

Mississippi Freedom Summer

The Ballot or the Bullet

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Author: Malcolm X

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Annotation: In this speech Malcolm X described how Blacks should fight for civil-rights in America. Malcolm X emphasizes the worth of voting as a solution to ending discrimination against Blacks. He addresses both the poor voting decisions and also the denial of legitimate voting rights to Blacks.

Document: Mr. Moderator, Reverend Cleage, Brother Lomax, brothers and sisters, and friends -- and I see some enemies. In fact, I think we'd be fooling ourselves if we had an audience this large and didn't realize that there were some enemies present.

This afternoon we want to talk about "The ballot or the bullet." The ballot or the bullet explains itself. But before we get into it, since this is the year of the ballot or the bullet, I would like to clarify some things that refer to me personally -- concerning my own personal position.

I'm still a Muslim. That is, my religion is still Islam. My religion is still Islam. I still credit Mr. Mohammed for what I know and what I am. He's the one who opened my eyes. At present, I'm the Minister of the newly founded Muslim Mosque, Incorporated, which has its offices in the Teresa Hotel, right in the heart of Harlem -- that's the black belt in New York city. And when we realize that Adam Clayton Powell is a Christian minister, he's the -- he heads Abyssinian Baptist Church, but at the same time, he's more famous for his political struggling.

And Dr. King is a Christian Minister, in Atlanta -- from Atlanta Georgia -- or in Atlanta, Georgia, but he's become more famous for being involved in the civil rights struggle. There's another in New York, Reverend Galmison -- I don't know if you've heard of him out here -- he's a Christian Minister from Brooklyn, but has become famous for his fight against a segregated school system in Brooklyn. Reverend Clee, right here, is a Christian Minister, here in Detroit. He's the head of the "Freedom Now Party." All of these are Christian Ministers -- All of these are Christian Ministers, but they don't come to us as Christian Ministers. They come to us as fighters in some other category.

I'm a Muslim minister. The same as they are Christian Ministers, I'm a Muslim minister. And I don't believe in fighting today in any one front, but on all fronts. In fact, I'm a "Black Nationalist Freedom Fighter." Islam is my religion, but I believe my religion is my personal business. It governs my personal life, my personal morals. And my religious philosophy is personal between me and the God in whom I believe; just as the religious philosophy of these others is between them and the God in whom they believe.

And this is best this way. Were we to come out here discussing religion, we'd have too many differences from the outstart and we could never get together. So today, though Islam is my religious philosophy, my political, economic, and social philosophy is Black Nationalism. You and I -- As I say, if we bring up religion we'll have differences; we'll have arguments; and we'll never be able to get together. But if we keep our religion at home, keep our religion in the closet, keep our religion between ourselves and our God, but when we come out here, we have a fight that's common to all of us against a [sic] enemy who is common to all of us.

The political philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that the black man should control the politics and the politicians in his own community. The -- The time -- The time when white people can come in our community and get us to vote for them so that they can be our political leaders and tell us what to do and

what not to do is long gone. By the same token, the time when that same white man, knowing that your eyes are too far open, can send another negro into the community and get you and me to support him so he can use him to lead us astray -- those days are long gone too.

The political philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that if you and I are going to live in a Black community -- and that's where we're going to live, 'cause as soon as you move into one of their -- soon as you move out of the Black community into their community, it's mixed for a period of time, but they're gone and you're right there all by yourself again. We must -- We must understand the politics of our community and we must know what politics is supposed to produce. We must know what part politics play in our lives. And until we become politically mature we will always be misled, lead astray, or deceived or maneuvered into supporting someone politically who doesn't have the good of our community at heart. So the political philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that we will have to carry on a program, a political program, of re-education to open our people's eyes, make us become more politically conscious, politically mature, and then we will -- whenever we get ready to cast our ballot, that ballot will be -- will be cast for a man of the community who has the good of the community of heart.

The economic philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that we should own and operate and control the economy of our community. You would never -- You can't open up a black store in a white community. White men won't even patronize you. And he's not wrong. He's got sense enough to look out for himself. You the one who don't have sense enough to look out for yourself. The white man -- The white man is too intelligent to let someone else come and gain control of the economy of his community. But you will let anybody come in and take control of the economy of your community, control the housing, control the education, control the jobs, control the businesses, under the pretext that you want to integrate. No, you're ought of your mind.

The political -- The economic philosophy of Black Nationalism only means that we have to become involved in a program of reeducation to educate our people into the importance of knowing that when you spend your dollar out of the community in which you live, the community in which you spend your money becomes richer and richer; the community out which you take your money becomes poorer and poorer. And because these negroes, who have been misled, misguided, are breaking their necks to take their money and spend it with The Man, The Man is becoming richer and richer, and you're becoming poorer and poorer. And then what happens? The community in which you live becomes a slum. It becomes a ghetto. The conditions become run down. And then you have the audacity to -- to complain about poor housing in a run-down community. Why you run it down yourself when you take your dollar out.

And you and I are in a double-track, because not only do we lose by taking our money someplace else and spending it, when we try and spend it in our own community we're trapped because we haven't had sense enough to set up stores and control the businesses of our community. The man who's controlling the stores in our community is a man who doesn't look like we do. He's a man who doesn't even live in the community. So you and I, even when we try and spend our money in the block where we live or the area where we live, we're spending it with a man who, when the sun goes down, takes that basket full of money in another part of the town.

So we're trapped, trapped, double-trapped, triple-trapped. Anywhere we go we find that we're trapped. And every kind of solution that someone comes up with is just another trap. But the political and economic philosophy of Black Nationalism -- the economic philosophy of Black Nationalism shows our people the importance of setting up these little stores and developing them and expanding them into larger operations. Woolworth didn't start out big like they are today. They started out with a dime store and expanded and expanded and then expanded until today, they're all over the country and all over the world, and they get to some of everybody's money. Now this is what you and I -- General Motors [is] the same way. They didn't start out like it is. It started out just a little rat race type operation. And it expanded and it expanded until today it's where it is right now. And you and I have to make a start and the best place to start is right in the community where we live.

So our people not only have to be reeducated to the importance of supporting black business, but the black man himself has to be made aware of the importance of going into business. And once you and I go into business, we own and operate at least the businesses in our community. What we will be doing is developing a situation wherein we will actually be able to create employment for the people in the community. And once you can create some -- some employment in the community where you live it will eliminate the necessity of you and me having to act ignorantly and disgracefully, boycotting and picketing some practice some place else trying to beg him for a job.

Anytime you have to rely upon your enemy for a job, you're in bad shape. When you have -- He is your enemy. Let me tell you, you wouldn't be in this country if some enemy hadn't kidnapped you and brought you here. On the other hand, some of you think you came here on the Mayflower.

So as you can see brothers and sisters, today -- this afternoon, it's not our intention to discuss religion. We're going to forget religion. If we bring up religion, we'll be in an argument, and the best way to keep away from arguments and differences, as I said earlier, put your religion at home -- in the closet. Keep it between you and your God. Because if it hasn't done anything more for you than it has, you need to forget it anyway.

Whether you are -- Whether you are a Christian, or a Muslim, or a Nationalist, we all have the same problem. They don't hang you because you're a Baptist; they hang you 'cause you're black. They don't attack me because I'm a Muslim; they attack me 'cause I'm black. They attack all of us for the same reason; all of us catch hell from the same enemy. We're all in the same bag, in the same boat. We suffer political oppression, economic exploitation, and social degradation -- all of them from the same enemy. The government has failed us; you can't deny that. Anytime you live in the twentieth century, 1964, and you walkin' around here singing "We Shall Overcome," the government has failed us.

This is part of what's wrong with you -- you do too much singing. Today it's time to stop singing and start swinging. You can't sing up on freedom, but you can swing up on some freedom. Cassius Clay can sing, but singing didn't help him to become the heavyweight champion of the world; swinging helped him become the heavyweight champion. This government has failed us; the government itself has failed us, and the white liberals who have been posing as our friends have failed us.

And once we see that all these other sources to which we've turned have failed, we stop turning to them and turn to ourselves. We need a self help program, a do-it -- a-do-it-yourself philosophy, a do-it-right-now philosophy, a it's-already-too-late philosophy. This is what you and I need to get with, and the only time -- the only way we're going to solve our problem is with a self-help program. Before we can get a self-help program started we have to have a self-help philosophy.

Black Nationalism is a self-help philosophy. What's so good about it? You can stay right in the church where you are and still take Black Nationalism as your philosophy. You can stay in any kind of civic organization that you belong to and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. You can be an atheist and still take black nationalism as your philosophy. This is a philosophy that eliminates the necessity for division and argument. 'Cause if you're black you should be thinking black, and if you are black and you not thinking black at this late date, well I'm sorry for you.

