

Bruce Hartford  
543 Indiana ave. Apt 3  
Venice, Calif

NOT FOR  
PUBLICATION

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Dear Anya

[redacted] at [redacted] [redacted] I worked with CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) for two years, demonstrating, going to jail, negotiating, writing, mimeographing, 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. [redacted] I went to Alabama to work for Dr. Martin Luther Kings Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). [redacted] 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 [redacted] [redacted] Marches to Montgomery. 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 slogans that mean the same thing. When you boil it down thats what our vision is, a society in which everyone is equal 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 obviously couldn't write his own name, and probably spoke with a soft, slurred accent that you could barely 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 sharecropper. "ONE 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 completely segregated (over a year after the passage of the civil rights bill of 1964), everywhere 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 integratd 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. We 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 investigatory 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 car and stop us. We were lucky, however, and managed 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 evidence 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 disappointing than 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 their 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 board's 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 allowed 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 than 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 morning got in to see the registrar, people waited from 9:10 until 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 out 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 than 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 subjugation. 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 man's whim.

It is impossible to really comprehend the reality of the poverty of the Southern Negro without seeing it and living with it day after day, week after week, month after month. We got to know poverty very well as we walked from cabin to cabin day after day. We'd walk up the dusty red dirt road under the hot sun toward an old decrepit wooden cabin held off the ground by crooked stacks of red bricks. We'd trudge across the swept yard of dirt bleached white by the sun that surrounded the cabin. We'd carefully climb the rickety stairs, worn thin over the years, up to the porch, and begin to talk to the woman who sat there listlessly shelling peas, (the family's 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 old oil lamp and heat by a wood burning 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 lot of rickets, and a lot of scro, and we saw a lot of hunger.

Tyranny is the partner of poverty in the south. There was a Negro named [redacted] in Crenshaw County who was a sharecropper on land owned by a white man called Joe [redacted]. After [redacted] had gotten planted and most of the work was done, [redacted] decided that he wanted all of the crop. so in June of last year he ordered [redacted] to move off the farm which he had worked for years. [redacted] knew that if he moved he would get none of the proceed from the crop and he refused to go. [redacted] then began to shoot at him with a shotgun. [redacted] was slightly wounded but was able to get away from [redacted]. [redacted] went into town to get the sheriff and lodge a complaint against [redacted]. [redacted], however, called up the sheriff and had [redacted] arrested for supposedly insulting his ([redacted]) wife. For the next two weeks [redacted] remained in jail, every time [redacted] down to bail him out the sheriff put another minor technicality in our way. Finally after two weeks [redacted] able to get him out of jail. When [redacted] returned to his farm [redacted] again ordered him to leave and [redacted] again refused. Two days later [redacted] son (35 years old) drove up along side of [redacted] son (16 years old) as he was walking along the road. [redacted] pulled out a pistol and shot him twice in the side. The boy was taken to the Crenshaw 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 where they were able to save his life. [redacted] continued his threats and attacks against [redacted] until [redacted] was finally forced to leave.

Even more despotic then the sharecropper system in the plantation system. The [redacted] plantation in Dallas County is one of the larger plantations in the area. [redacted] 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 [redacted]. 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. [redacted] 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 as this. Unfortunately, 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 snapshot. You can see from the snapshot 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 snapshot. I will write another letter soon, but before I close this one there is one more thing that I want to discuss. 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 backbone 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 ourselves. 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