

MERIDIAN PROJECT REPORT

September 14-25, [1964]

The Meridian Project has just began to start a well-organized political program along with a well-planned community center program. Included in this report is the political report by Joe Morse who is in charge of the Meridian Political Program and a Community Center report submitted by Elaine Weinberger.

For clarification: The following people are now working in the Meridian Office:

Preston Ponder - Project Director
Joe Morse - Head of Political Programs
Margie Henderson - political programs
Eddie Doss - political programs
Gunter Frenz - political programs
Ray Robinson Jr. - political programs
Elaine and Eric Weinberger - Head of Community Center
Gail Falk - Community Center
Sandra Watts - Office
Freeman Cocroft - Community Center (expected back Sept. 27th.)

Miriam Kerster - Community Center temporary until Oct. 12
Rick Batdorff - Community Center temporary for at least 2 more weeks
Chris Rance - Staying here temporarily until project is set up
in Clark County
Jeannie Franklin - Staying temporarily until project is set up
in Clark County

The following is the Meridian Project's Budget: Monthly

Rent	\$ 40.00	(Office)
Rent	65.00	(Freedom House)
Food	50.00	(Freedom House)
Utilities	15.00	(Office and Freedom House)
Phone	60.00	(Office 2 exten. and Freedom House and office pay phone)
Supplies	25.00	(including office repairs)
	\$255.00	

We have a Core Credit Card so no money is given out for gasoline. The churches have also set up a program whereby we get one hot meal a day. This leaves us with breakfast and dinner to furnish for ourselves. The guys in the Freedom House need food money to buy breakfast food with. The girls get their breakfasts in the private homes where they stay. Money not included in this budget is needed for the girls to pay the people they live with. I did not include it in the budget since most of the families have understood that we do not have any money.

Sandra Watts

POLITICAL REPORT - MERIDIAN COFO PROJECT - 14-25 of September

On September 15, those working on the political program in Meridian had a meeting. Those present were: Joe Morse, Gunter Brentz, Eddie Doss and Margie Henderson. We discussed the goals for the coming fall and winter, specifically the organization of Meridian through the precinct and block captain system. It was decided that we would begin by taking one precinct apiece and try to get block captains and precinct meetings set up in those certain areas. (There are 10 active precincts in Meridian) Our objective was to organize each precinct down to the block captain level working directly with the local interested residents. Through this program, we would be able to keep in touch with everyone.

Margie Henderson was assigned to Precinct 6, to find out how well-organized it was. She found that this precinct already had block captains and was conducting Voter Registration workshops two to three times a week. Margie helped Mr. Sloan, the precinct captain, make a file on everyone in the precinct and contact those who were inactive. The 6th. precinct is now perhaps the best organized in the city. The people from this area go to the Court House regularly. The reason for the success of this precinct is its local leadership. Local people are being brought into the workings of this precinct by some very capable and interested leaders. Due to the success of this precinct, Margie was assigned to the 4th. precinct. This precinct is completely inactive and will take much work to get it going.

Gunter Brentz was assigned to the 9th. precinct. For the most part, this precinct was dead since the summer project ended. Gunter visited many of the people in the precinct but found very few real leaders. He has set up voter registration classes for every week and feels the response will be generally very good. Gunter has had one good precinct meeting which stirred up a great deal of interest among the local people. There are only three presently active persons in this precinct, but he feels by contact and the classes this area will begin to organize.

Eddie Doss was assigned to the South Side which makes up the 10th. precinct. This area is the poorest in the city, and has few, if any, leaders. Two meetings have been held in this area with 6 to 7 people attending. So far there have been about the same number who have gone to take the voter registration test at the Court House in the last two weeks. This precinct will require much time and energy, but could be one of the strongest in the city if the local people become active.

Joe Morse, the head of the political program, works in the 1st. precinct. This area is just beginning to get organized. Two meetings have been held in the past 2 weeks

and the precinct captain, Mrs. Growell, is very active. This precinct should be well-organized within 2 or 3 weeks.

A meeting of the Lauderdale County Executive Committee (Freedom Democratic Party) was held on September 18, 1964. This committee decided to open up a Johnson For President campaign headquarters in Meridian. They also decided to hold a freedom election on the first party of November. It will probably be on November 2, the day before the general election. In line with the Johnson headquarters, the committee intends to hold a fund raising dinner in Meridian to raise money for the Democratic ticket.

It was also decided at this meeting, that it was essential for every precinct in Meridian to be functioning on the block captain system if the Freedom Election and a Freedom Day are to be successful. To accomplish this complete organization, Mr. John Sloan and Mrs. Polly Heidleberg, were appointed to talk to every precinct captain and to work with them to get the precincts organized and functioning. The problem in the local Negro High School was also discussed. It seems the Principal, Mr. Reed, is making it very difficult for those students who were involved in the Freedom School this summer. He has asked many of these students to leave school for insignificant reasons such as the way they were dressed. (Wrong color of shoes, skirts too short and the wearing of "Freedom Now" buttons from CORE) The executive committee intends to work with them through the Student Union to force Mr. Reed to a showdown on these expulsions.

A Lauderdale County Freedom Rally was held on September 24. Speakers were Rev. R.S. Porter, Lawrence Guyot, Mrs. Jones from Philadelphia, Miss., and Preston Ponder, Project Director. The people were very enthusiastic and high spirited during the meeting. Approximately 125 people attended. Their enthusiasm ceased when they were asked if they would be going to the Jackson meeting of the F.D.P. on Sunday, September 27th. It is difficult for the people to transfer their enthusiasm into direct action. During this meeting, plans for the Johnson headquarters were discussed and an appeal was made for a place to open an office. The committee had been turned down on every place available for renting. Most people simply do not want to get involved.

Some contact has been made in Clark, Jasper and Newton counties again. Preston Ponder worked all last week getting old acquaintances renewed. One Voter Registration class was held in Jasper County with 6 people attending. *A Freedom Day will be held in Jasper County next week.*

Eddie Doss and Joe Morse have also contacted 4 people in rural Lauderdale County but they were quite reluctant to hold any classes. However, we will try to get out there again next week. We also hope to have weekly mass meetings to keep the entire city informed of all activities.