Once you change your philosophy, you change your thought pattern. Once you change your thought pattern, you change your -- your attitude. Once you change your attitude, it changes your behavior pattern and then you go on into some action. As long as you gotta sit-down philosophy, you'll have a sit-down thought pattern, and as long as you think that old sit-down thought you'll be in some kind of sit-down action. They'll have you sitting in everywhere. It's not so good to refer to what you're going to do as a "sit-in." That right there castrates you. Right there it brings you down. What -- What goes with it? What -- Think of the image of a someone sitting. An old woman can sit. An old man can sit. A chump can sit. A coward can sit. Anything can sit. Well you and I been sitting long enough, and it's time today for us to start doing some standing, and some fighting to back that up.

When we look like -- at other parts of this earth upon which we live, we find that black, brown, red, and yellow people in Africa and Asia are getting their independence. They're not getting it by singing "We Shall Overcome." No, they're getting it through nationalism. It is nationalism that brought about the independence of the people in Asia. Every nation in Asia gained its independence through the philosophy of nationalism. Every nation on the African continent that has gotten its independence brought it about through the philosophy of nationalism. And it will take black nationalism -- that to bring about the freedom of 22 million Afro-Americans here in this country where we have suffered colonialism for the past 400 years.

America is just as much a colonial power as England ever was. America is just as much a colonial power as France ever was. In fact, America is more so a colonial power than they because she's a hypocritical colonial power behind it.

What is 20th -- What do you call second class citizenship? Why, that's colonization. Second class citizenship is nothing but 20th century slavery. How you gonna tell me you're a second class citizen? They don't have second class citizenship in any other government on this earth. They just have slaves and people who are free. Well this country is a hypocrite. They try and make you think they set you free by calling you a second class citizen. No, you're nothing but a 20th century slave.

Just as it took nationalism to move -- to remove colonialism from Asia and Africa, it'll take black nationalism today to remove colonialism from the backs and the minds of 22 million Afro-Americans here in this country.

And 1964 looks like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet.

Why does it look like it might be the year of the ballot or the bullet? Because Negroes have listened to the trickery, and the lies, and the false promises of the white man now for too long. And they're fed up. They've become disenchanted. They've become disillusioned. They've become dissatisfied, and all of this has built up frustrations in the black community that makes the black community throughout America today more explosive than all of the atomic bombs the Russians can ever invent. Whenever you got a racial powder keg sitting in your lap, you're in more trouble than if you had an atomic powder keg sitting in your lap. When a racial powder keg goes off, it doesn't care who it knocks out the way. Understand this, it's dangerous.

And in 1964 this seems to be the year, because what can the white man use now to fool us after he put down that march on Washington? And you see all through that now. He tricked you, had you marching down to Washington. Yes, had you marching back and forth between the feet of a dead man named Lincoln and another dead man named George Washington singing "We Shall Overcome." He made a chump out of you. He made a fool out of you. He made you think you were going somewhere and you end up going nowhere but between Lincoln and Washington.

So today, our people are disillusioned. They've become disenchanted. They've become dissatisfied, and in their frustrations they want action.

And in 1964 you'll see this young black man, this new generation asking for the ballot or the bullet. That old Uncle Tom action is outdated. The young generation don't want to hear anything about the odds are against us. What do we care about odds?

When this country here was first being founded there were 13 colonies. The -- The whites were colonized. They were fed up with this taxation without representation, so some of them stood up and said "liberty or death." Though I went to a white school over here in Mason, Michigan, the white man made the mistake of letting me read his history books. He made the mistake of teaching me that Patrick Henry was a patriot, and George Washington, wasn't nothing non-violent about old Pat or George Washington.

Liberty or death was what brought about the freedom of whites in this country from the English. They didn't care about the odds. Why they faced the wrath of the entire British Empire. And in those days they used to say that the British Empire was so vast and so powerful when the sun -- the sun would never set on it. This is how big it was, yet these 13 little scrawny states, tired of taxation without representation, tired of being exploited and oppressed and degraded, told that big British Empire "liberty or death."

And here you have 22 million Afro-American black people today catching more hell than Patrick Henry ever saw. And I'm -- I'm here to tell you in case you don't know it -- that you got a new -- you got a new generation of black people in this country who don't care anything whatsoever about odds. They don't want to hear you old Uncle Tom handkerchief heads talking about the odds. No. This is a new generation. If they're gonna draft these young black men and send them over to Korea or South Vietnam to face 800 million Chinese -- if you're not afraid of those odds, you shouldn't be afraid of these odds.

Why is -- Why does this loom to be such an explosive political year? Because this is the year of politics. This is the year when all of the white politicians are going to come into the Negro community. You never see them until election time. You can't find them until election time. They're going to come in with false promises, and as they make these false promises they're gonna feed our frustrations and this will only serve to make matters worse.

I'm no politician. I'm not even a student of politics. I'm not a Republican, nor a Democrat, nor an American, and got sense enough to know it. I'm one of the 22 million black victims of the Democrats, one of the 22 million black victims of the Republicans, and one of the 22 million black victims of Americanism. And when I speak, I don't speak as a Democrat, or a Republican, *nor an American.* I speak as a victim of America's so-called democracy. You and I have never seen democracy; all we've seen is hypocrisy. When we open our eyes today and look around America, we see America not through the eyes of someone who have -- who has enjoyed the fruits of Americanism, we see America through the eyes of someone who has been the victim of Americanism. We don't see any American dream; we've experienced only the American nightmare. We haven't benefited from America's democracy; we've only suffered from America's hypocrisy. And the generation that's coming up now can see it and are not afraid to say it.

If you -- If you go to jail, so what? If you black, you were born in jail. If you black, you were born in jail, in the North as well as the South. Stop talking about the South. Long as you south of the -- Long as you south of the Canadian border, you're south. Don't call Governor Wallace a Dixie governor; Romney is a Dixie governor.

Twenty-two million black victims of Americanism are waking up and they're gaining a new political consciousness, becoming politically mature. And as they become -- develop this political maturity, they're able to see the recent trends in these political elections. They see that the whites are so evenly divided that every time they vote the race is so close they have to go back and count the votes all over again. And that...which means that any block, any minority that has a block of votes that stick together is in a strategic position. Either way you go, that's who gets it. You're -- You're in a position to determine who will go to the White House and who will stay in the dog house. You're the one who has that power. You can keep Johnson in Washington D.C., or you can send him back to his Texas cotton patch. You're the one who sent Kennedy to Washington. You're the one who put the present Democratic Administration in Washington D.C. The whites were evenly divided. It was the fact that you threw 80 percent of your votes behind the Democrats that put the Democrats in the White House.

When you see this, you can see that the Negro vote is the key factor. And despite the fact that you are in a position to -- to be the determining factor, what do you get out of it? The Democrats have been in Washington D.C. only because of the Negro vote. They've been down there four years, and they're -- all other legislation they wanted to bring up they brought it up and gotten it out of the way, and now they bring up you. And now, they bring up you. You put them first, and they put you last, 'cause you're a chump, a political chump.

In Washington D.C., in the House of Representatives, there are 257 who are Democrats; only 177 are Republican. In the Senate there are 67 Democrats; only 33 are Republicans. The Party that you backed controls two-thirds of the House of Representatives and the Senate, and still they can't keep their promise to you, 'cause you're a chump. Anytime you throw your weight behind a political party that controls two-thirds of the government, and that Party can't keep the promise that it made to you during election time, and you're dumb enough to walk around continuing to identify yourself with that Party, you're not only a chump, but you're a traitor to your race.

And what kind of alibi do they come up with? They try and pass the buck to the Dixiecrats. Now back during the days when you were blind, deaf, and dumb, ignorant, politically immature, naturally you went along with that. But today as your eyes come open, and you develop political maturity, you're able to see and think for yourself, and you can see that a Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat in disguise.

You look at the structure of the government that controls this country; it's controlled by 16 senatorial committees and 20 congressional committees. Of the 16 senatorial committees that run the government, 10 of them are in the hands of Southern segregationists. Of the 20 congressional committees that run the government, 12 of them in the -- are in the hands of Southern segregationists. And they're going to tell you and me that the South lost the war.

You, today, have -- are in the hands of a government of segregationists, racists, white supremacists who belong to the Democratic party, but disguise themselves as Dixiecrats. A Dixiecrat is nothing but a Democrat. Whoever runs the Democrats is also the father of the Dixiecrats, and the father of all of them is sitting in the White House. I say and I say it again: You got a President who's nothing but a Southern segregationist from the state of Texas. They'll lynch you in Texas as quick as they'll lynch you in Mississippi. Only in -- in Texas they lynch you with a Texas accent; in Mississippi they lynch you with a Mississippi accent.

And the first thing the cracker does when he comes in power, he takes all the Negro leaders and invites them for coffee to show that he's alright. And those Uncle Toms can't pass up the coffee. They come away from the coffee table telling you and me that this man is alright 'cause he's from the South, and since he's from the South he can deal with the South. Look at the logic that they're using. What about Eastland? He's from the South. Make him the President. He can -- If Johnson is a good man 'cause he's from Texas, and being from Texas will enable him to deal with the South, Eastland can deal with the South better than Johnson. Oh, I say you been mislead. You been had. You been took.

