[Note that at the time this letter was written names of some local folk were changed for security reasons, and when some portions of the letter were intended for publication some other names were crossed-out for legal reasons. -- bh]

Bruce Hartford 543 Indiana ave. Apt 3 Venice, Calif

[Undated, probably fall 1965]

Dear Anya

I have been in the movement since 1961. My first involvment with the movement was with the "Freedom Rides" in the spring of that year. Later I worked with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) for two years, demonstrating, going to jail, negotiating, writing, mameographing, meeting, painting, investigating etc. In 1964 I helped form N-VAC the Non-Violent Action Committee. I worked with N-VAC all through the year of 1964. In February of 1965 I went to Alabama to work for Dr. Martin Luther Kings Southern Christian Leadership Conferance (SCLC). From February until the end of May I worked in Selma and the surrounding counties organising demonstrations and doing voter registration work. During this time I was arrested 6 times (my 7th through 12 arrest). I was on the marchx sweex the On the 1st of June I became project director of Crenshaw County Ala. a small rural county about 60 miles south of Montgomery were I was the first civil rights worker to come into the county. I was project director untill I had to return to Los Angeles for a retrial of one of the N-VAC sit-in cases and to serve a 30 day sentence from one of the other sit-in cases.

Recently somebody asked (as did you) a friend of mine, and myself, what all these civil rights demonstrators and free speech sit-ins -- what is it that we all wanted. My friend said "Let the people decide" and I said "One man-One vote". Two slogens that mean the same thing. When you boil it down thats what our vision is, a society in which everyone is equel and the people have a voice in the decisions that effect their lives. To me the goals of the movement are embodied in a poster I once saw that was printed by SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee). It said "ONE MAN -- ONE VOTE", and over the slogan was a picture of an old Negro man. He was probably about 50 but he looked 60. He was sitting down with his knarled hands in his lap and an old beaten up hat on his head. His overalls were faded and threadbare and his shoes broken down. What teeth he had were crooked and stained with snuff, his face was cracked and weatherbeaten, and he sat there holding a pitchfork. He obviosly couldn't write his own name, and probably spoke with a soft, slurred accent that you could barly understand, "ONE MAN -- ONE VOTE" it read. Not a picture of a James Meridith, a Sidney Poitier, a Jackie Robinson. Not a picture of a Negro college professor, or a Negro soldier, or a Negro minister, but a picture of an illiterate, beaten down old Mississippi sharcropper. "ANE MAN -- ONE VOTE". ONE MAN---

A number of people have asked me why the civil rights movement is still mounting demonstrations, why we are still marching, why children are still going to jail. After all they argue, there have now been four civil rights bills passed (1957, '61, '64, '65), innumerable executive orders promulgated, and the President has even sung "We Shall Overcome". Why then the continuing demonstrations? The answer lies not in the lack of legislation but in the lack of enforcement.

When I arrived in Crenshaw County in June of 1965 I found a county that to all intents and purposes was still living in the era before World War II. The town of Luverne was completly segregated (over a year after the passage of the civil rights bill of 1964), everywere one looked were "White Only" signs, every public building had two enterances and four restrooms. Even the bus depot was still segregated (four years after the Freedom Rides). It was easy to tell when you entered the Negro sections of town—where the pavement ended the Negroes began. That summer we tried to integrate the bus depot. The chief deputy sheriff, Debne Horn, stirred up a mob that attacked and beat the integrated group of us that sought service in the bus depot.

On another occasion 4 of us were working in a small town ten miles south of Luverne, the Crenshaw County seat, called Brantley. The chief of Police and Mayor of Brantley organised a mob of about 90 persons to attack us. They were all armed with iron pipes, baseball bats, knives, and probably guns. They threatned to kill us and

the Negroes that we had been working with. As the mob grew we hid inside the home of one of the Negroes. The called the Justice Department and the F.B.I., both of whom gave us the same answer. They told us that there was nothing that they could do but that if we were killed or injured they would certainly investigate. They said that they were not able to make arrests but were only an investagatory body. We were finally forced to make a run for it. They chased us for ten miles, on two occasions they tried to force us off the road, and on other occasions they tried to surround our cas and stop us. We were lucky, however, and maged to reach Luverne. There is no doubt that if they had caught us they would have killed us. The justice dept. and the F.B.I. did nothing even though we gave them evidance that the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and the State Troopers were organizers of the mob, they didn't even "investigate". It is interesting to note that the F.B.I. finds no difficulty in arresting students who burn their draft cards.

