

(Anne) Where were you from before you came to Mississippi?

(Moses) I was from Harlem, New York and I was born and raised there.

(Anne) Where did you go to school?

(Moses) I went to New York City school system and then to Hamilton College which is a small college upstate New York and then did some graduate work at Harvard.

(Anne) Did you complete your master's or PhD or what?

(Moses) I completed a masters. In philosophy.

(Anne) What year?

(Moses) 1957.

(Anne) When did you first come to Mississippi?

(Moses) The first time was in the summer of 1960. I was working on a tour for SNCC and I went through parts of Alabama and Mississippi, Louisiana, to get students to come to a conference. That was to be the first fall conference in the fall of 1960 and they would--

(Anne) Was that in Raleigh?

(Moses) Atlanta. The Raleigh conference was the spring of '60 and then they planned at that conference to have another one in the fall and I went and got names of people to come to the conference.

(Anne) When did you decide to work fulltime in Mississippi?



(Moses) Well, when I was in Mississippi that summer, I talked to a person named Amsy Moore, who was with the NAACP in Cleveland, Mississippi, about possibilities of a voter registration project in the delta. He was very interested in that. He wasn't really interested in the sit-ins and integration of lunch counters and so forth. So we mapped out the areas where ~~was~~ a voter registration drive could take place and an idea for a program which I sent back to the SNCC office in Atlanta. And I decided later on that summer that I would come back and work on it.

(Anne) On voter registration?

(Moses) Right. So I came back the following year, July of 1961, back to Cleveland to start to work on this program and it turned out that it was easier to start in McComb so I went down there and that's ~~where~~ when we started what people consider the first phase of SNCC voter registration project in Mississippi.

(Anne) Could you trace your activities or the events of 1961-2-3 that lead up to the official MFDP? Is that too broad a question? I'm not exactly sure how to ask it. I don't know very much about it.

(Moses) There are some, I think, key stages that you can trace that will help you. One was simply an initial stage of an exploration of whether or not you could make sense of, say, a person, like myself coming and living in a community and conducting a voter registration campaign, and whether it was possible to get people from the area to work. My feeling, after the initial, ~~stage~~ say, program in McComb which lasted about four months, was



that that was worthwhile, that you could do that. You could get local people to work with you and finally that you could get young people to leave school and work. So out of that first campaign we did get Curtis Hayes and Hollis Watkins as field secretaries, who had just graduated from high school and instead of going on to college right away decided to work for a year. And they went into Hattiesburg to start a similar campaign. So that the idea of developing a group, a force of young people from Mississippi, who would spread out into different areas of the state and begin to work on the voter registration really took roots out of that first program in McComb.

didn't

So even though that program ~~did~~ actually register any one, ~~and~~ you got about thirty-six people to go down which was in itself a huge breakthrough because in the last ten years you hadn't gotten twenty people who had attempted to register.

So the next year was really-- You can look in one sense upon the development from '61 through until say '63, fall of '63 as a process in which you were working at that level. That was you were consciously trying to build a group of young people in Mississippi who would work and view themselves as having the right to work on this kind of problem. That it would become something that was legitimate for young people to do and that, in fact, it was a kind of work for young people and the most pressing work to be done, more important, say, than going through school in four years. And for some, more important than continuing school. Like Guyot, for instance, had finished Tougaloo and was planning to go to law school, but I think altered those plans



with the idea that it was more important to work than to go on to law school. So that a certain tone, rationale, spirit, I think, began to develop in those years among some of the young people. And that, at the end of two years you had about twenty-five or thirty young Negroes between the age of 18 and 26 who were from Mississippi, who viewed themselves as some kind of unit, who identified with SNCC in terms of organization of national identification and who identified with each other in terms of, sort of working in Mississippi context, of being from Mississippi and more or less thinking that their job and even their life's work would be to work to make some sense out of living in Mississippi.