I was in Washington a couple weeks ago while the Senators were filibustering, and I noticed in the back of the Senate a huge map, and on this map it showed the distribution of Negroes in America, and surprisingly the same Senators that were involved in the filibuster were from the states where there were the most Negroes. Why were they filibustering the civil rights legislation? Because the civil rights legislation is supposed to guarantee voting rights to Negroes in those states, and those senators from those states know that if the Negroes in those states can vote, those senators are down the drain. The Representatives of those states go down the drain. And in the Constitution of this country it has a stipulation wherein whenever the rights, the voting rights, of people in a certain district are violated, then the Representative who -- who's from that particular district, according to the Constitution, is supposed to be expelled from the Congress. Now, if this particular aspect of the Constitution was enforced, why you wouldn't have a cracker in Washington D.C. But what would happen when you expel the Dixiecrat, you're expelling the Democrat. When you destroy the power of the Dixiecrat, you're destroying the power -- power of the Democratic Party. So how in the world can the Democratic Party in the South actually side with you in sincerity, when all of its power is based in the -- in the South?

These Northern Democrats are in cahoots with the Southern Democrats. They're playing a giant con game, a political con game. You know how it goes. One of them -- One of them comes to you and makes believe he's for you, and he's in cahoots with the other one that's not for you. Why? Because neither one of them is for you, but they got to make you go with one of them or the other. So this is a con game. And this is what they've been doing with you and me all these years.

First thing Johnson got off the plane when he become President, he asked "Where's Dicky?" You know who "Dicky" is? Dicky is old Southern cracker Richard -- Richard Russell. Look here, yes. Lyndon B. Johnson's best friend is the one who is the head, who's heading the forces that are filibustering civil rights legislation. You tell me how in the hell is he going to be Johnson's best friend? How can Johnson be his friend and your friend too? No, that man is too tricky. Especially if his friend is still old Dicky.

Whenever the Negroes keep the Democrats in power, they're keeping the Dixiecrats in power. Is this true? A vote for a Democrat is nothing but a vote for a Dixiecrat. I know you don't like me saying that, but I...I'm not the kind of person who come here to say what you like. I'm going to tell you the truth whether you like it or not.

Up here, in the North you have the same thing. The Democratic Party don't -- don't do it -- they don't do it that way. They got a thing that they call gerrymandering. They -- They maneuver you out of power. Even though you can vote, they fix it so you're voting for nobody; they got you going and coming. In the South, they're outright political wolves. In the North, they're political foxes. A fox and a wolf are both canine, both belong to the dog family. Now you take your choice. You going to choose a Northern dog or a Southern dog? Because either dog you choose I guarantee you you'll still be in the dog house.

This is why I say it's the ballot or the bullet. It's liberty or it's death. It's freedom for everybody or freedom for nobody. America today finds herself in a unique situation. Historically, revolutions are bloody. Oh, yes, they are. They haven't never had a blood-less revolution, or a non-violent revolution. That don't happen even in Hollywood. You don't have a revolution in which you love your enemy, and you don't have a revolution in which you are begging the system of exploitation to integrate you into it. Revolutions overturn systems. Revolutions destroy systems.

A revolution is bloody, but America is in a unique position. She's the only country in history in a position actually to become involved in a blood-less revolution. The -- The Russian revolution was bloody; Chinese revolution was bloody; French revolution was bloody; Cuban revolution was bloody; and there was nothing more bloody than the American Revolution. But today this country can become involved in a revolution that won't take bloodshed. All she's got to do is give the black man in this country everything that's due him -- everything.

I hope that the white man can see this, 'cause if he don't see it you're finished. If you don't see it you're going to be coming -- you're going to become involved in some action in which you don't have a chance. And we don't care anything about your atomic bomb; it's -- it's useless because other countries have atomic bombs. When two or three different countries have atomic bombs, nobody can use them, so it means that the white man today is without a weapon. If you're gonna -- If you want some action, you gotta come on down to Earth. And there's more black people on Earth than there are white people on Earth.

I only got a couple more minutes. The white man can never win another war on the ground. His days of war, victory, his great -- his days of that ground victory are over. Can I prove it? Yes. Take all the action that's going on on this earth right now that he's involved in. Tell me where he's winning. Nowhere.

Why some rice farmers -- some rice farmers -- some rice eaters ran him out of Korea. Yes, they ran him out of Korea. Rice eaters with nothing but gym shoes and a rifle and a bowl of rice took him and his tanks and his napalm and all that other action he's supposed to have and ran him across the Yalu. Why? 'Cause the day that he can win on the ground has passed.

Up in French Indo-China those little peasants, rice growers, took on the might of the French army and ran all the Frenchmen -- you remember Dien Bien Phu. No.

The same thing happened in Algeria, in Africa. They didn't have anything but a rifle. The French had all these highly mechanized instruments of warfare, but they put some guerilla action on, and a -- and a -- and a white man can't fight a guerilla warfare. Guerilla action takes heart, takes nerve, and he doesn't have that.

He's brave when he's got tanks. He's brave when he's got planes. He's brave when he's got bombs. He's brave when he got a whole lot of company along with him, but you take that little man from Africa and Asia, turn him loose in the woods with a blade, with a blade -- that's all he needs, all he needs is a blade -- and when the sun comes down -- goes down and it's dark, it's even-steven.

So it's the -- it's the ballot or the bullet. Today our people can see that we're faced with a government conspiracy. This government has failed us. The senators who are filibustering concerning your and my rights, that's the government. Don't say it's Southern senators. This is the government; this is a government filibuster. It's not a segregationist filibuster. It's a government filibuster. Any kind of activity that takes place on the floor of the Congress or the Senate, that's the government. Any kind of dilly-dallying, that's the government. Any kind of pussy-footing, that's the government. Any kind of act that's designed to delay or deprive you and me right now of getting full rights, that's the government that's responsible. And any time you find the government involved in a conspiracy to violate the citizenship or the civil rights of a people, then you are wasting your time going to that government expecting redress. Instead, you have to take that government to the World Court and accuse it of genocide and all of the other crimes that it is guilty of today.

So those of us whose political, and economic, and social philosophy is Black Nationalism have become involved in the civil rights struggle. We have injected ourselves into the civil rights struggle, and we intend to expand it from the level of civil rights to the level of hu

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The Civil Rights Movement: Fraud, Sham, and Hoax

by George C. Wallace
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We come here today in deference to the memory of those stalwart patriots who on July 4, 1776, pledged their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor to establish and defend the proposition that governments are created by the people, empowered by the people, derive their just powers from the consent of the people, and must forever remain subservient to the will of the people.

Today, 188 years later, we celebrate that occasion and find inspiration and determination and courage to preserve and protect the great principles of freedom enunciated in the Declaration of Independence.

It is therefore a cruel irony that the President of the United States has only yesterday signed into law the most monstrous piece of legislation ever enacted by the United States Congress.

It is a fraud, a sham, and a hoax.

This bill will live in infamy. To sign it into law at any time is tragic. To do so upon the eve of the celebration of our independence insults the intelligence of the American people.

It dishonors the memory of countless thousands of our dead who offered up their very lives in defense of principles which this bill destroys.

Never before in the history of this nation have so many human and property rights been destroyed by a single enactment of the Congress. It is an act of tyranny. It is the assassin's knife stuck in the back of liberty.

With this assassin's knife and a blackjack in the hand of the Federal force-cult, the left-wing liberals will try to force us back into bondage. Bondage to a tyranny more brutal than that imposed by the British monarchy which claimed power to rule over the lives of our forefathers under sanction of the Divine Right of kings.

Today, this tyranny is imposed by the central government which claims the right to rule over our lives under sanction of the omnipotent black-robed despots who sit on the bench of the United States Supreme Court. This bill is fraudulent in intent, in design, and in execution.

It is misnamed. Each and every provision is mistitled. It was rammed through the congress on the wave of ballyhoo, promotions, and publicity stunts reminiscent of P. T. Barnum.

It was enacted in an atmosphere of pressure, intimidation, and even cowardice, as demonstrated by the refusal of the United States Senate to adopt an amendment to submit the bill to a vote of the people.

To illustrate the fraud--it is not a Civil Rights Bill. It is a Federal Penal Code. It creates Federal crimes which would take volumes to list and years to tabulate

because it affects the lives of 192 million American citizens. Every person in every walk and station of life and every aspect of our daily lives becomes subject to the criminal provisions of this bill.

It threatens our freedom of speech, of assembly, or association, and makes the exercise of these Freedoms a federal crime under certain conditions.

It affects our political rights, our right to trial by jury, our right to the full use and enjoyment of our private property, the freedom from search and seizure of our private property and possessions, the freedom from harassment by Federal police and, in short, all the rights of individuals inherent in a society of free men.

