

STATE OF MISSISSIPPI  
COUNTY OF HINDS

Council of Federated Organizations  
Affidavit of Eli Hochstedler

Jail Treatment of white student in Jackson, Mississippi

On Thursday, April 16, I, Eli Hochstedler, (white), along with Marion Gillon (Negro), was arrested for attempting to integrate the Jackson Municipal auditorium to attend the Holiday on Ice Show. We were charged with Breach of the Peace.

On Friday, the following day, we were each sentenced to six months imprisonment and \$500.00. We were taken to the Hinds County jail about 6:30 p.m. About 9:30 p.m. I was beaten and whipped by two prisoners in the cell in which I was staying.

The jailer did not place me behind bars at the same time as the rest of the white prisoners were put in. From the looks and stares I sensed that they had been told why I was in jail. One of the prisoners later told me that the jailer had told them before-hand who was coming and what I had been arrested for. After taking a shower, I was told by a prisoner (who later beat me) that I had better stay on my bunk in my cell if I knew what was good for me. The six common cells had eight bunks in each and were open 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.

At about 9:00 p.m., a dozen or more inmates gathered in the cell where I had been told to stay. I was told to get out of my bunk. After talking and trying to reason with them or some time I was told that they were going to show me and any other people from the North thinking about coming down to stir up trouble what would happen to them if they came. I had been sitting on the lower bunk. When I stood, a prisoner who weighed about 400 lb., hit me near the left eye. I fell to the floor. When I got up, he hit me and knocked me down again. After one or two repetitions, I fell into a lower bunk. My face was bleeding. He then stopped hitting me. One of the prisoners ordered me to get back on my bunk and to roll up my mattress. They threatened to kill me if I didn't follow orders. I did as I was told. After laying on the steel bunk for 10-15 minutes, I was ordered to get down and lean over with my head on a lower bunk. Another prisoner then began whipping me with a leather belt. I had on only my underwear. After about eight lashes I was ordered to lower my shorts. He then continued the whipping. All during the whipping I kept repeating, "Father, forgive them, because they really don't know what they are doing. Oh, Lord, help me to take it." After 16 or 18 lashings, I screamed and stood up. Somebody then hit me hard on the right jaw, and nearly knocked me out. I remained sprawled out on a lower bunk for several minutes, after which I crawled back into my bunk for the rest of the night. No one beat me any more that night.

Saturday morning the jailer asked me what had happened to my face. I didn't tell him because the other prisoners were within hearing range. I'm quite sure he knew what had happened, but he just laughed when I told him I ran into something.

During the next day one of the prisoners told me that last night was just a sample of what was coming tonight. Because of depression and fear, I made a statement Saturday evening with the pretense that I was changing my ways and would do nothing more in the area of civil rights for Negroes. They made no more attacks or threats on me while I was in jail.

On Sunday, April 20, Pete Stoner, another white active in civil rights was placed in the jail. I was told to move into another cell so Pete could stay where I had been. I moved down one cell and across the hall. At about 9:30 p.m., one or more prisoners began beating him. I could not see the beating, but could very easily hear it. I heard the continuous beating last for about three minutes. Ten or fifteen minutes later they ordered him out of his bunk for a whipping. They ordered him to lower his pants. I heard about six or eight lashings. That is all the beating I heard that night. In my opinion, the life of any white civil rights person is in danger in a Mississippi jail.

original signed by Eli Hochstedler