It was on that base that all the other work rose, the organization of COFO, the organization of the Freedom Democratic Party, the coming in of the Mississippi Summer Project, and the running of political campaigns. I think the real one, I'd say, in terms of a thesis, to find out what, writing a history of FDP or any of those organizations that one thing that would be important to do would be to get the list of those people starting with Curtis Hayes and Hollis Watkins, <sup>Willie</sup> Louis Peacock, Sam Block, Lawrence Guyot, James Jones, McLaren, and others who were part of that initial group and who are still working, who are now, either--They're in school, some of them, Some of them are running some of the organizations in Mississippi. And really ~~they~~ their history, which is, I think the kernel of a lot of the history of these organizations, more so than say volunteers or people who came in from the outside.

Now watching that grow-- What your first, was the development of a relationship between some of those people and some people in rural areas in



different parts of the state: The Steptoes (?) and others, Weathersby and other people in the county, Mrs. Hamer, MacDonalds and some other people in Sunflower County, some of the people in and around Forrest County and around Hattiesburg.

The initial base-- You see I think you tended to have two prongs. That is, as a base in the young people, ~~onx~~ a small group of them conceiving themselves as workers, fulltime, and developing a certain kind of mobility, moving out, usually, from the area where they lived to another town and then some of them moving from area to area. And then the people that they initially worked with being by and large not from the city such as they were in Mississippi, but from rural areas and then by and large not from the plantations initially, but from the small independent farmer who had their own little plots of land.

The other thing which entered early. In fact, the next program that I personally worked on after the McComb program was a program, a political program where Reverend Smith, who was from Jackson, ran for Congress on the Democratic primaryx ticket. He announced in January of 1962. So it was about 6 months after I first came. The election wasn't until that June but we used the whole winter and spring to campaign and to do voter registration. At that time, of course, there was no chance of winning. There was no chance of polling any votes; no one was registered. But there was a chance of raising the issue of voter registration of more organization--they set up campaigning committeess--getting on TV with the equal time provision



and so speaking to white people as well as Negroes, and of operating over a Congressional district. So in essence what happened was we pulled out of McComb and operated in a wide political unit which included McComb as a subdivision of the Third Congressional district and continued with the voter registration program that we had begun in McComb.

I think that, for me, that experience lead to a feeling that in the whole area of politics there was room which wasn't available in an area, say, just of voter registration. Because, for one thing, you could get on TV. For another, local person felt he had a right to run so you had the whole platform for projection of a local person as opposed, say, to the organizers for civil rights organization and that kind of thing. And in response to that projection, other local people who knew him would feel like they could come out to support him, whereas they would maybe be reluctant to support SNCC as a civil rights organization. So that you had a whole new dimention for organizing around the direct involvement in politics, even though there wasn't a chance of winning.

So that was where, I think that first idea came of the direct political involvement and, of course, out of that the whole question about political party was raised out of that campaign. I mean certainly in my own mind I began to think through what was a political party.



BOB PARRIS MOSES

Interviewed by:

Anne Romaine

Part II

(moses) Well, it was out of that that I first began to ~~through~~ think through what was a political party, how does a political party get formed, what is the structure, what's the base, all those questions which had never really been real questions for me before. Then Smith, after the campaign was over, went on to try and develop democratic clubs in the different counties where he'd gotten a base for the campaign but they later faded. There was no real manpower to work on them. So that didn't take hold at that time.

I guess the other thing which was important out of that was that you began to lay a base for a cooperation of different civil rights organizations in a program. Because around such a campaign there was a basis for the people who were in working with SCLC and the people who were in working with SNCC and with CORE (not overtly NAACP because ~~is~~ at that time they were taking the position that they couldn't participate directly in politics) to work together on a given program, as opposed to the kind of thing you get where a given organization has its program.

At the same time, in response to Reverend Smith's campaign, you had programs in the delta Mississippi ... they ran ~~pe~~ candidates, too. First Reverend Tremel and then he suffered a heart attack during the campaign and died and then Reverend Lindsay took his place.

(Anne) ... this person?

(Moses) Merril Lindsay. I've forgotten Tremel's first name.

(Anne) ... Reverend ~~Lindsay~~ <sup>Lindsay</sup>, where is he?

(Moses) Rev. Lindsay's in, out of West Point, Mississippi now.



James Bevel, who was with SCLC at that time, worked with and supported Rev. Lindsay's campaign in the delta. Some of the others of us were working in the southwest part of Mississippi.