Ministers, lawyers, teachers, newspapers, and every private citizen must guard his speech and watch his actions to avoid the deliberately imposed booby traps put into this bill. It is designed to make Federal crimes of our customs, beliefs, and traditions. Therefore, under the fantastic powers of the Federal judiciary to punish for contempt of court and under their fantastic powers to regulate our most intimate aspects of our lives by injunction, every American citizen is in jeopardy and must stand guard against these despots.

Yet there are those who call this a good bill.

It is people like Senator Hubert Humphrey and other members of Americans for Democratic Action. It is people like Ralph McGill and other left-wing radical apologists.

They called it a good bill before it was amended to restore the right to trial by jury in certain cases.

Yet a Federal judge may still try one without a jury under the provisions of this bill. It was the same persons who said it was a good bill before the amendment pretending to forbid busing of pupils from neighborhood schools. Yet a Federal judge may still order busing from one neighborhood school to another. They have done it, they will continue to do it. As a matter of fact, it is but another evidence of the deceitful intent of the sponsors of this bill for them to claim that it accomplished any such thing. It was left-wing radicals who led the fight in the Senate for the so-called civil rights bill now about to enslave our nation.

We find Senator Hubert Humphrey telling the people of the United States that "non-violent" demonstrations would continue to serve a good purpose through a "long, busy and constructive summer."

Yet this same Senator told the people of this country that passage of this monstrous bill would ease tensions and stop demonstrations.

This is the same Senator who has suggested, now that the Civil Rights Bill is passed, that the President call the fifty state Governors together to work out ways and means to enforce this rotten measure.

There is no need for him to call on me. I am not about to be a party to anything having to do with the law that is going to destroy individual freedom and liberty in this country.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy our free enterprise system.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy neighborhood schools.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that will destroy the rights of private property.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that destroys your right -- and my right -- to choose my neighbors -- or to sell my house to whomever I choose.

I am having nothing to do with enforcing a law that destroys the labor seniority system.

I am having nothing to do with this so-called civil rights bill. The liberal left-wingers have passed it. Now let them employ some pinknik social engineers in Washington, D.C., To figure out what to do with it.

The situation reminds me of the little boy looking at the blacksmith as he hammered a red-hot horseshoe into the proper shape.

After minutes of hammering, the blacksmith took the horseshoe, splashed it into a tub of water and threw it steaming onto a sawdust pile.

The little fellow picked up the horseshoe, dropped it quickly.

"What's the matter, son," the blacksmith said, "is that shoe too hot to handle?"

"No sir," the little boy said, "it just don't take me long to look at a horseshoe."

It's not going to take the people of this country long to look at the Civil Rights Bill, either.

And they are going to discard it just as quickly as the little boy tossed away the still hot horseshoe.

But I am not here to talk about the separate provisions of the Federal Penal Code. I am here to talk about principles which have been overthrown by the enactment of this bill. The principles that you and I hold dear. The principles for which our forefathers fought and died to establish and to defend. The principles for which we came here to rededicate ourselves.

But before I get into that, let me point out one important fact. It would have been impossible for the American people to have been deceived by the sponsors of this bill had there been a responsible American press to tell the people exactly what the bill

contained. If they had had the integrity and the guts to tell the truth, this bill would never have been enacted.

Whoever heard of truth put to the worst in free and open encounter? We couldn't get the truth to the American people.

You and I know that that's extremely difficult to do where our newspapers are owned by out-of-state interests. Newspapers which are run and operated by left-wing liberals, Communist sympathizers, and members of the Americans for Democratic Action and other Communist front organizations with high sounding names.

However, we will not be intimidated by the vultures of the liberal left-wing press. We will not be deceived by their lies and distortions of truth. We will not be swayed by their brutal attacks upon the character and reputation of any honest citizen who dares stand up and fight for liberty.

And, we are not going to be influenced by intellectually bankrupt editors of the Atlanta Journal and Constitution, one of whom has presided over the dissolution of the once great Atlanta Constitution. We can understand his bitterness in his bleak failure, but we need not tolerate his vituperative and venomous attacks upon the integrity and character of our people. These editors, like many other left-wingers in the liberal press, are not influenced by tradition. Theirs is a tradition of scalawags. Their mealy-mouthed platitudes disgrace the honored memory of their predecessors -- such men of character as Henry Grady, Joel Chandler Harris, and Clarke Howell, men who made the name of the Atlanta Constitution familiar in every household throughout the South. They are not worthy to shine the shoes of those great men.

In this connection I want to pay my highest respects and compliments to the dedicated men of Atlanta and of Georgia who gave to the people of their state what is destined to become the true voice of the south. I have reference to the great newspaper the Atlanta Times.

It is a sad commentary on the period in which we live that it is necessary for the people of a great city to start their own newspaper in order to get the truth.

I hope you have some success in this venture and I assure you that there will be many subscribers in the State of Alabama including myself.

As I have said before, that Federal Penal Code could never have been enacted into law if we had had a responsible press who was willing to tell the american people the truth about what it actually provides. Nor would we have had a bill had it not been for the United States Supreme Court.

Now on the subject of the court let me make it clear that I am not attacking any member of the United States Supreme Court as an individual. However, I do attack their decisions, I question their intelligence, their common sense and their judgment, I consider the Federal Judiciary system to be the greatest single threat to individual freedom and liberty in the United States today, and I'm going to take off the gloves in talking about these people.

There is only one word to describe the Federal judiciary today. That word is "lousy."

They assert more power than claimed by King George III, more power than Hitler, Mussolini, or Khrushchev ever had. They assert the power to declare unconstitutional our very thoughts. To create for us a system of moral and ethical values. To outlaw and declare unconstitutional, illegal, and immoral the customs, traditions, and beliefs of the people, and furthermore they assert the authority to enforce their decrees in all these subjects upon the American people without their consent.

This is a matter that has been of great concern to many legal authorities. The Council of State Governments composed of representatives of the fifty States sponsored the proposal just last year seeking to curb the powers of this body of judicial tyrants. The Conference of Chief Justices of all of the state Supreme Courts of this nation has also issued an historic statement urging judicial restraint upon the Court.

This latter group said, "the value of a firm statement by us lies in the fact that we speak as members of all the state appellate courts with a background of many years experience in the determination of thousands of cases of all kinds. Surely there are those who will respect the declaration of what we believe.

"It has long been an American boast that we have a government of laws and not of men. We believe that any study of recent decisions of the supreme court will raise at least considerable doubt as to the validity of that boast."

in addition, the state legislatures have for years flooded the Congress with resolutions condemning usurpations of power by the Federal judiciary.

The court today, just as in 1776, is deaf to the voices of the people and their repeated entreaties: they have become arrogant, contemptuous, highhanded, and literal despots.

It has been said that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely. There was never greater evidence as to the proof of this statement than in the example of the present Federal Judiciary.

I want to touch upon just a few of the acts of tyranny which have been sanctioned by the United States Supreme Court and compare these acts with the acts of tyranny enumerated in the Declaration of Independence.

The colonists objected most strenuously to the imposition of taxes upon the people without their consent.

Today, the Federal judiciary asserts the same tyrannical power to levy taxes in Prince Edward County, Virginia, and without the consent of the people. Not only that, but they insist upon the power to tell the people for what purposes their money must be spent.

The colonists stated, "he has refused to pass other laws for the accommodation of large districts of people, unless those people would relinquish the right of representation in the legislature, a right inestimable to them and formidable to tyrants only."

Today, the Federal judiciary, in one of its most recent decisions, has deprived the American people of the right to use the unit system of representation in their own state governments for the accommodation of large districts of people, and has itself prescribed the manner in which the people shall structure the legislative branch of their own government, and have prescribed how the people shall allocate the legislative powers of state government.

More than that they have even told the American people that we may not, with a majority of the people voting for the measure, or with two-thirds of those voting, or even if by unanimous consent, adopt a provision in our state constitutions to allocate the legislative power of state government in any manner other than as prescribed by the court.

One justice of the United States Supreme Court said in this connection, and I quote, "to put the matter plainly, there is nothing in all the history of this Court's decisions which supports this Constitutional rule. The Court's draconian pronouncement which makes unconstitutional the legislatures of most of the fifty states finds no support in the words of the constitution in any prior decision of this court or in the 175-year political history of our Federal union... These decisions mark a long step backward into the unhappy era where a majority of the members of this court were thought by many to have convinced themselves and each other that the demands of the constitution were to be measured not by what it says but by their own notions of wise political theory."

Two other Justices of the Court said, "such a massive repudiation of the experience of our whole past in asserting destructively novel Judicial power demands analysis of the role of this Court and our Constitutional scheme...It may well impair the Court's position as the ultimate organ of the Supreme Law of the Land..."

The only reason it is the Supreme Law of the Land today is because we have a President who cares so little for freedom that he would send the armed forces into the states to enforce the dictatorial decree. Our colonist forefather had something to say about that too.

The Declaration of Independence cited as an act of tyranny the fact that, "...Kept among us in times of peace standing armies without the consent of the legislature."

