

[1964, July 29] J

Roy Bell Wright

I am a Negro participant in the civil rights movement, am 19 years old and ~~xxxxxxx~~ my address is Route 2, Box 26B, Clarksdale, Mississippi.

On or about July 29, 1964, at about 2:00 pm, I and five others went to the Resthaven restaurant on Highway 61 in Clarksdale. We got out of the car. When we got out, the owner-manager, Mrs. Woodrow Joseph, came over to us and told us to leave because she wasn't going to serve us. She said that she had never had any trouble as long as she had been there. We told her that we weren't there to give any trouble. We asked her if she would comply with the provisions of the Civil Rights Act. She asked, "What?" We repeated the question. She said she was not going to unless she was forced to do so. To make sure she understood clearly, we asked her again if she had said that she wouldn't serve us until forced to do so, and she said, "yes." Then we got back in the car and went north on Highway 61 with a police car following us. We went to the Rancho Drive-in on Highway 61. I was driving the car and we pulled up in the driveway. When we got there three men came out to the car and told us not to get out. The girls opened the car door and the men closed the door very hard, telling them not to get out. They asked us what we wanted. We said, "We only want to get some pop." A man wearing a shirt embroidered with the name of the restaurant told us that we would have to leave. The other man with him was Thomas Pearson, the county prosecutor, and Joe Davis, a deputy sheriff. They said that they were on private property and would have to leave. The man wearing the Rancho shirt said that we could go down the highway to another drive-in and be served. (He meant a Negro-owned establishment.) Then three police cars came up, in one of which was police chief Ben Collins, and asked Pearson and the others what the trouble was. They said that we were refusing to leave. By this time, I was backing out of the driveway. I turned south on Highway 61 and came back to Freedom House. I was followed by Ben Collins and there were two people in the car with him--the woman desk sergeant at the city jail and a man in plainclothes whom I did not recognize. When we got out of the car, Collins blew his horn after us. We walked up Yazoo toward Fourth St. and Collins kept blowing his horn. As I looked back and he was beckoning for me to come back to the car. I turned and went back to the police car. Then Collins asked to see my driver's license. I showed it to him. Then he asked me my name. I told it to him. Then he said, "I don't want to have any more trouble out of you niggers. When I call you, you come." I said, "I didn't know you were talking to me." Then I walked off.

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I request the Federal Government and the NAACP to institute legal action in my behalf.

Sworn to before me this

_____ day of _____, 1964

Notary public