The next developments, the next stages in the summer of '62, in the meantime the program ~~which~~ the voter registration program which consolidated around and through what we call COFO began. Now COFO had its start in the summer of '61 when a whole slew of organizations got together to seek a meeting with Barnett under the leadership of Rev. Smith, Medgar <sup>Evers</sup> Evans, Aaron Henry. They set up what they call the Council of Federated Organizations to present a united front to Barnett.

(Anne) ... SNCC...?

(Moses) No. SNCC wasn't, didn't even have a base in Mississippi at that time, in the summer of '61. I was in McComb. I didn't even know about COFO or about the meeting with Barnett.

(Anne) There was no office then. ...even have a base?

(Moses) Not only not an office, no program, no people who knew or worked or identified with SNCC, or anything. Not because we ... SNCC program started in McComb in July of '61, and this group had formed in the spring when the freedom rides came in.

In the winter some of us, we had a series of meetings with Aaron Henry, Medgar, and other people, Dave Dennis of CORE, around the concept of a unified voter registration program in the state or a program where the



different organizations would be complementingxxx, not warring, or anything like that. The feeling was that COFO was as an organizational form, was a form through which such a program <sup>C</sup>ould be channeled. In part there was another focus of pressure from what was the Voter Education Project then, which had money to put into voter registration and the question was how should that money be channeled in Mississippi, and so forth. There finally was some agreement to channel it through COFO, as an organizational structure, with myself as field director of the voting program, with Dave Dennis as an assistant from CORE, and with Aaron Henry as the president of COFO.

The was, of course, that at that time then COFO essentially then had a staff, and what happened was the group of young Mississippi people that I referred to before became the staff for COFO's voter registration program. Essentially then, that staff then identified with each other and SNCC and there were a few that identified with Dave Dennis and CORE, but the bulk of the staff from the beginning were these young people who were primarily identified with SNCC. They all made up the staff of COFO's voter registration program.

(Anne) How many were there?

(Moses) At that time there were about thirteen.

(Anne) All local people?

(Moses) There was myself, just me, I guess. Dave Dennis was from



Louisiana. Otherwise the rest of the staff was from Mississippi.

(Anne) ... any high school people?

(Moses) They had finished high school, ... Curtis Hayes and Alice Watkins<sup>11/15</sup> from McComb and ..., and McDowell was from McComb. We had Guyot who had finished college ...; McLoren and James Jones was from Jackson and had finished high school; Will Peacock and Sam Block. Sam was from Cleveland and Willie was from Charleston, ... Sam finished high school and Willie was in college at the time. ... she had finished high school, she was from Jackson. We had some others.

Well, that summer worked about 10 areas of the state under this COFO program. Most of them located in the delta, then a project in Jackson, Mississippi, and Hattiesburg. That work continued really, well, there was an initial project which started that summer, went through us, for a few months just after this other program as the summer program. Then after the summer there was another meeting and a decision to continue our program through the year with some differences in the administration of funds and things like that, and some of the projects were cut out. Those programs continued through the fall of '62 and on into the summer of '63. It was in that period that you began to get a different formation where out of these voter registration projects you got community--not really organizations--they were like community meetings. What usually happened, you had a place, or a church where a group of people met, either once a week or once every two weeks or once a month, and began to get a sense of themselves as a people in the



community and in that county, say, who were willing to take a stand and take some risk around this voting. It was out of those meetings that you began to get the hook-up between people in one county who would go visit another county meeting. And then, a deliberate planning of joint meetings between different counties. These were run as COFO meetings, so that people in, say, a Holmes County meeting, got a sense of themselves as a unit in COFO and they would go to COFO meetings which were meetings where people from other units like from ... get together and talk about what they were doing, get some sense of strength, you know, that there were other people doing that same kind of work, and ~~the~~ make plans for the programs.