Today, 188 years later, we have actually witnessed the invasion of the State of Arkansas, Mississippi, and Alabama by the armed forces of the United States and maintained in the state against the will of the people and without consent of state legislatures.

It is a form of tyranny worse than that of King George III who had sent mercenaries against the colonies because today the Federal Judicial tyrants have sanctioned the use of brother against brother and father against son by federalizing the National Guard.

In 1776 the colonists also complained that the monarch "...Has incited domestic insurrections among us..."

Today, we have absolute proof that the Federal Department of Justice has planned, supervised, financed and protected acts of insurrection in the southern states, resulting in vandalism, property damage, personal injury, and staggering expense to the states.

In 1776 it was charged that the monarchy had asserted power to "...Dissolve representative houses and to punish... For opposing with manly firmness his invasions of the rights of the people..."

Today, the Federal judiciary asserts the power not only to dissolve state legislatures but to create them and to dissolve all state laws and state judicial decrees, and to punish a state governor by trial without jury "...For opposing with manly firmness his invasions of the rights of the people."

The colonists also listed as acts of tyranny: ".The erection of a multitude of new offices and sent hither swarms of officers to harass our people and to eat out their substance.;"

"...Suspending our own legislatures and declaring themselves invested with the power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever;" "...Abolishing the free system of the English laws. . .;"

--it had "abdicated government here;"

--refusing to assent to the laws enacted by the people, "...Laws considered most wholesome and necessary for the public good;" --and "...For depriving us in many cases, of the benefits of trial by jury ...; For taking away our charters, abolishing our most valuable laws, and altering fundamentally form of our government; for suspending our own legislatures and declaring themselves invested with power to legislate for us in all cases whatsoever."

The United States Supreme Court is guilty of each and every one of these acts of tyranny.

Therefore, I echo the sentiments of our forefathers who declared: "a prince, whose character is thus marked by every act which may define a tyrant, is unfit to be the ruler of a free people."

Ladies and gentlemen, I have listed only a few of the many acts of tyranny which have been committed or specifically sanctioned by the United States Supreme Court.

I feel it important that you should know and understand what it is that these people are trying to do. The written opinions of the court are filled with double talk, semantics, jargon, and meaningless phrases. The words they use are not important. The ideas that they represent are the things which count.

It is perfectly obvious from the left-wing liberal press and from the left-wing law journals that what the court is saying behind all the jargon is that they don't like our form of government.

They think they can establish a better one. In order to do so it is necessary that they overthrow our existing form, destroy the democratic institutions created by the people, change the outlook, religion, and philosophy, and bring the whole area of human thought, aspiration, action and organization, under the absolute control of the court. Their decisions reveal this to be the goal of the liberal element on the court which is in a majority at present.

It has reached the point where one may no longer look to judicial decisions to determine what the court may do. However, it is possible to predict with accuracy the nature of the opinions to be rendered. One may find the answer in the Communist Manifesto. The Communists are dedicated to the overthrow of our form of government. They are dedicated to the destruction of the concept of private property. They are dedicated to the object of destroying religion as the basis of moral and ethical values.

The Communists are determined that all natural resources shall be controlled by the central government, that all productive capacity of the nation shall be under the control of the central government, that the political sovereignty of the people shall be destroyed as an incident to control of local schools. It is their objective to capture the minds of our youth in order to indoctrinate them in what to think and not how to think.

I do not call the members of the United States Supreme Court Communists. But I do say, and I submit for your judgment the fact that every single decision of the court in the past ten years which related in any way to each of these objectives has been decided against freedom and in favor of tyranny.

A politician must stand on his record. Let the Court stand on its record.

The record reveals, for the past number of years, that the chief, if not the only beneficiaries of the present Court's rulings, have been duly and lawfully convicted criminals, Communists, atheists, and clients of vociferous left-wing minority groups. You can't convict a Communist in our Federal court system.

Neither can you convict one of being a Communist in Russia, China, or Cuba. The point is that the United States Supreme Court refuses to recognize the Communist conspiracy and their intent to "bury us."

let us look at the record further with respect to the court's contribution to the destruction of the concept of God and the abolition of religion.

The Federal court rules that your children shall not be permitted to read the bible in our public school systems. Let me tell you this, though. We still read the bible in alabama schools and as long as I am governor we will continue to read the bible no matter what the Supreme Court says.

Federal courts will not convict a "demonstrator" invading and destroying private property. But the Federal courts rule you cannot say a simple "God is great, God is good, we thank Thee for our food," in kindergartens supported by public funds.

Now, let us examine the manner in which the Court has continuously chipped away at the concept of private property.

It is contended by the left-wing liberals that private property is merely a legal fiction. That one has no inherent right to own and possess property. The courts have restricted and limited the right of acquisition of property in life and have decreed its disposition in death and have ruthlessly set aside the wills of the dead in order to attain social ends decreed by the court. The court has substituted its judgment for that of the testator based on social theory.

The courts assert authority even in decree the use of private cemeteries.

They assert the right to convert a private place of business into a public place of business without the consent of the owner and without compensation to him.

One justice asserts that the mere licensing of a business by the state is sufficient to convert it into control by the Federal judiciary as to its use and disposition.

Another asserts that the guarantees of equal protection and due process of law cannot be extended to a corporation. In one instance, following the edicts of the United States Supreme Court, a state Supreme Court has ordered and directed a private citizen to sell his home to an individual contrary to the wishes of the owner.

In California we witnessed a state Supreme Court taking under advisement the question as to whether or not it will compel a bank to make a loan to an applicant on the basis of his race.

We have witnessed the sanction by the courts of confiscatory taxation.

Let us take a look at the attitude of the court with respect to the control of the private resources of the nation and the allocation of the productive capacity of the nation.

The Supreme Court decisions have sanctioned enactment of the civil rights bill.

What this bill actually does is to empower the United States government to reallocate the entire productive capacity of the agricultural economy covered by quotas and acreage allotments of various types on the basis of race, creed, color and national origin.

It, in effect, places in the hands of the Federal government the right of a farmer to earn a living, making that right dependent upon the consent of the Federal government precisely as is the case in Russia.

The power is there. I am not in the least impressed by the protestations that the government will use this power with benevolent discretion.

We know that this bill authorizes the President of the United States to allocate all defense productive capacity of this country on the basis of race, creed, or color.

It does not matter in the least that he will make such allocations with restraint. The face is that it is possible with a politically dominated agency to punish and to bankrupt and destroy any business that deals with the Federal government if it does not bow to the wishes and demands of the president of the United States.

All of us know what the court has done to capture the minds of our children.

The Federal judiciary has asserted the authority to prescribe regulations with respect to the management, operation, and control of our local schools. The second brown decision in the infamous school segregation case authorized Federal district courts to supervise such matters as teacher hiring, firing, promotion, the expenditure of local funds, both administratively and for capital improvements, additions, and renovations, the location of new schools, the drawing of school boundaries, busing and transportation of school children, and, believe it or not, it has asserted the right in the Federal judiciary to pass judgment upon the curricula adopted in local public schools. A comparatively recent Federal court decision in a Florida case actually entered an order embracing each and every one of these assertions of Federal supervision.

In ruling after ruling, the Supreme Court has overstepped its constitutional authority. While appearing to protect the people's interest, it has in reality become a judicial tyrant.

It's the old pattern. The people always have some champion whom they set over them ...And nurse into greatness. This, and no other, is the foot from which a tyrant springs, after first appearing as a protector.

This is another way of saying that the people never give up their liberties ...And their freedom ...But under some delusion. But yet there is hope.

There is yet a spirit of resistance in this country which will not be oppressed. And it is awakening. And I am sure there is an abundance of good sense in this country which cannot be deceived.

I have personal knowledge of this. Thirty-four percent of the Wisconsin Democrats supported the beliefs you and I uphold and expound.

Thirty percent of the Democrats in Indiana join us in fighting this grab for executive power by those now in control in Washington. And, listen to this, forty-three percent of the Democrats in Maryland, practically in view of the nation's capital, believe as you and I believe.

So, let me say to you today. Take heart. Millions of Americans believe just as we in this great region of the United States believe. I shall never forget last spring as I stood in the midst of a great throng of South Milwaukee supporters at one of the greatest political rallies I have ever witnessed.

A fine-looking man grabbed my hand and said:

"Governor, I've never been south of South Milwaukee, but I am a Southerner!"

Of course, he was saying he believed in the principles and philosophy of the southern people ...Of you here today and the people of my state of Alabama.

He was right.

Being a southerner is no longer geographic. It's a philosophy and an attitude.

One destined to be a national philosophy--embraced by millions of Americans--which shall assume the mantle of leadership and steady a governmental structure in these days of crises.

Certainly I am a candidate for President of the United States.

If the left-wingers do not think I am serious--let them consider this.

I am going to take our fight to the people--the court of public opinion--where truth and common sense will eventually prevail.

At this time, I have definite, concrete plans to get presidential electors pledged to me on the ballots in the following states: Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, New York, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Tennessee, and of course Alabama, Mississippi and Louisiana. Other states are under serious consideration.

