

The Mudcat

The Mississippi History Newsletter for Students

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Summer 2014

A Summer Project and a Summer School



VOTER REGISTRATION

The struggle for freedom in Mississippi can only be won by a combination of action within the state and a heightened awareness throughout the country of the need for massive federal intervention to ensure the voting rights of Negroes. This summer's program will work toward both objectives.

Voter registration workers will operate in every rural county and important urban area in the state. These workers will be involved in a summer-long drive to mobilize the Negro community of Mississippi and assist in developing local leadership and organization.

Forty thousand dollars must be raised for a Freedom Registration campaign. The registration campaign which was launched in February will be implemented by summer workers. Freedom Registrars will be established in every precinct, with registration

books closely resembling the official books of the state. The Freedom Registration books will serve as a basis for challenging the official books and the validity of "official" federal elections this fall.

Finally, voter registration workers will assist in the summer campaigns of Freedom Candidates who will be running for congressional office.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

An integral part of SNCC's voter registration work is the development of leadership for politically emerging communities. Freedom Schools will begin to supply the political education which the existing system does not provide for Negroes in Mississippi.

The summer project will establish ten daytime Freedom Schools and three resident schools. The daytime schools will be attend-

ed by 10th, 11th, and 12th grade pupils; the schools will operate five days a week in the students' home towns. Instruction will be highly individualized—each school will have about fifteen teachers and fifty students. The program will include remedial work in reading, math and basic grammar, as well as seminars in political science, the humanities, journalism and creative writing. Wherever possible, studies will be related to problems in the students' own society.

The three resident schools will be attended by more advanced students from throughout the state. The program will be essentially the same as that of the day schools, with emphasis on political studies.

The students who attend the schools provide Mississippi with a nucleus of leadership committed to critical thought and action.

COMMUNITY CENTERS

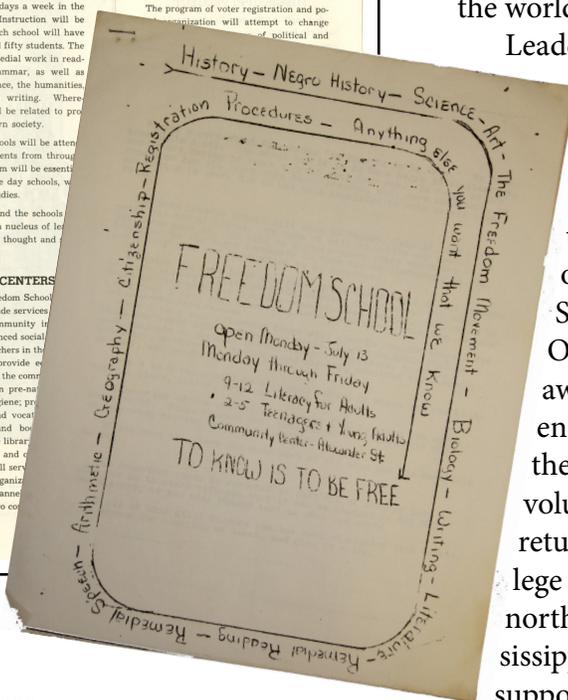
In addition to the Freedom Schools, Community Centers will provide services denied the Negro community in Mississippi. Staffed by experienced social workers, librarians and teachers in the crafts, the centers will provide educational and cultural programs for the construction will be given in pre-natal care, and general hygiene; provide adult literacy and vocational training. The thirty thousand books SNCC's Greenwood office library contributed to these centers, and obtained. The centers will serve political education and organization provide a structure to channel programs into the Negro community's future.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The program of voter registration and political organization will attempt to change the political and social conditions

tions they could make to the world.

Leadership was also emphasized in the Freedom Schools. This was essential to the success of the Freedom Summer Project. Organizers were aware that at the end of the summer the out-of-state volunteers would return to their college campuses in the north, leaving Mississippians with little support. If local civil rights groups were to keep the momentum for Freedom Summer going, the communities would have to take charge. The Mississippi Freedom Summer Project drew national attention to the struggle for civil rights and helped convince the American public and U.S. government to pass crucial **legislation** that would help give African Americans the first-class citizenship they deserved.