That really was the basis for your Freedom Democratic Party in the sense if you look at what the roots of the Party were in people and in units, organizations and neighborhoods... the roots can be traced back to these small meetings and to the sense of identify which began to grow out of meetings between counties and regional meetings and then statewide meetings, which began to take shape in the summer of '62 and continued at a very slow pace through the whole winter 62-63 and on into the summer of '63. It was in that winter of '62-63 that you had the Greenwood campaign. We had the first national focus around the Voter Registration Project and COFO and the relationship of COFO to civil rights organizations and the whole work that was going on there.

part in

Now that Greenwood campaign is described in that record. ... some ~~the~~ description of it, you know it was three stages. That first stage with



Sam and Willie go into Greenwood. Sam went first--Sam Block went first.

It is a part of this overall process in '62 where the workers spread out into these ten different areas so that Sam ~~was~~<sup>as</sup> a part of that went into Greenwood. early

All of them came ... ~~highland~~ in the/summer of '62 and they had a meeting here.

(Anne) ...?

(Moses) I didn't stay. I came and I helped bring people and then... there was a lot of things to do ~~and~~ in Mississippi. What we were doing was setting up these programs and arranging for places for the workers to ~~stay and~~ stay and all of that.

Anyway they were here for at least a week and they mapped out what they wanted to do, what, you know, they discussed different concepts of the voter registration program and mapped out the programs ~~for~~ for themselves for the summer that they were going to work on.

(Anne) ....?

(Moses) I don't know, you should ask Miles about that. But that was an important meeting.

(Anne) 1962?

(Moses) Early summer 1962. In the spring of that year the NAACP had that drive in Jackson which partly was in response to what happened in Greenwood and the partly in response to what had happened in Birmingham. Because right after Greenwood King opened up this drive in Birmingham which was the



drive which led to the March on Washington, that huge march. And then, of course, in that Jackson drive, that was when Medgar was killed, which was into you know, really the first time we got international prominence; the whole had thing about the ... and ... string of deaths, you know, that occurred in Mississippi during that period when people were organizing.

(Anne) ....?

(Moses) No.

(Anne) And what ~~was the~~ caused ...?

(Moses) Well, Medgar, of course, was the state field secretary for the NAACP so therefore--

(Anne)...?

(Moses) Yes, but it was his organizational connection and the fact of his being a state leader in the NAACP and that all of the pressure of the as a NAACP's national organization... lots of other groups had moved in... and-- The fact of ... is always ~~ready~~ related to the connectedness of the individual in so far as either white or Negro ~~that~~ they're connected to the larger society and that's where you get the projection and the attention.

(Anne) ...?

(Moses) Right, not connected. Or, like Mendy was talking about ... being problems and textile workers and poor white people. They're also not connected and insofar as the way the unions are not making the connection for them, they're not organizing in anything, then they have no way to bring



pressure or focus or attention.

Now it happened, simply, that ~~that~~ before the rise of the civil rights organizations most Negroes were not connected, just as a by-product of segregation. So that, in a sense Negroes could be killed with impunity because they simply, they weren't connected up at all.

The summer of ~~XXX~~ '63. Now, that summer found most of the people concentrated in and around Greenwood. Really a carry~~/~~-over from the Greenwood campaign because after Jimmy was shot we collapsed most of the workers into Greenwood in a concentrated campaign which began around February, March I guess and went on into the summer.

(Anne) '63?

(Moses) '63. The work in the other areas really sort of suffered, including the whole process of this linking up of different community groups and everything. Because with most of the workers in a given area then-- So then the Greenwood campaign then sort of went ~~xxxxxxxxxx~~ through a natural period and ended up in the summer with workshops and with other students who came down to work with SNCC for that summer towards the end of the summer there and sort of congestion because of, you wound up with a lot of people in jail that summer, some demonstrations, it was impossible to raise the money to get them out so you were in that bind where you couldn't really demonstrate because people were not ready to ~~stay in~~ stay in jail. You couldn't, there was no protection for your demonstrations~~xxx~~ from the Federal government.



Once you were in jail, you couldn't raise the huge fund money to get people out. After going down certain numbers and numbers of times then people feel like they've had enough of going down to the courthouse. So, you know, what to do, how to move, what, and then in that situation then the workers get certain frustration and turn on each other and, you know, so you have internal problems and things at that point.

(Anne) By this time how many people did you have working for SNCC in Mississippi?

(Moses) Within this general operation you were up in the summer close to thirty-five, forty people.