A candidate for President must receive 270 electoral votes to win.

The states I am definitely going to enter represent 218 electoral votes.

Conservatives of this nation constitute the balance of power in presidential elections.

I am a conservative.

I intend to give the American people a clear choice. I welcome a fight between our philosophy and the liberal left-wing dogma which now threatens to engulf every man, woman, and child in the United States.

I am in this race because I believe the American people have been pushed around long enough and that they, like you and I, are fed up with the continuing trend toward a socialist state which now subjects the individual to the dictates of an all-powerful central government.

I am running for President because I was born free. I want to remain free. I want your children and mine and our prosperity to be unencumbered by the manipulations of a soulless state.

I intend to fight for a positive, affirmative program to restore constitutional government and to stop the senseless bloodletting now being performed on the body of liberty by those who lead us willingly and dangerously close to a totalitarian central government.

In our nation, man has always been sovereign and the state has been his servant. This philosophy has made the United States the greatest free nation in history.

This freedom was not a gift. It was won by work, by sweat, by tears, by war, by whatever it took to be--and to remain free.

Are we today less resolute, less determined and courageous than our fathers and our grandfathers?

Are we to abandon this priceless heritage that has carried us to our present position of achievement and leadership?

I say if we are to abandon our heritage, let it be done in the open and full knowledge of what we do.

We are not unmindful and careless of our future. We will not stand aside while our conscientious convictions tell us that a dictatorial Supreme Court has taken away our rights and our liberties.

We will not stand idly by while the Supreme Court continues to invade the prerogatives left rightfully to the states by the constitution.

We must not be misled by left-wing incompetent news media that day after day feed us a diet of fantasy telling us we are bigots, racists and hate-mongers to oppose the destruction of the constitution and our nation.

A left-wing monster has risen up in this nation. It has invaded the government. It has invaded the news media. It has invaded the leadership of many of our churches. It has invaded every phase and aspect of the life of freedom-loving people.

It consists of many and various and powerful interests, but it has combined into one massive drive and is held together by the cohesive power of the emotion, setting forth civil rights as supreme to all.

But, in reality, it is a drive to destroy the rights of private property, to destroy the freedom and liberty of you and me.

And, my friends, where there are no property rights, there are no human rights. Red China and Soviet Russia are prime examples.

Politically evil men have combined and arranged themselves against us. The good people of this nation must now associate themselves together, else we will fall one by one, an unpitied sacrifice in a struggle which threatens to engulf the entire nation. We can win. We can control the election of the president in november.

Our object must be our country, our whole country and nothing but our country.

If we will stand together--the people of this state--the people of my state--the people throughout this great region--yes, throughout the United States--then we can be the balance of power. We can determine who will be the next president.

Georgia is a great state. Atlanta is a great city. I know you will demonstrate that greatness in november by joining alabama and other states throughout the south in electing the next president of the United States.

We are not going to change anything by sitting on our hands hoping that things will change for the better. Those who cherish individual freedom have a job to do.

First, let us let it be known that we intend to take the offensive and carry our fight for freedom across this nation. We will wield the power that is ours--the power of the people.

Let it be known that we will no longer tolerate the boot of tyranny. We will no longer hide our heads in the sand. We will reschool our thoughts in the lessons our forefathers knew so well.

We must destroy the power to dictate, to forbid, to require, to demand, to distribute, to edict, and to judge what is best and enforce that will of judgment upon free citizens.

We must revitalize a government founded in this nation on faith in god.

I ask that you join with me and that together, we give an active and courageous leadership to the millions of people throughout this nation who look with hope and faith to our fight to preserve our constitutional system of government with its guarantees of liberty and justice for all within the framework of our priceless freedoms.

http://www.sojust.net/speeches/wallace_hoax.html

One Volunteer's Freedom Summer, 1964

[Freedom Summer](#) volunteer Terri Shaw traveled south to Mississippi to work at the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) office in Hattiesburg. COFO was the coalition of workers from [SNCC](#), [SCLC](#), [CORE](#), and the [NAACP](#).

Her days in the nerve center of local operations put her in the perfect position to observe voter registration and education activities; responses from local people, black and white; and the birth of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Her account, written in 1964 but not published, forms a part of the Civil Rights in Mississippi Archive at the University of Southern Mississippi.

Orientation

... the weeklong orientation session at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, should have prepared us for everything that happened this summer. We were exposed to every possibility and given guidelines for behavior in almost any contingency...

... lessons were given in how to protect your vital organs while being beaten and what happens when a mob gets out of hand. In an auditorium more often used for assemblies and class days, stories were told of beatings and shootings and bombings, by the witnesses themselves...

...The battle scarred veterans who tried to prepare us for what we might meet in Mississippi were mostly young field secretaries of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)...

Heading South

...Traveling through the South in an integrated car is an experience every white American should have. The full impact of what segregation in public accommodations has meant to Negro Americans is a sobering experience. No matter how hot and dusty it gets, you have to think twice about stopping for a drink, and usually there is no place you can stop at all. No matter how tired you are, the motels "owned and operated by colored" are few and far between. And with a white girl in the car, you have to keep driving fast, and choose the places to buy gas with extreme caution...

...[In] Meridian... I heard my first Mississippi news broadcast:

"The so-called Council of Federated Organizations announced this morning that three so-called civil rights workers have been missing since last night when they went to Philadelphia to investigate a so-called church burning..."

... We knew right away that there was little hope for the three if they had been missing overnight. We had all been trained to call the office at regular intervals if we were away and never to stay away overnight without letting someone know about it...

Where Shaw Worked and Lived

...Palmer's Crossing, a rural area about 3 miles from Hattiesburg, looked... like Guatemala. There is no mail delivery there. Very few families have running water or plumbing of any kind. Few stores are owned by whites and law enforcement is handled by whites...

...My job was called "communications." ... My duties included, handling the press, FBI, Justice Dept. and local law enforcement officers; keeping a daily log; handling telephone communications with the Jackson,

Greenwood and Atlanta offices; sending a daily written report to Jackson and weekly reports to the Justice Dept., Atlanta and Greenwood; and an infinite variety of other duties stemming from answering the constantly ringing telephone. The office was hot, hectic, noisy and nerve-wracking, and sometimes I spent as many as 15 hours a day in it. Therefore it was always a great pleasure to come home to the wonderful family that had consented to take me in.

It was pure luck that I was assigned to the Longs....

...Mr. [John Gould] Long had built up his own business on Mobile St., and had also done many different sorts of work to provide his family with a comfortable home and financial security. Unlike other volunteers, I made no sacrifice as far as living conditions were concerned. My roommate, a freedom school teacher, and I shared a large, comfortable room. Mr. Long, now retired, is a college graduate who tried to register to vote and to form a Negro Voters League, back in the 40's. He is well-read and informed, especially in national, state and local politics. However, because the local registrar, who never went beyond sixth grade, failed him every time he took the voter registration test, Mr. Long was not able to vote until his case figured in a Justice Dept. suit.

Mixed Reception from the Locals

...The ladies of the Negro community pitched in immediately to see that we were well taken care of. During the first few weeks of the summer they served huge lunches to all 60 volunteers every day in the office. Later, when the freedom schools were set up, equally huge lunches were served in four separate churches every weekday. Several ladies took in washing and one made her bathtub available to the volunteers who lived in Palmers Crossing and other areas without running water.

Our reception from the white community was not so warm. After the first meeting, held the day we arrived, two cars drove past the office tossing out handfuls of most scurrilous hate literature I have ever seen.

Another night a caravan of about a dozen cars drove slowly past the office. White men in cars, some carrying guns, followed the voter registration workers as they canvassed in the Negro neighborhoods. Other carloads of whites drove up and down in front of the office. Quite often these cars did not have license plates although we never heard of anyone being arrested for failure to have a plate on a car...

... There were a couple of small-time "bombings" which caused no damage but added to the atmosphere of fear. A few local supporters received anonymous telephone calls and threats of assassination. Many more were fired from their jobs or taken off welfare, although this supposedly is illegal. The welfare workers especially delighted in dropping "subtle" hints to Negro welfare recipients. One woman who had nothing to do with the movement was told that she might be taken off the rolls because they had to "cut off some good niggers as well as the bad niggers so it won't look so bad."

Local police soon came to know our cars and stopped them frequently. Payment of traffic fines -- many undeserved and others for violations which would have gone undetected if committed by anyone else -- took an important chunk out of the weekly budget....

Obstacles to Voter Registration

...Thanks to the Justice Department [JD] case, the registration test had been simplified somewhat. Although it still included interpretation of a section of the Mississippi constitution, the registrar had to choose from 14 sections selected by the JD rather than the entire 286. However, it is still up to the registrar to decide whether the interpretation is correct or not, and the JD's brief has page after page showing tests carelessly written by almost illiterate whites who "passed" contrasted with meticulously accurate interpretations by educated Negroes who, of course, "failed." The names of all those who take the test are published in the local newspaper for 2 weeks, leaving them open to reprisals.

