

10/20/64

Dear Mr. Ryspan-

Many thanks to the Green Lantern COOP for this adoption.

I suppose you're curious about what you've adopted: 22 yrs old; native of Denver, Colo.; history-major graduate of Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois; Freedman School teacher in Canton since the end of June, with added duties since August of Librarian & staff member of the Canton Community Center.

About future correspondence: We do feel uneasy about the mail. Occasionally a letter or package comes through which has been opened. And once in a while things just don't get through. But my own policy has been to keep a careful record of what I mail out when & to also check the post marks of incoming materials against the date of their arrival. Whenever I notice an irregularity I file a complaint at the post office & ask people on the other end to do the same. This has kept irregularities ~~to~~^{at} a minimum so far. It also lays the groundwork for a federal suit should we catch local officials in a big "mistake" sometime. So, if we keep a record of & watchfulness over our exchange of letters I think you'll not

have to register them. Checks are fine, I can cash them with local Negro merchants with no trouble.

The enclosed article may give you some inkling of how my summer's work progressed. About mid-way through the Summer Project another F. School was opened in ^{the} rural area of Flora, c. 40 miles from Canton. And I went to work there.

Entire families turned out for evening classes after working all day in their fields and/or kitchens. They came in numbers of 30, 50 & one night, over 70.

The age-range went from 4 - 72. I began working with the adults on reading, writing, preparation for the votes registration test & elementary history & political science. Their beautiful eagerness & their almost frightening sense of expectation are largely responsible for my being here now instead of in graduate school. Those few summer weeks were not enough to even begin to meaningfully channel that eagerness, let alone satisfy the expectations. So I've decided to stay on until I've done the best I can to 1) foster a working realization that my fellow workers & I are not, should not &

Cannot be sacrosanct & that freedom has to begin inside every man who desires it & 2) train the potential leaders of the community to carry on the educational program by themselves.

While the Flora school (which is now meeting only once a week) is the concern closest to my heart, I'm also working in 3 other schools - one in Canton & 2 in rural areas. Both of these other rural schools lost their buildings to flames - Gluckstadt Willing Worker Society Hall in August; Madisonville Cedar Grove Church late last month. The people of Madisonville have opened another church to us for school, but Gluckstadt folk are generally too frightened now. So we're bringing in the few who will still come out once a week to the Canton Common Center for tutorial help, use of the library & "Freedom Curriculum".

This curriculum revolves around discussing about the problems of being a Negro (& I always keep inserting that there are problems with being a Caucasian, too) in America. It includes Negro history, study of the power structure in Miss., & research into such questions as: what values ^{& traditions} does the Negro

culture passes, which should be preserved; what, if any, values & traditions of ~~the~~ middle-class white America does the Negro want to adopt; what is to be gained by escaping from Miss. to the North etc. etc.

With the adults I'm trying, too, to stimulate some awareness of & interest in the universal problems of wealth distribution, war & peace, other forms of discrimination (anti-Semitism e.g.) etc. The youngsters, tho' their schools are bad, have at least been exposed to those problems. But the older people - many of whom have never travelled more than 15 miles out of their home vicinity really don't know that the larger world exists. Not even the world wars have touched their lives.

The Carter Community Center is open until supper time after school every night & all day Sat. & Sun. afternoons & evenings for recreation, arts & crafts etc. Week nights it is used as a study hall & a place for tutorial help. It houses a library of c. 1500 volumes, all of them carefully selected

categorized, cataloged & easily checked out. This is probably one of COFO's best contributions to this community. Because the public library, which isn't as good in some respects as ours anyway, is not open to Negroes. The school libraries are pitifully sparse & regular textbooks average out to about 1 for every 6 to 10 kids. So that a typical literature lesson, for instance, consists of a few students lending a selection & reporting on it to the rest of the class. So that when most of the kids say they've "read" a certain short story or poem or essay they mean they've heard about it. Now we can at least supply more of them with ~~many~~ copies of the genuine thing.

As far as the recreation goes: local fellows have built their own ping pong & knock-hockey tables as well as benches & tables ^{for} drawing & painting etc. They are now struggling with problems of administering the centers - keeping the games in tact, fights from breaking out, the floor swept up & various rules obeyed. We let them define their own

difficulties & work out their own solutions
as much as possible since, again, our main
task is to train local hands to
carry on ~~work~~ on their own.

I hope you can get at least
a sketchy notion of what we're doing
here from this. It helps very much
to know that people "out there" do care
about our work.

Yours for Peace & Freedom,

Jeanne Dorman