

Dear friends,

I strive to put into brief words the feelings that have permeated my being in the last three weeks since I left the safety and comfort of my wonderful home and it is hard. The time seems like years and the distance like that of another world. The conference run by the National Council of Churches was very fine as we learned somewhat what to expect in this new land and learned how to act in jail and to protect ourselves while being beaten and more of the philosophy of non-violence. The leaders were the best I've ever known, save none. Bob Moses, the Summer Project leader and a Harvard teacher is nothing but a saint. He feels personal guilt for every death in Miss. in the last years and pleaded in the most anguished speech I've ever heard for us to return home. Some did. For most of us, the death of the three men served to drive home the reality of our situation and to frighten us more, but most of all it served to make us more determined to do our bit to correct the wrongs that have never been absent from Miss. We left Oxford with a great deal of fear, but more than that I felt enthusiasm and a sense that for one time in my life I was doing what was right for me to do and God's will. The early Christians did not turn back when others told them it was crazy for them to continue to be Christians. I have no rational explanation for spending my summer this way, but then there is no rational explanation for the existence of God. Some things are beyond the realm of the mind. This is one. This involves not only the mind, but the emotions, heart and very soul. I am no longer afraid for I know God will provide and if it is his will for some of us to die, it will be for the good of all.

Conditions are ~~are~~ much more appalling than anticipated. The poverty of Miss. is so much more than that of NYC or rural Vermont. Incomes are mostly less than \$500.00 a year. Often no plumbing and most homes are shacks. They, anyone from 7-90, work in the fields for 14 hours, a day at \$3/day. It still turns my stomach to see the little kids being transported back after a day hoeing weeds. Sometimes it requires effort to keep the love ethic in mind for those responsible for this; not only the plantation owners, Sen. Eastland is one of the largest here, but also all whites and better-off Negroes for their apathy and ignorance that permits the situation to exist. I am as guilty as Sen. Eastland and so are you.

Spent the first week cleaning and papering our COFO office, Freedom School and Community Center, 2 rooms and a hall of a house here. We sorted and resorted thousands of books sent from the North and now have a respectable library for the half of Ruleville citizens denied use of the public library. Now the Community Center and Freedom School are going full blast. We have classes for adults and pre-school children in the morning and after school age kids are done at public school for them in the afternoon. The Negro kids attend public school from July-Sept. which is the time between cotton chopping and cotton picking. The weather is often 105 and rarely below 90 which is hard for us, but must be worse for them in school. I've been teaching writing and arithmetic to adults, who are far behind their kids (we have the men in the evening) and Africa to the kids. Also have been busy working on a free school lunch program, for when a family has 5 kids in school and lunches cost 20¢ a day and you only make \$3.00 a day, you cannot afford to buy lunches, so the kids go hungry. Even the most well-to-do, relatively speaking of course, never have milk or fruits and seldom any meat, but ham fat. We try to give them milk at the Center, so they have it at least once a day. We also distribute clothes sent from the North, for these people are really poor.

Ruleville is a town of 2,000 about equally divided between races. It is in the heart of the Delta, which to my surprise is north in Miss. and west. This land was rich, but the cotton has depleted it. It's the flatest land I've ever seen much more than Iowa. Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, who ran for Congresswoman after beatings, sterilization, jail and loss of both her and her husband's job lives here. She is the guiding spirit of the Movement, who declared after they burned her church, "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted and blessed are the meek, for they shall obtain mercy." I am leaving Ruleville soon to work in Clarksdale on Job-Training and after only 2 weeks here, it is with a very heavy heart I leave these most kind, friendly and generous people, who really know what religion is, not just a country club. It also pains me to leave my colleagues from all over the U.S. and even Australia, who are so dedicated. The average age is 24 and ~~and the boys and the girls~~ are mature, concerned humans, any of whom I am proud to call friend. Most of the guys come from Harvard or Yale and the girls from unknown schools like Wooster.

Please remember us and the ill-treated people and especially children of Miss. Pray for us. I thank you all for your concern, for it keeps me going when the situation seems hopeless.

Sincerely,  
Linda Seese