

HINDS COUNTY

I reside in New York, New York, and am a volunteer voter registration worker with the Council of Federated Organizations.

On Wednesday, July 15, 1964, at about 10:30 P.M., Steve Smith, Melvin McDavia, Robert Ellis, and myself were taking voter registration material in a pick-up truck to Greenville and Greenwood. We were traveling by way of Canton. Steve Smith was driving.

As we were entering Highway 51 (in Jackson) we were stopped by two Jackson city policemen. They asked Steve where we were going and he told them Canton. They also looked through the truck and saw the voter registration material we were

carrying. They then gave Steve a ticket for driving without a commercial license.

After receiving the ticket, we proceeded on toward Canton. Along the way we were worried that the Jackson police might call ahead to the highway patrol to have us stopped. (We thought that the proper procedure for the Jackson police to have followed was to have made us leave the truck and not allow us to drive it until someone had the proper license.) We thought at several times along the way that suspicious cars were following us.

About five miles out of Canton (just past Madison) we saw one car that was definitely following us. The car was unmarked and there was no indication that it was a police car. We increased our speed to try and get away from the car. The other car also increased its speed but did not try to stop us. It just remained behind us, blinking its lights. As we reached Gluckstadt, the car pulled up close to us and began blinking a red light. We then pulled over. It was about 10:30 P.M. at this time. The doors and windows of our truck were locked.

A man, not in uniform and not wearing a badge, came out of the car and came over to the truck. He ordered Steve out of the truck. Steve asked him for identification and the man refused to show any. He pulled his gun and told Steve to get out. Steve got out and I got out also. The man asked Steve for identification, driver's license, etc. Steve showed him what he asked for. He asked Steve about what was in the truck, where we were going, where did we get our hats, etc. Steve answered all these questions very politely. He then started insulting us and asking us sarcastic questions which had nothing to do with any traffic violations.

A highway patrolman then pulled up in another car. The highway patrolman was in complete uniform and his badge number was _____.

He wore a name pin with the name Officer A_____ on it. A third car pulled up after Officer A_____ 's car. This car was unmarked and a man wearing no uniform and without any sign of authority (except a gun sticking out of his back pocket) got out. Officer A_____ and this third man searched the truck and made everyone get out. Officer A_____ looked through the material in the back of the truck and threw Melvin, who was riding there, out, kicking him over the tail gate in the process. They made all four of us line up in a row, cursed us, threatened us, and the third man kept shouldering Steve and myself and stepping on our toes.

A fourth car pulled up about this time. It was also unmarked and one man in plain clothes, except for a gun in a holster, got out. The four men then huddled together and talked among themselves while writing a ticket. Then the first of the four cars (the one that originally stopped us) left. The third man then put Steve in the highway patrol car in the rear seat and got in with him. The fourth man told

Melvin and Robert to "run back to Jackson." He also told them to quit working with COFO or COFO would get them killed. The two kids began running down the highway towards Jackson. The fourth man then started threatening me. While he was doing this I could hear the sounds of Steve being beaten in the other car. The man in the car with Steve then got out. When he opened the door of the car to get out, a light in the car went on. In that light I could see Steve slouched over with blood running from his head. The three men then told me that they had no charges against me and that I should take the truck and drive off. I told them that my driver's license had expired and that they should arrest me along with Steve. The fourth man then promised me that he would let me drive the truck without a license. I was afraid that they might come after me if I tried to leave, so I still refused. They emphasized that they had no charges against me but that if I tried to take their guns then they would have a charge.

When I asked to be arrested again, the man who had beaten Steve got angry and kicked me in the shins. The fourth man then punched me in the eye. He (the fourth man) then pulled out his gun and started hitting me with it on the right side of my head. I tried to protect myself from the blows, but at no time tried to resist or take his gun. Each time he hit me he said, "Stop trying to take my gun." I fell to the ground and he then kicked me in the arm and in the chest.

He told me to get up. As I was getting up he kicked me in my ribs. He (still the fourth man) then told me to get into the car that Steve was in and ordered Steve to get out. When Steve got out he was limping and had blood all over his shirt, face, arm, and head. I then got into the car and Steve was put into the fourth car. The highway patrolman (Officer A_____) and the fourth man then got into the front of the car that I was in and began driving toward Canton. The fourth man then told Officer A_____ that they should drive me to Philadelphia and made some reference to the three missing COFO workers. They continued to make comments about me and other COFO workers until we arrived at the Madison County Jail in Canton.

At the jail they locked me up until the next morning. The next morning, after four requests, I was allowed to make a phone call by the jailer's wife. (I had also asked to make a phone call the night before when I was first taken to the jail.) I called COFO in Jackson and spoke to Bob Moses. I told him what had happened the night before.

Shortly thereafter, I was taken to the home of a judge in Madison. Court was held in his garage and two lawyers from COFO were there. Highway patrolman Officer A_____, the man who had beaten Steve, and the man who had beaten me were the only other persons present. I heard the man who had beaten me referred to as Officer B_____ by Mr. Braiterman (a COFO lawyer). I was then charged with

interfering with Steve's arrest and resisting arrest. Bail was set at \$150 and the case was continued until the 27th of July.

We were then taken back to the Madison County Jail and were bailed out later that evening. At no time did I request or receive any medical attention.

I would be able to identify the highway patrolman, the man who beat Steve, and the man who beat me if I ever saw them again.

SIGNED: *Eric Morton*