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P. O. Box 275
c/o Charles McLaurin
Ruleville, Mississippi
June 30, 1964

Dear Ones,

I'm sorry I didn't write sooner, but the situation as to where I am going to be and when I am to go is very questionable. It now looks as if I will be here in Ruleville for at least three or four more days. Even then, it seems unlikely that we will be going to Cleveland, because there is no housing for us there nor is there any place where a center can be set-up. We have only one contact in the city; everyone else is too afraid to make any positive move. Right now, the most likely location seems to be Shaw, a town about 11 miles south of Cleveland, and the location of the one Freedom School which will be set up in Bolivar County.

Therefore, the address at the top of this letter is a temporary one. However, any mail sent here should reach me with very little delay, as one of the SNCC staff here in Ruleville is engaged to a girl in Cleveland, and goes over there every night or so.

Ruleville is the home of Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, the woman who seems to be the Saint of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement. The movement here centers on her, and her home has been the target for many acts of petty terrorism. As a result, the Hamers have asked us to move as much of our activity to other areas as we could, so as to decentralize any attacks.

The community center here is to be set up in an old house not far from Mrs. Hamer's home. We (I feel as if I kind of belong here) are setting up the library now, and the library will probably take up all of the wall space in the two rooms which have been allotted to us. We have received an amazingly good nucleus for a small library, but there are many more advanced books than we could ever hope to use. I couldn't begin to count the number of books of Shakespeare that I alone have sorted, and there were better than twenty people working on sorting. There were a lot of books that I saw that I would have given my eye teeth to have had in my own library. I hope that the library where ever I go has an equally good collection so that I can catch up on some of the reading that I have never had a chance to do.

The spirit of the people here is amazing. With Mrs. Hamer as the leader, no one dares to be anything but enthusiastic, I guess, but there have been more local kids working on the Community Center than volunteers.

Needless to say, the Security situation here is touchy. Before we came, coke bottles were thrown at cars and houses and many people's jobs were threatened, among them Mr. Hamer's. (Incidentally, there is a profile of Mrs. Hamer in the June 1 issue of The Nation. I think that it is very good and I hope you get an opportunity to see it.) He works at the local hospital which is run by the son of the Mayor, who appears to be the real focus of power in the local white community. (The Mayor, not his son.) If a Negro woman enters the hospital for an operation, six times out of ten, she is sterilized. This from Mrs. Hamer, who had this happen to her, without her prior knowledge, let alone her consent.

The police here seem to take it for granted that we are coming here to be a source of trouble and violence. In Memphis where the group which came to Ruleville had a five hour layover, There were FOUR riot trucks awaiting the arrival of the three buses which brought the Volunteers from Oxford. When no trouble developed, they drifted away, but we were a little nervous, to say the least.

The situation was repeated in Ruleville. There are either three or four agencies which have jurisdiction here, and each apparently met us with its entire force. Across the street from where the bus stopped, the local marshal was waiting with his combination paddy wagon-police dog carrier truck. Other police and sheriff cars were cruising in the area. We have since become quite familiar with the marshal's truck, since it cruises ~~down~~ the area centering on Mrs. Hamer's house on the average of twice an hour, day and night. The dog is beautiful -- and mean. I hope I never meet him at close quarters.

We are expecting an outbreak of violence of at least a token level one night soon. It has been quiet since we arrived, but trucks have been meeting at the city dump nightly for several days now. There were people wandering around last night, but nothing of any permanent or recordable nature apparently occurred.

Not long ago, a Negro man was killed by a State Patrolman, allegedly on a charge of justifiable homicide. The Negro supposedly ~~attacked~~ attacked the patrolman with a knife; we doubt it since the man had a mental condition characterized by extreme submissiveness. Anyway, we plan to attend his funeral as a group since we feel that this was not a fair situation. He was not connected with the movement in any way.

There isn't much else that I can say; we are asked to clear all communications which might be published or broadcast. But all that you have heard about Mississippi is false; it is ten times worse. And Senator Eastland clearly lied when he said that the Negroes are not intimidated. The people who have taken us in are all worried about their jobs or their welfare checks.

A donation of a fan would be DEEPLY appreciated; do you think one could be scrounged up?

I love and miss all of you; please say hello to everyone who would be interested and gaze fondly at my lovely, cool mountains for me.

Love,

Judy