

SPECIAL REPORT from:
STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
31½ Franklin Street
Selma, Alabama

November 7, 1963

OFFICIAL REPORT
OF ORRVILLE

Here, we have a very interesting, but dangerous city to work in, in relation to Voter's Registration. Orrville is a city which is the population of approximately 3,500, however, the unusual thing about it is, the Negroes outnumber the Caucasian 10 to 1 and still the Negro has nothing in Orrville. Taking very an extensive study of Orrville of which I must remind you is also a part of Dallas County; I came to find out that this small city has two suburban areas of which are Boquechitta and Hayzen, which are unique in their own way. I will go into detail on these areas in further reports, however, some things I write on Orrville will include Boquechitta and Hayzen.

Thanks to Rev. Powell, the only courageous minister of this area, we have been able to infiltrate this area slightly. Rev. Ceborn Powell is a volunteer field Secretary for S. N. C. C. who has had his life threaten constantly and has been put out of his church; plus being told not to be seen in Orrville too much.

My report is based upon the facts given to me by the Rev. Powell plus a few visits in which I encountered myself.

When one drive into Orrville (of course being a Negro) he will feel and see the coldness of fear in every "Black Brothers" eyes. If he speaks of Registering to Vote, he might as well be speaking to a "Stone Wall". Sometimes you might find an individual who will say in a whispering voice, "Shh! Not here, come to my house or to a certain Box number on a certain road."

Rev. Powell was successful in getting 19 Negroes to come to Selma, Alabama to Register to Vote and this minister has been in Orrville just about all of his life, but what did this middle aged minister encounter during the Voter's Registration Drive. He was called crazy by his Black Brothers when he first started, for the White Brother of that area had so indoctrinated the Negro against the cause of "Freedom" till it was like telling a staunch Nazi that the Jew was equal. However, Rev. Powell looked over the dangers of being killed or even seeing his family killed and knowing no justice would take place, Why? Because Orrville is the White Man's justice and no Black Brother goes against the "White Man's Law" of Orrville which is, "No Black Brother is Allowed to Vote."

During the past three weeks an extensive Voters's Registration Drive was launched into Orrville, with the Rev. Powell somewhat being the guide for the area. We were able through a miracle to talk some 50 people in Orrville, however, we only got 19 Negroes Processed in the County Court House in a period of three weeks.

The Rev. Powell was able to report some other interesting factors while going through the extensive work of Voter's Registration, he

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stated that , "Some people told me about some threats made concerning me." He also said that "The White Brothers there had been asking Negroes what kind of a car that I drove, and what name, other than Rev. Powell, was he known by, in his community. He was told that if he came back to the Church, where he was giving lessons and talks, that he would probably be surrounded and killed, because the Whites who owned the property that the church was on, had set up road blocks for one way in and one way out from the church."

He told me that the Negro Farmers, there, were being refused loans by the Government Agent, A Mr. Burton, they were given loans only if they were recommended by the whites. Not ten Negroes have been given Federal Loans. Other Negroes who applied, were given some kind of excuse about why they couldn't get Federal Loans. Mr. Powell went to this man for a loan, twice. The first time he was refused flat. The second time he was told that there was someone in Orrville that was able to give him this loan. Consequently, he had to go to this white man in Orrville to borrow the money. This white man, of whom we're speaking, lends money to these Negroes at aa25% interest rate on the dollar. He sells them a \$40 sack of fertilizer for \$47.50. Consequently, he is making a large profit on money that he borrowed from the government. Rev. Powell told me that people were being threatened by their White Landlords. Ten or twelve people were being threatened by Mr. Joe Hughy. He told them if they got mixed up in this Nigger Movement to register to Vote, they could look for another means of support for next year because he would drop them.

This was the problem Mr. Powell wanted to know about. He wanted to know if a branch office could be set up here to loan money to these farmers, or if some system could be arranged with the farmers there, who owed their own property.

Rev. Powell conducts Voter Registration Clinics at the Salem Baptist Church on Wednesday Nights, and at St. Mary's Baptist Church on Tuesday. Rev. S. M. Sanders (Salem Baptist) and Rev. James Shaw (St. Mary's) are the pastors. Rev. Powell was the pastor of the Zion Baptist Church, 10 miles North of Orrville.

Rev. Powell told us of one lady (he was not at liberty to give her name) who asked him if she register to vote, what would happen? He said that she told him that she had been threatened by her landlord. He told her "If you go up there to register to vote, make sure that she moved her things in the road so that she would not have to come back into the house. Undoubately she went down, because she told Rev. Powell later that, "I moved."