But even against these formidable odds, many Negroes have gone to the courthouse time and time again, determined to take the test until they pass. Some have tried as many as a dozen times...

Educational Activities

... Hattiesburg was a beehive of educational activity. In fact we had less violence and harassment than almost any other projects, especially those in the Southwest and the Delta, both areas with much larger Negro populations and therefore more intense fears among the whites.

The freedom schools were the most impressive part of the program. They were directed by Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Reese, Negro secondary school teachers from Detroit. The schools were established in six churches for an initial enrollment of 585 persons. (We had expected about 75).

The oldest student was an 85-year-old man who had taught himself to read, but wanted to learn more in order to take the registration test...

...The community center staff was small, but talented, and a varied program was developed -- day care for younger children in the morning, recreation for the older ones in the afternoon, and classes in first aid, sewing and literacy in the evening. Mary Sue Gellatly, white, of Portland, Ore., taught eight persons to read and write and another eight to teach literacy. Phyllis Cunningham, white, RN, of Chicago, got a medical care program going and taught, hygiene and first aid. Both plan to stay in Mississippi indefinitely. A library was set up next door to the office with homemade shelves and handwritten catalogue cards...

Registering Voters and Forming a Party

Voter registration was hot, dusty work. The less than 20 workers were divided into four teams working in three city areas and Palmers Crossing. In Palmers it was particularly difficult to keep records as there were no street names or house numbers. So the workers made their own map and their own street names. The main intersection became the corner of Freedom St. and Now Rd., and other streets were named after famous Negroes and civil rights workers. Three short roads in a corner of the settlement became, poignantly, Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman Sts...

...During the last few weeks of the summer, teams of four ventured into rural counties near Hattiesburg, where both fear among Negroes and harassment on the part of whites, were heavier.

An important part of the work of the voter registration workers was local organization of the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP). Any resident of Forrest County over 21 -- literate or illiterate -- was eligible to fill out a "freedom registration form," patterned after the official registration application, but much simpler, and thus become a member of the FDP. One of the purposes of freedom registration, was to disprove the Southern contention that Negroes don't register to vote simply because they don't want to.

The next step in the campaign was to elect delegates to the Democratic convention in Atlantic City with a procedure as closely parallel as possible to the procedure used by the MDP. We held four precinct meetings, advertised by legal notices in the newspaper and spot announcements on the one radio station which would accept them. These were followed by a county meeting, a caucus of all the delegations from the sixth congressional district and state convention.

The FDP meetings were very successful in Forrest County. The local people took over the leadership right away, which was one of the main purposes of the program. People like Mr. Long [John Gould] who had been interested observers of the political process for years were delighted at the opportunity to actually participate.

From the precinct meetings, local civic associations also grew, with a minimum of prodding from the voter registration workers. One of the FDP leaders also began to work on a Voters League for those Negroes who finally did get registered.

Violence Against Volunteers

...The... most serious incidents concerning volunteers were beatings. The first occurred on July 10 when the Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld of Cleveland, (a Ministers Project volunteer) and two white male college students were beaten while on their way to one of the churches where lunch was served after a morning of canvassing. They were attacked by two white men who had been following them in a pickup truck without license plates. Shouting "white nigger" and "nigger lover" they beat the rabbi and one of the students with an iron bar. The other student was kicked down an embankment, pummeled and kicked, and finally, his assailant shoved his canvassing notes into his mouth, shouting "eat this... nigger lover." All three were treated at a hospital and the rabbi was hospitalized over night.

For a city whose white population continually expresses its shock and righteous indignation at the "lawlessness" of New York City, Hattiesburg didn't do too well that day. White people watched the beating from their porches and front lawns, but no one called the police until other volunteers returned to the scene to look for the rabbi's glasses.

Both the police chief and the mayor issued strong statements, saying the assailants would be sought and prosecuted for "assault and battery with intent to kill," a felony. The FBI investigated and a week later, one of the assailants turned himself in. The two were charged with "assault and battery with intent to maim, also a felony, but the grand jury refused to indict them. The district attorney then charged them with simple assault and battery (a misdemeanor) and they each paid a \$500 fine. Each also received a suspended sentence of 90 days.

...The civil rights act, signed on July 2, brought little change in Hattiesburg. Some local Negroes tested the lunch counters and were served at Woolworth's and Kress's both of which immediately became the objects of Citizens' Council boycotts. (Mississippi's anti-boycott law is enforced only against civil rights groups.) Walgreens took the coward's way out and closed the lunch counter...

Source: Shaw, Terri. "Freedom Summer Recollections." Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive, The University of Southern Mississippi. <http://anna.lib.usm.edu/%7Eespol/crda/shaw/ts001.htm>

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/sources/ps_summer.html

Press

The New York Times, May 30, 1964

Mississippi is Gripped by Fear of Violence in Civil Rights Drive

Mississippi has assumed the air of a besieged fortress in the face of an impending civil rights campaign...

...Law-enforcement agencies have joined in a program of para-military preparations.

White residents are being urged to ignore civil rights demonstrations with the assurance that officials will deal firmly with any challenge to the state's racial codes and customs.

The Legislature has passed a series of bills aimed at defeating what many whites refer to as "the coming invasion..."

..."There's something badly wrong here," observed E. W. Steptoe, Sr., as he sat in the neat though unpainted living room of his tar-papered home on his 240-acre farm in Amite County, on the Louisiana state line.

"I don't know what the Negro could be doing to displease the white people," he continued. "Looks like they're trying to do everything to satisfy them."

"They're not asking for nothing out of reason -- just the vote," he said...

...The abundance of official steps taken to oppose the Freedom Summer campaign has failed to satisfy many white Mississippians. Their concern was apparent at a meeting this week of Americans for the Preservation of the White Race, held in the courtroom of the Rankin County Courthouse in Brandon.

The main speaker...was Shelby Brewer, a manufacturer of automobile tire boots. Mr. Brewer fingered a small black Bible as he told two jokes about Negroes. He then attacked President [Lyndon] Johnson, saying that, while the President had asked for \$125 million to fight Communism in South Vietnam, he had done nothing to fight Communism in the South....

..."He has encouraged Martin Luther King, the nigger general who has declared war on all white people, to continue his fight..."

...Both Mr. Brewer and Mr. [Arsene] Dick stressed nonviolence. However, Mr. Dick said, "A man today who hasn't got a gun in his house is a fool."

A grim-faced mechanic standing nearby broke in to say of Negroes, "We ought to get shed of all of 'em. We ought to shoot 'em all..."

...Mr. [Archie C.] Curtis was asked what he thought was behind the violence in southwestern Mississippi.

"They are trying to cower Negroes down so that they won't take part in demonstrations," he replied. "The colored people here are not free," he continued. "They don't feel free to go to public meetings at night..."

The New York Times, June 14, 1964

South Girds for Crisis

Massive Assault on Racial Barriers Planned for This Summer Creates Atmosphere of Tension

...Even the assurance of repressive law enforcement has failed to calm the fears of whites in some areas. Much of their anxiety results from rumor and misunderstanding. But it is nonetheless real.

The depth of this misunderstanding and apprehension is reflected in the reaction of many white Mississippians to the coming "Freedom Summer" operation. The project calls for a statewide program of voter registration drives, special academic training for Negro youths, adult citizenship classes, political action, a survey of the state's political and economic structure and a study of white attitudes...

...Probably the best that can be hoped for realistically in the Deep South's pockets of defiance...is a peaceful stalemate. There can be no substantial, lasting progress here so long as whites see signs of hope elsewhere that the nation will eventually tire of the civil rights controversy and leave them to resolve the issue in their own way, as was done [in 1877](#).

The Birmingham Post-Herald, August 7, 1964

5 Bullets in 3 Bodies

Study Shows, Shot From Front

FBI agents fanned out around Old Jolly farm today, questioning residents for clues to who killed three civil rights workers and buried them in a red dirt dam.

The FBI said it believed the three were victims of abduction and murder but steadfastly refused to confirm or deny widespread rumors of imminent arrests...

Private pathologists in Jackson identified the bodies of Andrew Goodman, 20, and Michael Schwerner, 24, both white New Yorkers. The third body is apparently their Negro companion, James Chaney, but sufficient scientific background on Chaney has not yet permitted the FBI to confirm the identity officially...

The Boston Globe, August 7, 1964

Editorial: Mississippi's Conscience

Some Mississippians who knew better mocked the search for the three missing civil rights workers, saying it was only a hoax. Now a nation horrified by mass racial violence in the North is stunned anew by the finding of the three bodies. This was cold-blooded vicious murder, the ultimate act of extremists...

...The next step must be the capture of the killers and their conviction by a jury -- in a state whose concept of proper justice in such cases has often been less than reassuring...

...It is hard to believe that the majority of the white community in Mississippi and its neighboring states are so monolithic that they are not torn by guilt.