(Anne) Were these COFO volunteers or SNCC volunteers?

(Moses) Well, the most of the staff they were both, you see. Most of the staff of COFO were SNCC people from the beginning. As they added on to it, of course, the people who joined tended to identify with SNCC and so they, I mean, it then became a vehicle for the Mississippi people who joined and worked there became identified with SNCC. ~~They were~~ There were a few more CORE people but not that many, most of them were SNCC. NAACP didn't have a fulltime subsistence young people working. SCLC had its base in, what they call, citizenship education program, but that really didn't carry a strong organization identification with SCLC, but rather with a literacy education program. So that what you got there was people over the course, say from spring of 1962 when Bevel and Diane moved to the delta and began to work--



(Anne) Diane?

(Moses) Diane Bevel, Bevel's wife. She was Diane Nash before she met. They began working, taking people to Dorchester, for the citizenship training programs which was another program which was developed by ... .. developed it as part of the Highlander staff in the south Sea Islands and in South Carolina, the literacy program. And when Highlander lost its tax exemption that program was given over to King's organization, SCLC and they set up a citizenship education program as part of his organization. Some of the staff from Highlander went to work for them for a while to help develop that program. That program was carried into the delta Mississippi by Bevel and Diane. They began taking people to Dorchester for the literacy training program. They began to develop on that work of citizenship teachers and classes around the state which fed into the work of COFO in the sense that these people would come to the COFO meetings, COFO meetings would be meeting places where the citizenship ~~work~~ people ~~and~~ could recruit people to go to the work, you know, to pay for classes and sort of working complementing each other.

But the people in the citizenship classes itself were , few didn't get an organizational identification out of it except as they got drawn into COFO and Mississippi identification, but there was ~~was~~ no ... really. SCLC ~~was~~ set there up so that ~~they~~ it was easy ~~to have an identification~~ way for them to have an identification as member, or as a part of SCLC. Because SCLC was based in the ministers and in the affiliates. But in Mississippi we weren't organizing



affiliates of SCLC, and Bevel wasn't. We were organizing local units which were, viewed themselves as a part of COFO as a statewide unit.

So, the picture in the summer of '63 then, is that you have sort of a, demonstrations in Jackson which ran into the similar problems, that is after Medgar was killed and the demonstration people went to jail, and you have the huge bail money, hundreds of thousands of dollars to raise which have to be raised outside of Mississippi. People ... raise that money say stop the demonstrations because we can't raise unlimited quantities of bail and it's all going doing in an endless pit in Mississippi. The people in the demonstrations not really ready to stay in jail, that whole jail no bail movement really never took off the ground. Partly, I think, because the leadership of the direct action people were not willing themselves to stay in jail ... the focus around the concept of staying in jail.

So then, what to do again. We started demonstrating you get in jail, costs too much money. So then what does the Movement do, it can't demonstrate, it can ... So you had that stalemate in Jackson, similar state in Greenwood around voter registration. And you had your march in Washington so a lot of people went to Washington for that, came back and then we had the meeting where we outlined the program for a participation in the fall of '63 in the Mississippi Governor's election.

(Anne) .... caused by this stalemate...? Would there have been these white people...?



(Moses) No, no white people in Mississippi at this time. Very consciously. People had not wanted white people to come in the ~~delta~~ delta. They had too many problems ~~now~~ without having the problem of an integrated staff. That was not part of your problem. Your problem was simply the question of the staff, which was mostly Mississippi people, figuring out what program that they could work on that made sense. And, then, the question of just surviving and the wear and tear now for some of them; two solid years of work. / People like Curtis and Hollis who had started in the summer of '61 and then worked straight through now to the summer of '63 and then some would work and going back to school. Really it had been emotionally all tied up with the Movement in one way or another for two years now, and really not seeing any breakthroughs at all. The only thing that was visible for them was their own growth. That there were more of them and that that process would continue. Then, the growth and watching local people who were paralyzed by the fear and everything break through that and begin to work and do things themselves; that kind of thing. That's what you were sustained on at that time.

