Clyde Kennard, subject of a SNCC petition drive, is in Billings Hospital here after cancer surgery. Kennard was released from Parchman Penitentiary at the request of Chicago medical authorities who said they had doubts for his life if he remained in prison.

Students at Tougaloo Southern Christian College in Jackson, who had first spearheaded the petition campaign, had collected names from every state in the union. The SNCC drive netted several thousand names.

MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA -- SNCC field secretary Robert Zellner's trial on "false pretenses" ended here February 28 with a hung jury. Judge Eugene Carter declared a mistrial. State attorneys have notified Zellner they will retry the case in late May, when the Montgomery Grand Jury will be in session.

Zellner has sued in Federal Court to restrain the prosecution and end harassment of himself and

his family. Five state investigators followed him from Montgomery to Mobile where his grandmother lay dying and harassed his family through the wake and funeral.

Zellner's Federal petition charges that George C. Wallace, now Governor of Alabama, instigated his arrest on January 8 for vagrancy one week before he took office, against the instructions of then-Governor John Patterson.

KNOXVILLE, TENNESSEE -- Students for Equal Treatment, a student protest group at the University of Tennessee, was enjoined in late February from picketing a cafeteria here in groups of more than two because of the danger of passerbys receiving possible "bodily harm." Marion Barry, Jr., former SNCC Chairman and now head of SET, said, "We are in no way guilty of the charges in the injunction. In my opinion Judge Dawson was in error in issuing it."

The Knoxville Civic Improvement Committee, led by Avon Rollins, a SNCC coordinating committee, led her, has sent down several thousand tons of food to dispossessed Negro families in the Mississippi Delta.

President Lawrence A. Davis for their participation in the sit-ins.

Hansen reported that over 48 persons - including SNCC staffer Ben Grinnage - were arrested March 25, 27 and 28 during anti-segregation demonstrations.

White mobs have thrown bricks at demonstrators and participants in mass meetings here. Hansen has been attacked several times, and the windows of the car he and Grinnage were using were smashed one night during a mass meeting.

### MISS. STORY TOLD

A chronological listing of 64 acts of violence and intimidation aimed at SNCC workers and Mississippi Negroes is available for 7¢ in pamphlet form from:

The Committee for the Distribution of the Mississippi Story, Box 564, Atlanta, Georgia.

CAMBRIDGE, MARYLAND -- The Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee is continuing a drive for fair employment practices in Cambridge's retail stores. This group, under the leadership of SNCC coordinating committee member Gloria Richardson, has also been engaged in the following: a voter registration and voter education program, a drive to increase employment for Negroes in city, county and state agencies (specifically in the Sheriff's office), a selective buying campaign aimed at Cambridge's stores, an attempt to integrate the Eastern Shore Mental Hospital, filing complaints against local industries with Federal contracts and other activities.

# Project Underway in Dallas County ; 20 Register

SELMA, ALABAMA -- Three field secretaries, two of whom are a newly-married couple, are completing four weeks here since they came to begin a voter registration project.

Bernard and Colia Lafayette and Frank Holloway have set up bi-weekly voter registration classes in Selma, and have taken trips to outlying districts in Dallas and Wilcox Counties. The three are teaching registration procedures to those who wish to register, and are instructing those already registered so that they will be able to teach others.

Frank Holloway described, in a field report, one of the communities they had found in Wilcox County, called Gee's Bend: "This area, up until about 13 years ago, was the most backward area in Alabama and probably the United States. The Negroes in Gee's Bend were living in the most primitive style. They knew nothing of running water, gas or electricity or automation in any form. They were not allowed to come out of Gee's Bend.

"They were born, they lived and they died in Gee's Bend. Because of this they had to intermarry among themselves... During this time the Negroes did not live in houses but they actually lived in little primitive huts. The Federal Government became aware of this situation and built a few houses, barns, etc. ...The situation in Gee's Bend today isn't much better.



CROWDED, ISN'T IT? In a jail meant for 140 women, 208 Negro and white demonstrators line up after 413 students were arrested in late February for stand-in demonstrations and picketing at a segregated movie theatre in Baltimore. Students, primarily from Morgan State College, but also from Goucher College and Johns Hopkins, demonstrated at the Northwood theatre under the leadership of the Baltimore Civic Interest Group, a branch of the Maryland CIG. The theatre integrated voluntarily on March 6, and Negro students and members of the community saw films there the next day. On March 12, the Maryland State Legislature passed a state-wide public accommodations law. The campaign against the Northwood Theatre caused one of the highest numbers of arrests in one spot since the sit-in movement began February 1, 1960 in Greensboro, North Carolina.

It still is a very backward place. Very few of the Negroes come out. Most of the children do not attend school, because they have to work in the field. There is still this marrying within their own family. Most of the people know very little about what's going on outside of Gee's Bend."

## SNCC Staff sits-in at Howard J.

ATLANTA, GEORGIA -- Staff members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee have attempted several times to obtain service at a Howard Johnson's restaurant here, but have been refused.

The attempts came after an initial try of staff members en route to Nashville for the SNCC Leadership Training Institute Thanksgiving.

All Howard Johnson's restaurants in the state of Georgia are segregated, despite a statement by the firm's president that all restaurants and hotels would have to integrate in Atlanta if businessmen wished to hold a World's Fair here.

## MISS.

Continued from page 1

ed the courtroom to hear Block refuse to accept a suspended sentence if he agreed to stop his work. About 200 Negroes stood outside, unable to get in. And then they began to go down to register.

Field reports on the scene indicate that Negro share-cropping families are barely existing.

Food drives conducted by Friends of SNCC in Chicago, the Southern Conference Educational Fund and CORE in Louisville, students in Ann Arbor, Detroit, Los Angeles, and several other cities will continue until cotton-picking begins again for the thousands of seasonal share-croppers.

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