But more dissapointing then the lack of protection is the non-enforcement of the Voting Act that we suffered so much in Selma to gain. In Crenshaw County the registration books are open for registration only two days a month. Twice a month during the long hot summer months of June, July, and August we would bring 60-75 people down to the Courthouse in Luverne to try to register and vote. Most of these people risked their jobs and some thier lives to come down to the courthouse and face the board of registrars. The board would usually only be able to process about 55 of those applying. Those who got in to attempt to register were faced with a four page form to be filled out, a quotation of the constitution to be read, 8 questions about government to be answered (to the boards satisfaction) oaths to be sworn, and witnesses to be produced. Out of the 55 or so that the board would process 5 or 6 would be allsoed to pass. Just before the last registration day in August the Voting Rights bill became law. The next registration day well over 200 Negroes were down at the Courthouse hoping, at last, to become voters. The board was only allowed to use a small form with about 8 questions on it, asking name, address, age, citizenship etc. That day the board processed less people then they did under the old system of the 4 page form and literacy test. The Courthouse opened at 8:30 in the morning, no one who arrived after 9:05 in the moring got in to see the registrar, people waited from 9:10 untill 4:30 in the afternoon when the Courthouse closed. The voting act contained a provision that if 20 people made a complaint that the provisions of the act were not being carried out that Federal Examiners would be sent in. Almost all of those who were left waiting when the Courthouse closed filled aut complaints. Over 150 complaints were sent in to the Justice Dept. We have never had an answer from them.

There is a sign in the Mississippi headquarters of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee-

There is a city in Mississippi called Liberty
There is a street in Ita Bena called Freedom
There is a department in Washington called Justice

There is more the just the dangers and frustrations of the civil rights movement that a worker has to get used to. You have to adjust to a way of life in which the people live in complete and abject poverty and total subjagation. In which everything that the Negro has is either inferior, or inadequate, the schools, the streets the sanitation system, the houses, the food, the clothes, the everything. You have to adjust to a society in which Negro children are taught that they are really not a human being but just...a nigger. A society in which Justice is a white mans whim.

It is imposible to really comprehend the reality of the poverty of the Southern Negro with out seeing it and living with it day after day, week after week, menth after menth. We got to know poverty very well as we walked from cabin to cabin day after day. We'ed walk up the dusty red dirt road under the hot sun toward an old decempit wooden cabin held off the ground by crooked stacks of red bricks. We'ed trudge across the swept yard of dirt bleached white by the sun that surrounded the cabin. We'ed carefully climb the rickety stairs, worn thin over the years, up to the porch, and begin to talk to the woman who say there listlessly shelling peas, (the familys sole

food at the moment), in the shade that the porch afforded. Lying in the corner of the porch would be her year old baby, lying there without the energy to brush off the flies that crawled over his face, over his lips, over his eyes. There was no glass for the windows and no screens, just wooden storm shutters that had to be left open during the hot summer months. Light was provided by an ald oil lamp and heat by a wood buring stove. Water had to be brought from the neighbors well down the road. As we went from cabin to cabin we saw a lot of children with birth defects caused by lack of good food during their mothers pregnancy. We saw a let of rickets, and a let of score, and we saw a let of hunger.

Tyranny is the partner of poverty in the south. There was a Negro named Johnson in XXXXXXXX County who was a sharecropper on land owned by a white man called Joe XXXXXXX After Johnson had gotten planted and most of the work was done XXXXXXXXXdecided that he wanted all of thecrop. so in June of last year he ordered Johnson to move off the farm which he had worked for years. Johnson knew that if he moved he would get none of the proceed from the crop and he refused to go. XXXXXX then began to shoot at him with a shotgun. Johnson was slightly wounded but was able to get away from XXXXXXX. Johnson went into town to get the sheriff and lodge a complaint against Trainnon. Trainny however, called up the sheriff and had Johnson arrested for supposedly insulting his (Training) wife. For the next two weeks Johnson remained in jail, every time we went down to bail him out the sheriff put another minor technicality in our way. Finally after two weeks we were able to get him out of jail. When johnson returned to his farm XXXXXXXX again ordered him to leave and Johnson again refused. Two days later XXXXXXXX son (35 years old) drove up along side of Johnsons son (16 years old) at he was walking along the read. Training pulled out a pistol and shot him twice in the side. The boy was taken to the Krymskyw County Hospital (built partly with Federal funds) where the doctors refused to treat him and ordered him taken out. He was then driven 60 miles to the Catholic hospital in Montgomery were they were able to save his life. Transport continued his threats and attacks against Johnson untill Jonson was finally forced to leave.