It was about that time that our ... came through in the summer of '63. ... the whole concept of the freedom vote for Governor. There had been some thinking, not much discussion about the , you know I had thought, about the possibility of someone running for Governor on the regular ticket in '63. But we just never really moved on it. There were a lot of problems. We had held a kind of freedom vote in connection with the primary that summer and the idea for that had come out of some of the law school students who were down in



Jackson doing research. In fact they were the first white students down there. Some law school students came down in Jackson and they uncovered--

(Anne) . . . . ?

(Moses) Well, Tim Jenkins, he's not white, he was there but I don't remember the other guys' names. Tim is, I think he's either in Philadelphia or the UN. They uncovered a law which allowed for casting protest ballot in the primary. Anyone who felt that they should have the right to vote, who should have been registered but was not could cast a vote and then presumably it went to the board of directors and they would say whether it was legitimate or not. It was a procedure obviously for people within the general framework who, say, white people who had tried to register and for one reason or another their registration was rejected and they thought it was unfair and they wanted to cast their vote because the elections were coming up and so forth.

We had people do this in Greenwood. We had hundreds of people who had tried to register, go down on the day of the primary around the Governor's election and so forth and cast a vote as a kind of freedom ballot. That was really in one sense the first voting that we got people to do outside of the regular voting thing. Then this idea of having freedom vote and running, Aaron Henry and Ed King on a freedom ticket carrying their own polls and--

(Anne) How were they... ?

(Moses) The problem, of course, at that point, there was no base for choosing people except the staff and some agreement that the staff would be



willing to work for the people who were going to run because if the staff wasn't willing to do it there was nobody who would do it. Of course the other problem was to get anybody to run. It wasn't as if you had a case where in those days, a choice of a lot of different people who would run. It was ~~that~~-- the act of doing something like that was in itself revolutionary act kind of thing there, without any precedent. ... saying we should be the Governor, the Governor is illegal. The only other process of choice was that people who had identified themselves as having some white support within the Freedom Movement, people who had themselves taken some stands, who were part of the Freedom Movement, had taken some risks, who had some following.

Henry agreed to run and King finally agreed to run.

(Anne) What were some of his reservations?

(Moses) King had a question of whether he wanted to enter in as a really public figure and whether he felt this was the best way he could-- It was the whole question of ~~his own~~ what his own function should be. He was chaplain and this relationship to Tougaloo. He was white, his family, Mississippi. That whole question.

That campaign then provided-- Before that decision there had been a decision among the staff anyway to spread out into five congressional districts in Mississippi and they sat down and debated about what they should do in the year '63. Many of them now had made a decision out of that summer program to stay out of school or to go on working so that you had a sound basis. You had, going into that fall roughly about fifty people who were



working now across the state.

(Anne)...?

(Moses) Only... Mostly from Mississippi, mostly identified with SNCC, mostly working in with COFO contacts.

(Anne) What were you doing at that time?

(Moses) When they made the decision to spread out in the five congressional districts, they also made a decision to set up a Jackson office. So I went to Jackson to help set this office as the first really statewide office, central office.

(Anne) Mendy gave me the impression that the central office idea and the idea of people working in the office and just having a base, sort of came when the staff became integrated, came with the whites.

(Moses) That, in fact, the two things coincided. The integration of the staff and everything, I think, was much more around the Freedom Vote campaign, where not only did for the first time some other SNCC people were asked to come into to work on the campaign and building these bases in the five congressional districts but the students from Stanford and Yale came down, about eighty students came from the two colleges and they took off from school for about a two week period just before the vote and spread out across the state to work so that that was really the germ of the idea. The students coming down to work on programs and the college base of the white broad middle class country coming to work. Again, that was Lowenstein's specific dimension of contribution. He had been at Yale Law School, he knew the students there, he had been the dean of freshmen at Stanford and knew



students there so he had the connections. It was his speaking and rallying of the students which brought them down. Then there was the decision within the state to, that to set that as a part of the way of getting really focus on the campaign. There was tension around the whole question of the building of the staff within the state and what part they, since those students were coming just for two weeks there was an acceptance of that.

