

Mississippi Department of Archives and History

# Learning Lagniappe: Educator Extras

## The Thomas Foner Freedom Summer Papers

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[http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/series/foner](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/series/foner)

This collection consists of correspondence, a voter registration plan, photographs, and newsclippings from Thomas Foner's work as a volunteer with the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project in 1964. The collection documents his work with the project and contains substantial information about the conditions faced by volunteers during the summer.

**Subjects that can be addressed within this Digital Archive:**

Civil Rights Movement (national and statewide), voting rights, murder of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman, political activism and political activists.

*Teacher Discussion Guide on Reverse*

## Teacher Discussion Guide

Use images from the MDAH Digital Archive entitled “Thomas Foner Freedom Summer Papers” (found at [http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital\\_archives/series/foner](http://www.mdah.ms.gov/arrec/digital_archives/series/foner)) to lead your class in a discussion analyzing and interpreting the following images:

**1. Type in “COFO offices” in the “search for keyword” box and discuss the following:**

- a. Examine the photo and read the chalkboard in the background.  
Come meet and welcome back Freedom Democratic Party.
- b. What is the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party?  
The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party was a political party organized by African Americans during the 1960s as an alternative to the white-only Democratic Party.
- c. Based on clues in the photo, explain who the people could be and what could be happening.  
People arriving in Mississippi to help the Civil Rights Movement. They look young, so they are probably college students or people in their early 20s. The boxes in the stack of luggage look beat-up. This could indicate that their owners either don't have financial resources to purchase additional suitcases or that they have come a lengthy distance, perhaps changing forms of transportation frequently and the cardboard boxes have deteriorated accordingly.

**2. Type in “Support the Democratic Party” in the “search for keyword” box and discuss the following:**

- a. Explain the reference in the second sign.  
It refers to the three Freedom Summer workers (James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman) who disappeared during the early days of the Freedom Summer Project. Their bodies were found several weeks later in an earthen dam.
- b. What Mississippi laws does the third sign oppose?  
This sign refers to various laws, described in Foner's letters, that were especially harsh on African Americans. This included laws that prohibited the distribution of leaflets calling for economic boycotts; laws prohibiting picketing of public buildings; laws allowing police to restrict freedom of movement of individuals and groups; laws to treat as adults juveniles arrested in a civil rights case; and laws allowing the sterilization of parents of two or more illegitimate children.

**3. Type in “Program for Voter Registration” in the “search for keyword” box and discuss the following:**

- a. Describe the process used to increase voter registration.  
Foner has met with local youth groups to gain their support in promoting voter registration. With these volunteers they canvas African American neighborhoods and then fill out a card for each person based on whether or not they are interested in registering.
- b. What major obstacle do the activists face? Why would this pose a major problem?  
Foner's group has been unable to set-up a carpool. This was a difficulty because it slowed down the canvassing process and made it harder to contact potential voters in rural areas outside town.
- c. Why would high school teachers make a good target?  
High school teachers had a direct link to and influence on the young people in the community. Because the Civil Rights Movement was driven largely by young people, gaining the support of their teachers could help gain more Freedom Summer workers.
- d. What is Foner's definition of success?  
Having fifty people at the courthouse each day.