Printed and homemade materials advertised Freedom Schools to potential northern volunteers and southern participants. MDAH, Museum Division Collections.

In the summer of 1964 the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a Mississippi civil rights group, organized the "Summer Project." Also known as Freedom Summer, the project sought to register African Americans to vote, help communities organize local civil rights groups, and establish Freedom Schools across the state. Over 700 college students from the northern United States traveled to Mississippi to participate alongside

local civil rights workers. The project reached into twenty-five communities across twenty counties.

While voter registration and community organizing targeted African American adults throughout the state, the Freedom Schools were open to everyone. These schools sought to remedy the poor education that African Americans received in **segregated** schools, which were equipped with out-of-date textbooks and equipment.

Held in churches, private homes, and in open fields these schools helped people learn the basics of reading, mathematics, history, science, and other subjects traditionally taught in public school. In addition to basic subjects, Freedom Schools also held classes on black history, citizenship, and voting rights. These classes were to educate African Americans about their heritage and to help them recognize the contribu-

Get out and

VOTE



Voting Booth, circa late 1960s, early 1970. MDAH, Museum Division Collections.

Voter registration was one of the primary goals of Freedom Summer. Workers went door to door, educating African Americans about their right to vote and its importance. They organized mass meetings and rallies, bringing attention to **discrimination** faced by African Americans. They also brought approximately 17,000 individuals to courthouses across the state to register to vote – nearly all of them were denied registration.

Freedom Summer also helped motivate Mississippi African Americans to become more politically active than ever before. They formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which unlike the officially recognized Demo-

cratic Party of the state was made up of white and black **delegates**. While the MFDP was not officially recognized by the national Democratic Party, they did succeed in bringing the Mississippi civil rights struggle to public attention nationwide.

In a televised **testimony**, Mississippian Fannie Lou Hamer talked about the difficulties experienced by African Americans trapped in the sharecropping system. She also testified about the brutal retaliations taken out on her and her family after she tried to register to vote.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 would prohibit the voter registration discrimination faced by Hamer and other African Americans across the country.

It was also a sad summer...

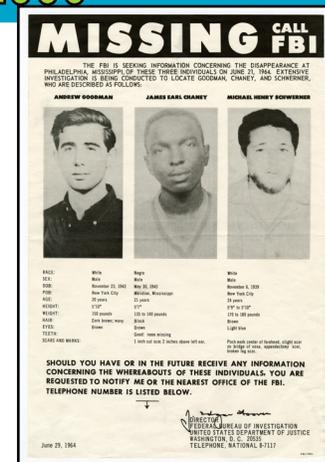
Perhaps the most remembered event of Freedom Summer was not its schools or voter registration drives, but that of the three workers who were killed in June, as the project began. James Chaney, a civil rights worker from Meridian, was teamed up with Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, two white civil rights workers from the north.

Late one night while returning from investigating a church bombing

in Neshoba County, the three men were stopped by **Ku Klux Klan** members. The three civil rights workers were beaten, killed, and buried in a levee. Though their burned out car was quickly found, their bodies remained missing for forty-four days. The FBI came to Mississippi and conducted a huge search throughout the Neshoba County area. During the search the FBI also found the bodies of eight other

African American men. Five of the men were never identified but all were believed to be victims of racial violence.

In 1967, nineteen white men were implicated and tried for the murder of Chaney, Schwerner and Goodman. Only seven were found guilty. None of the convicted murderers served more than six years in prison. In 2005 the case was reopened and an eighth man was found guilty and