Even more despotic then the shareeqopper system in the plantation system. The MCCXXXX plantation in Dallas County is one of the larger plantations in the area.

MCCXXXX, the owner, is a high ranking member of the KuKluxKlan. Workers on his plantation work a 12 hour day 6 or 7 days a week and are paid \$1.25 a day (or about ¢10 an hour). No one is allowed to leave the plantation without the permission of MCXXXXX. Everything that the workers must buy (all Negro workers of corse) they must buy at the plantation store there on the plantation. Anyone that leaves the plantation without permission is beaten up. MCCXXXX has threatned to shoot any civil rights worker found on his land. We know he is not bluffing.

If someone were to ask me to I could talk about the civil rights movement for 6 days and 6 nights and fill a hundred letters such asthis. Unfortunatly, however, no matter how much I talk or how much I write I always run into the same problem. It is as difficult to tell someone ab ut the movement and give them a real understanding of it as it is to give someone a real comprehension of the Grand Canyon or Banff from a little black and white snapshet. You can see from the snapshet that there is a hole in the ground or a mountain but that does not get over the real truth of the situation. It is the same in talking about the movement, the best that I can hope for is to give you a written snapshet. I will write another letter seen, but before I close this one there is one more thing that I want to discusss. The people who make up the movement. I don't mean the great leaders or the civil rights workers, but the people who are the bavkbone of the movement, the people who were born and grew up in the Black Belt of the deep south, the poorr and uneducated, the old and the young. Sometimes people wonder why we stay in the movement w th it's dangers and frustrations, sometimes we wonder ourselfs. A large part of the answer to that question lies in the people that we work with. There is a strong bond that is forged between civil rights workers and between the people that they work with. No one leaves the south without leaving a part of himself there, and no one leaves with out taking a part of the south

There is somuch I want to say about these people an words are so pitifully inadequate. There is do much to describe and there is no time, especially in a letter, to tell it.

Most of the demonstrating in Sakwax was done by the young students in Jr. and Sr. High School. One of the student leaders was a 13 year old girl named Veronica Smith. She had been arrested a number of times in demonstrations and was one of the students that were in charge of picket lines. One day when she was arrested whe was brought up beofre Sheriff XXXXXXXXX to be booked.

(brusquely)"Nigger, whats your name", he commanded.

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

(angrily) "Nigger! You know haw to talk to us! Now whats you name!"

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

(ominously) "Nigger, we're going to give you one more chance. Now..whats..your.. name."

(quietly)"Miss Verenica Smith"

He knocked her to the floor with his billy club and kicked her ones. She got up.

(sneeringly) "Okay, nigger, whats your name."

(quietly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

We beat her down again with his club a kicked her a few times in the mouth. She get up slowly, she was bleeding from the mouth.

(angrily) "Say Veronica!"

(reluctantly) "Veronica"

(angrily) "Say Smith!"

(slowly) "Smith."

(satisfied) "ekay, then , nigger."

(softly, defiantly) "Miss Veronica Smith"

They beat herhup untill she was unconscious and then dragged her off to a cell.

Where she stayed about five days untill we could get them out.

There were old people too who had that quiet kind of courage. One day about naon time we were in the 1st Baptist church dispatching teams of pickets to variouse places downtown, when a dozen old ladies entered the church. They were all forty or fifty or sixty, and they said that they wanted to go picket the Wellfare Office becasue they had been removed from the wellfare rolls after they had tried (unsuccesfully) to register to vote. They had come from Orrville about 20 miles SouthWest of Selma. They had had to walk part of the way and they were pretty tired. Whe teld them they sught to rest awhile before they went out to picket, but they said that they thought they should do their picketing during the noon hour when lots of people would see them, besides they knew that they wouldn't get mere them 50 steps before they were arrested anyway. So it didn't matter how tired they were. Later that day I found that the cell I was in was just down the hall from theirs, and that we could shout to each other. They were in a cell with steel bunks, but with no mattresses. There were 6 bunks so halh of them had to sleep on the concrete floor. We were there for 3 days. When we left they were in good spirits.

There were others kinds of courage. I remember a poor farmer who came shyly, hesitantly, up to the freedom House one evening. He was nervouse about talking to a white person, even one who was a freedom worker. He didn't say much he just sort of stood there for a moment and then he thrust a dollar into my hand and softly mumbled "This is to help you all out." I knew where he lived and I knew that without that dollar he and his family would not eat the next day. I wanted to give it back to him and tell him that we really didn't need it. But, somehow, standing there looking at him I couldn't do it. If he had the courage to give me that money I would just have to find the courage to accept it.

Well, I'll write again