That, then, carried into November and that vote and marked really the first statewide program and the really, the spreading of the concept of COFO around the state because it got a lot of projection because of that. Then the building was out of that, the process that had started before ... coming to gether, meetings began because in the context of that campaign there was some more, many, many more meetings in areas around the state at campaign committees for Aaron Henry and so forth were set up. Here you see you have, what you had essentially were the little groups who when the campaign started they just transformed themselves into a group to work for Henry as a part of that program in the Freedom Movement. So, say, the Denton County Civic League would become a campaign unit for Henry and through that grew some more in his own community. After the campaign was over, it was back <sup>as</sup> ~~and~~ the Denton County Civic League with the voter registration program or what have you. These units grew out of the campaign and then after the campaign you had a program of calling into Jackson what we called COFO meetings, statewide COFO meetings. The first one



you had, I think, in December and then you had one every month fairly regularly for all the way into the Mississippi Delta Project. You began to pull two hundred, three hundred, four hundred people from around the state to this meeting where they talked about programs, where they exchanged with the staff, where they could get a sense of the development of themselves as a Mississippi Movement, where they got some identify. The people who wanted to work in the state and from different groups had a chance to meet other people and have an ... So the National Council ~~for~~ of Churches met with people in this framework. They met people at the assembly and out of that they developed their ~~D~~elta Mississippi Project. The lawyers groups that came down could identify with this as a movement, Mississippi Movement kind of this as opposed to simply to working for a single organization.

That continued through the winter. Within the staff there was a huge debate which raged about whether or not they should have a summer project, whether or not they should open up the state for volunteers to come in, which went on; again Highlander held a workshop in Mississippi this time, in Greenville, in early December, right after the campaign was over, or late November and the staff gathered and discussed what the ~~program~~ pros and cons were of that campaign, of the students coming down and at that time we first began having the ~~disc~~ discussion about the Negro-white ~~quest~~ question all of that. That debate and discussion was carried through a series of staff meetings on into the end of January when there was finally some decision or



agreement that we should have a summer project and that we should have students come down.

(Anne) What were some of the arguments...?

(Moses) Your argument revolved around question of what does it take to open up Mississippi, what kind of forces did you have to bring to bear on Mississippi, what the relationship of Mississippi was to the country and how could you get out the facts about Mississippi to the country because obviously, the students brought with them part of the country and so the whole focus, like a searchlight as they came they brought a searchlight from the rest of the country on Mississippi ~~and it was~~ so that it was possible to get out a whole set of facts about what really was happening. The feeling of whether or not, what we were going to do in the state. The staff was exhausted and they were butting up against a stone wall, no breakthroughs for them. How long could you expect them to survive working in that kind of isolation. Where was the help to come from. The civil rights organizations were not prepared to make Mississippi a focus. The debate for SNCC earlier that fall we had asked SNCC to move its national headquarters to Mississippi and to make Mississippi a ~~for~~ real focus and they refused to go that far.

(Anne) Why did they refuse?

(Moses) Well, they had big discussions about whether they would, that would mean the destruction of SNCC to go into Mississippi and get demolished whether they could really operate in Mississippi. Then the other projects,



they were afraid that that wouldn't, Georgia... all the other projects would just not function... It was clear that the NAACP and SCLC and CORE, none of them were really willing to put a major drive into Mississippi... they were called for working ~~and~~ in other parts of the South first ... And NAACP's whole policy was work all around the state.

The question the people from Mississippi were faced with, and here you got to remember that these, the staff were primarily people who grew up in the concept of themselves as civil rights workers out of the movement of Mississippi and whose primary loyalty and identification was doing something about Mississippi which was their home. There were some people in the staff who felt that they should ... what attitudes were available to do something. That they should be used. The question of whether or not the white students coming in would take over the Movement would dominate, set back the whole process by which the local development people and everything was a risk but not as important as the risk of not being able to do anything at all, not being able to make or break.. That was the pole between them and there ~~they~~ were really very very deep heated discussions about that.

