

The experience of being an integral part of the Mississippi community is an invaluable experience for anyone living in a 'normal' American Community. Coming to Mississippi by bus made it possible to adjust 'gradually' to a police state. At Mobile Alabama the segregation was absolute. It grew in intensity as we went on to Mississippi.

However the experience of living within the Negro community has convinced me that while Mississippi is a police state it is not necessarily the Negro who is in jail. From too many of the leaders I heard the same refrain, "They want me to leave. I wont." Where I come from prisoners aren't urged to leave their jail. I have learned to distinguish between people fighting for their rights and men who have an inner sense of freedom.

Throughout the week as we went about asking people to come in for a dental examination, or when speaking to youngsters meeting out of doors at the sight of their burnt out church, the conclusion was the same. Freedom is a matter of the spirit. If I came to help set men free, I was wrong. Those whom I met, and naturally they are a select group, proved that they know what they are striving for. The men and women in my Sunday school class seated near their new building overlooking the sight of their destroyed community center had carefully chosen as their text Biblical references that would be meaningful for me. They were concerned that I feel at ease. I did. We spoke of freedom, and I thanked them for giving me an inner sense of freedom. I understood that it took tremendous strength to say, "If they burn this one down I will build another." There was nothing cocky about these free men, but they understood that they had something which those who hated had not. They did not feel hate but merely concern for the day when all the people of this state would again feel a sense of brotherhood.

Perhaps the opportunity to be present throughout the trial in Jackson where the Justice Department sought to restrain the registrar of Madison and the State of Mississippi was a highlight. Here I could see justice wearing blindfolds, yet I could also sense that what was taking place was a step forward. The witnesses who appeared told of their experiences, their attempts to become voters, trying over and over again. With the defendants being reduced to the absurdity of being annoyed that so many of the responses concerning good citizenship has been the same since CORE came on the scene. Instead of being grateful that their citizens are getting some knowledge of good citizenship they hate those who would give men their rights. The hate is so intense that it is expressed in the ~~expressed~~ remarks of the court stenographers when speaking privately to me. It is expressed in the contemptuous statement of one red neck who sauntered over to talk to me at the Federal Post Office building, even as the police left the vicinity.

The desire of the young Department of Justice striving so hard for a conviction makes me hopeful that with freedom will also come rights.

I do believe that the opportunity to live with a family has given me a feeling of kinship with the people of Mississippi which will keep me close to those who stay behind. If before I came I had any doubt about the wisdom of young people who are giving a year to the service of the people of Mississippi I now understand not only what their aid can do but also what it is they are gaining from their intense relationship with natives who are gradually developing a local leadership. I am optimistic about the future even though there have been encounters that suggest that for the present the gulf between white and black is great because of the fear of the "free" white.

Our presence reaffirms in the hearts of good people that they need not despair.

It is difficult to make recommendations. I have come at a time when the Freedom Schools were closing, and many of the young people were leaving. I hope that the older folk will continue to come and work ~~and~~ beside their youth. Voter registration continues to be the key to the bright future.