

The following excerpted statement by Lafayette Surney, director of the Clarksdale COFO project, indicates the attitude of local law enforcement and authorities towards the existence of civil rights offices in the state of Mississippi. Surney, Negro, is a 22-year-old SNCC worker and a native of Ruleville.

"The first day that I arrived in Clarksdale to arrange for housing for the other workers the Chief of Police, Ben Collins, came up to me and said, 'We ain't goin to have this shit this year.' He then asked me if I wanted to fight right then and I said that I was nonviolent...The next day he and other policemen sat in front of the office and took our pictures with a movie camera. Collins (a day later) said, 'I'm going to kill you if it's the last thing I do'...This same day Collins assigned a policeman to follow me around wherever I went. When I would go into any place that policeman would stay outside. This same policeman would follow people from the project to try to find out what families we were living with and where we ate.

"After the Civil Rights Bill was signed, Collins went around to all the Negro restaurants and told them that if they served the project workers, either white or Negro, he would close them up...

"A while later an agent from the city Water and Light Department came to the office and tried to turn the lights off. He called Ben Collins who came over and cursed us us. We talked to him outside the office, he told us to get inside and instructed another policeman to 'get the damned billy clubs, we're going to have to move these niggers.' He grabbed the arm of a Negro volunteer named Doris Newman and twisted it. I called the FBI office. They asked for a statement, I said that the situation was too bad for us to go down and asked them to come over. But they wouldn't do this. The next day a Negro man came by the office...He told me that Ben Collins had hired some men to kill me...The next night...when I was on my way back to the Freedom House a group of white men stopped me and showed me a gun. They said, 'This has two buck shots in it and both of them have your name of them. I'm going to blow this up your ass and blow it off.' I walked off and called the chief of police, he told me to go to hell and hung up.

"About three days after the incident with the white men with the gun, I went up to the court house to help register some people and the sheriff and Ben Collins were there waiting for me. Collins said, 'There aren't too many white people in town who like you and I'm not one of them. If you don't want to come up



WILLIAMS ADAMS, being duly sworn, deposes and says:

My address is Box 118, Rt. 2, Charleston, Mississippi, and I am a Negro citizen of the United States. I live on the Rabbit Ridge Plantation in Tallahatchie County. I and all my sons who are old enough work on this plantation.

On August 11, 1964, my son, William Ed Adams, went to the County Courthouse to register to vote. He was seen by the crowd of whites who assembled in the courthouse square. Later that afternoon, Mr. Nelson Douglas, the manager of Rabbit Ridge Plantation, told some people at the plantation store that he was going to have my son arrested because he tried to register to vote.

Mr. Riley McGee came around to my house and told me that Mr. Douglas had announced that my son would be arrested. I went over to the store and saw Mr. Douglas. I asked him, "What are you going to have him arrested for? He hasn't done anything."

Mr. Douglas replied, "He didn't have no business going down to the courthouse. He don't have no more work around here. We can't use a boy like that." I told him that I would go to Greenwood and try to talk to the SNCC people and try to get a lawyer.

I went to Greenwood. I went first to talk to Mr. J. Nolan Reed, the owner of Rabbit Ridge Plantation. He told me that nothing could be done unless my son went down to the courthouse and took his name off the rolls. He said that he would go from Greenwood to the plantation tomorrow and take my son down to the courthouse. He said that unless his name was removed, he could not work on his plantation any more...

(signed) Williams Adams