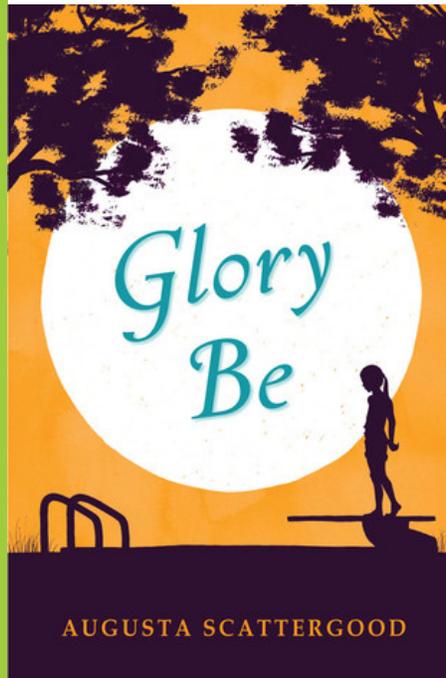
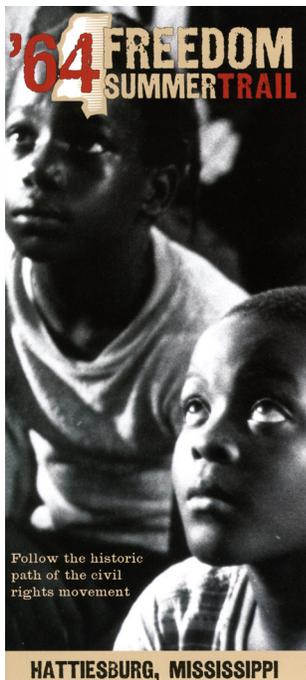
FBI Missing Poster, 1964. MDAH, Archives and Records Services.

sentenced to prison for three consecutive twenty-year terms.

Investigate More

You can visit sites and museums across the state to learn more about Freedom Summer!

Tour Hattiesburg and travel the Freedom Summer Trail. See sites where important events during the summer of 1964 happened, including memorials dedicated to the lives of civil rights workers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. Begin at the Hattiesburg Visitors Center at 5 Convention Center Plaza.



Read *Glory Be* by Mississippi author Augusta Scattergood. This is a story about 11-year-old Glory whose Delta hometown is changed forever during the summer of 1964. In between trying to understand why her local pool is closing and making new friends from the North, Glory learns how to stand up for herself and for what is right.

See these Freedom Summer sites for yourself.



M.W. Stringer Grand Lodge, site of MFDP State Convention in 1964. Located at 1072 John R. Lynch Street, Jackson. *MDAH, Museum Division Education.*



The Neshoba County Jail at 422 Myrtle Avenue East, Philadelphia. *MDAH, Historic Preservation.*

Celebrate Fannie Lou Hamer!



MDAH, Museum Division Education.

Visit the Fannie Lou Hamer Civil Rights Museum in Belzoni and hear the stories of slaves, sharecroppers, and the Civil Rights Movement from their Old Story Teller. <http://www.thefanielouhamercivil-rightsmuseum.com/>

Listen to Hamer's famous speech at the Democratic National Convention at <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html>



Museum (above) and Garden (right). MDAH, Museum Division Education.



Remember Hamer at her Memorial Garden located at 726 Byron Street in Ruleville.

Show What You Know!

Word Search

Use the key below to find the Freedom Summer names and terms hidden in the word search!

community
delegates
discrimination
Fannie Lou Hamer
Freedom School
Freedom Summer
Ku Klux Klan
leadership
legislation
Mississippi
racial violence
segregated
testimony
vote
Voting Rights Act



Vocabulary

delegates: persons chosen to act for or represent others.

discrimination: the act of treating others differently based on the race, class, or other category to which they belong.

Ku Klux Klan: an organization that seeks to suppress the powers of African Americans, Catholics, Jews, and the foreign-born, sometimes with violence.

legislation: the process of making or enacting a law.

segregated: to keep whites and African Americans separate.

testimony: evidence presented in court.

Create a Catfish Competition

How **would you like to see a catfish of your own creation on the cover** of the *Mudcat*? If you're an artist – or even if you're not – **craft a cool catfish graphic**, send it in to the *Mudcat*, and **YOUR catfish could win a coveted spot on the cover** of the next issue! Send all entries via mail or email to:

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**Congratulations to
Rachel S. of Flowood for
her winning Mudcat!**