As far as the local people as expressed as COFO meetings, it was clear that there feeling was that they needed help, they looked upon the students who came down in the Aaron Henry campaign as bringing help, they felt that if more students came down in the summer that there would be more help and that they should come. It was clear that if there was the vote put to the



~~xxxx~~ assembly of COFO people that they would vote that the students come in. ... of course, that the Movement rested on the backs of the staff, that they were the ones that carried the bulk of the work and that you had to have a decision which they carried, in other words, which they were willing to work on if you were going to get any of your work. Because you hadn't as yet evolved to a state where adults, as residents of a community, working, were really willing to work ~~full-~~ full-time, or work parttime in the whole processes of canvassing, of taking people to the courthouse, all of that. You see that was to come only after '64 and after the formation of FDP. At that time the work, if the work was to be done then you had to carry the staff with you.

Now there was a big debate about whether there was a question of democracy there of the staff making these decisions and my feeling, my position at that time was that the people who did the work should make the decision. And, that as long as the staff was carrying the ~~bulk~~ bulk of the work well then they had to carry the bulk of the decisions.

That carried you into the spring. That January program in... where this whole process of the outside world coming down was extended to ministers so that you had about ~~fifty~~ <sup>sixty</sup> ministers who came down through the Commission on Religion and Race of the National Council of ~~Churches~~ Churches to Hattiesburg around the Voter Registration Project in the beginning of January. There was the first demonstration where people were not arrested wholesale. So we began to inch away at the whole right to picket and to demonstrate around



the voting and again that whole thing of the influence of ~~pep~~ people what ~~pro~~ peoples brought to bear from the outside and that whole thing as a tool for opening up Mississippi for getting information and for making the people in Mississippi hear different things; the whole spotlight of people who were connected up to the larger society. Then the whole thing <sup>dimension that</sup> the moral. / the ministers brought. Then the involvement that people-- You see what ~~what~~ happened is people came and saw for themselves and then they went back home they got involved and they talked to people in their churches and everything and carried stories ;in the local papers ... saw what happened so that the word spread to that part of the country.

Most of that spring then, after the decision was made to carry out the project, you had preparations around the state; meetings, getting ready for the Summer Project. In was in that time that you had some of these more murders, ~~xxxxx~~ a lot of people were murdered ~~and~~ in two counties in the space of about two months in southwest Mississippi. You had, after the March on Washington, you had the formation of the Society for the ~~Preserve~~ Preservation of the White Race that formed along with ... new chapters of the White Citizens Council and Klan in the southwest corner of Mississippi. As a response, in part, to the national concensus that was growing and that was reognized by the March on Washington and then by the whole process of the ~~Civil~~ civil rights bill and the evidence that there wasn't going to be a filibuster which was to be effective and all of that because you had all of that nationwide going on at that time, they pulled off--the Societies and the Klan--pulled off some spontaneous cross-burnings in the area. They had



eighty counties at one time had cross-burnings in one night. Later on areas including Louisiana and Mississippi. Then some bombings and then ~~some~~ shootings and killings of people.

One point that I think is important, just to turn to the history of that. That particular phenomenon was a reaction, in part, to the ~~national~~ nationwide development, ~~xxx~~ of the civil rights law that was to be passed and the consensus about integration, and anticipated the announcement about the Summer Project because you see it wasn't really projected until the staff made up its mind in January and you didn't begin to get national projection because there was no projection from Mississippi of the Project, and there was agreement not to form a national committee to project the Project because of the whole thing of the focus of decision-making on the staff and on the people in Mississippi rather than on some nationwide committee. The projection of the Project began to sift through ~~xxxx~~ as individual colleges recruited people and then at the AP and the UPI ~~wxx~~ began to spot check colleges ~~xxxxxx~~ across the country and found out, yes there were ten people from this college and fifty people from this college and they were all planning to come to Mississippi and so then they began to run stories of the college students planning to come down.

That built up into the spring and then you had your Summer Project. I don't know. That Summer Project, I mean there's a lot of territory here to cover.



(Anne) . . . . ? I think you left out something pretty important as far as biographical data that happened.

(Moses) What's that?

(Anne) Didn't you get mad?

(moses)Yes,

(Anne) That was pretty important.

(Moses) Yes, dramatic, I suppose.

(Anne) Well, would you rather do that some other time?

(Moses) The Summer Project?

(Anne) yes,

(Moses) What do you want to know about that? What kind of things do you want to know. I mean, there's so much written . . . people.