The three were slain for helping Negroes make a reality of the right to vote. It was a lynching, in an atmosphere that only the people of Mississippi themselves can purge. The crime is on their conscience. They will have to live with it, and face the condemnation of an outraged world.

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/story/09_summer.html

Testimony of Rita L. Schwerner

1964

During the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 over a thousand white college students from the North traveled South to challenge racial segregation and the dis-enfranchisement of black voters. On June 21, 1964, at the start of the Freedom Summer, a young black Mississippian, James Chaney, and two whites from the North, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman, drove to Philadelphia, Mississippi, to look into the bombing of a black church. They never returned, and pleas to the Justice Department to take immediate action were met with coldness. Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner had been arrested by local police, then released. In a plan participated in by the sheriff and deputy sheriff of the county, they were then followed by a group of white men who blockaded their car, took them to a deserted farm, beat them with chains, shot them to death, and buried their bodies. Not until forty-four days after their arrest were the bodies of the three young men found. Schwerner's wife, Rita, made this statement¹ before the discovery of the three bodies.

From *Voices of A People's History*, edited by Zinn and Arnove



I am 22 years old and the wife of Michael H. Schwerner, one of the three civil rights workers who have been missing in or near Philadelphia, Mississippi, since June 21, 1964. Michael and I came to Mississippi on about January 16 this year as field staff workers for the Congress of Racial Equality, assigned to the Council of Federated Organizations. On about January 21 we went to Meridian, Mississippi, with the purpose of establishing a community center in that city which would provide such services which the state and local authorities would not provide for Negro citizens. From that time until June 21, 1964, we worked continually in and around the area of Meridian and other counties in the eastern half of the Fourth Congressional District. To my knowledge, the only times that Michael left the state in those six and a half months were for a four-day conference in New Orleans in February, a one-day trip the two of us took to New York in March, and the Oxford orientation session in Oxford, Ohio, immediately prior to his disappearance. The only additional time that I was out of the state was for a ten-day visit to New York City from May 24 to June 2.

Shortly after we arrived in Meridian in January, we met Mr. James E. Chaney, a 21-year-old Negro man who worked with us and eventually became part of the Congress of Racial Equality staff. From about the middle of February to the end of March, James was out of Meridian, working first in Canton and then, for a short time, in Greenwood. At the end of March, he returned to Meridian to work with us.

In the first few weeks that Michael and I were in Meridian, we had to change our place of residence some three or four times, because the Negro families who took us in received intimidating phone calls and became afraid to house us. In February we were able to rent a house from a Negro, Mr. Albert Jones, which he rented from a white woman, Mrs. Roy Cunningham. We lived in that house until the beginning of June, when Mrs. Cunningham insisted that we leave. Prior to our eviction, we had had our rent raised by her.

In the first few weeks that we were in Meridian, we received no threats, nor did we suffer harassment at the hands of the local authorities. However, as people came to know us better, to recognize us, and to know what we were attempting to do, the tension increased. On several occasions my husband was picked up by the local police and taken to the police station, where he was questioned as to our activities, asked to show proof of ownership of our car, etc. They never did pick me up for questioning.



As we achieved some success in establishing the community center, the threats and intimidation began to increase. By May we received so many phone calls at late hours of the night that in order to get some sleep we were forced to remove our telephone receiver before going to bed. We finally resolved this problem by obtaining an unpublished telephone number when we moved to our new apartment after being evicted. The phone calls at the office during the day and evenings continued. They were of several forms. Some were extremely unpleasant in that when I picked up the phone the party at the other end of the line would use extremely offensive language towards me. Other calls we received were threats of violence, such as

someone calling and telling me that he was planning to kill my husband, or that my husband was already dead. Michael received anonymous calls telling him that they intended to kill me or that I was already dead.

A man by the name of Mr. Oliver, who runs an electrical shop a few doors down the block from our office, used abusive language directed towards me and my husband continually. He constantly referred to my husband as "jew-boy" and "nigger-lover." I have been told by workers in Meridian that on at least one occasion in the last month, several of them were threatened by Mr. Oliver with an axe handle.

At the end of April, my husband was arrested on two counts of blocking a crosswalk. He was held in the Meridian City Jail from Monday until after his trial on Wednesday. When he was released, he told me that he had narrowly escaped a beating. The police officer who took him to his cell on Monday afternoon called one of the other prisoners out of the cell. My husband could not hear what the police officer said to the other prisoner, but when that man returned to the cell he took Michael aside and told him that he didn't know who he, my husband, was, or what he did, but that he better keep quiet about it while in the jail, because the police officer had said that if this prisoner got the others to beat Michael, no action would be taken by the police.

On Friday, April 18, my husband and I were visiting Reverend R. S. Porter, when he received word that a cross was burning in front of his church. We arrived at the First Union Baptist Church as the fire department was extinguishing the flames, but the cross was still smoldering. In the beginning of June, a large group of people were arrested in Meridian when they attempted to form a picket line in front of three of the five-and-ten-cent stores. They were charged with obstructing traffic. My husband went down to the police station to find out the charges on the arrested persons. Officer Kirkland, whom I believe was the desk sergeant that day, threatened my husband. From what Michael told me, his words were something like this, "If you get anymore of these damn kids arrested, Schwerner, I'm going to get you, and that's a promise." . . .

Michael started making trips into Neshoba County in February and, in all, made about 30 such expeditions. Every time he went into that county to work, I remained in the office in Meridian to receive his phone calls when he checked in, or in the event that anything went wrong and he needed to contact someone. The only times that I did not serve in that capacity were the few trips he made into Neshoba County when I was out of the state. Because the county was known to be so dangerous, I insisted on assuming that job myself, out of obvious concern for my husband's safety. When James Chaney returned to Meridian at the end of March, the two of them usually traveled to Neshoba together, although there were one or two occasions when one of them went alone or with another person. Neshoba County has had a reputation for being so volatile that it has been nicknamed "Bloody Neshoba," and many experienced civil rights workers, for very good reason, declined to work in that territory.

My husband believed very strongly in security precautions, such as phoning in one's whereabouts, and on several occasions I heard him reprimand others who did not call in to the office when they were supposed to. I remember only one incident prior to his disappearance when Michael was two hours late returning from Neshoba County and did not call to tell me why. I was frantic and at the point of calling the jails, but refrained because I knew that if he had not been picked up, this would inform the authorities of his whereabouts and make the situation far graver. When he and James returned that particular evening, they said that they had been detained in talking with a contact who had no telephone, and that they were fearful of stopping on the road to call in and advise me of their delay. . . .

On one or more occasions, James told me that the car had been followed in Neshoba County by white persons in cars with the license plates either covered or removed. On one occasion he said he had been followed by an official car, either that of police or sheriff's department, but I don't know which.

On June 21, 1964, Michael and James made another trip to Philadelphia, this time accompanied by Andrew Goodman, one of the volunteer COFO² summer workers. I was in Oxford, Ohio, at the time, but before my husband left Oxford at 3 a.m., Saturday, June 20, he told me of his intention to go on Sunday to

Philadelphia to investigate the burning of the Mt. Zion Church in the Longdale community. The three men never returned to Meridian, nor did they call in their whereabouts. All knowledge I have of my husband's habits and training indicates that, given the opportunity, he certainly would have called in. It is foolish to assert that he would have turned down the opportunity to do so. The information from officials is vague and contradictory, and all knowledge of the situation in Neshoba County would lead me to believe that the three men have been murdered.



On June 25, at about 3 p.m., I went to the State Capitol building in Jackson with John Robert Zellner, a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee field secretary, and Reverend Edwin King, the Tougaloo College chaplain. I attempted to see Governor [Paul B.J Johnson Jr.] to ask for his promise of help in the search for the three men. We were told by Senator Barbour that the governor was out for the afternoon and could not be contacted. He was extremely rude in his treatment of me. We then walked over to the Governor's Mansion, arriving just as Governor Johnson walked up the steps with Governor [George] Wallace of Alabama. We followed them up the steps and Mr. Zellner introduced himself by name to Governor Johnson and they shook hands. Mr. Zellner then turned towards me and introduced me as the wife of Michael Schwerner, one of the three missing men. He said that I would like to speak for a moment with the Mississippi governor. The moment Johnson heard who I was, he turned and bolted for the door of the Mansion. The door was locked behind him and a group of Mississippi highway patrolmen surrounded

the three of us. An officer with the name plate "Harper" refused to allow us to request an appointment with the governor. Harper said that he would not convey our request to Johnson.

On June 26, 1964, when I went to Neshoba County to speak with Sheriff [Lawrence] Rainey, the car which I was in was followed by a blue, late-model pick-up truck without license plates. There were two white men in the truck. At one point the truck blocked us off in front and a white, late-model car blocked us from behind. We turned our automobile around and were able to get by the white car; the pick-up truck followed us awhile farther. We reported this to the FBI agents who were working in Philadelphia on the investigation. After I spoke with Sheriff Rainey, who denied knowledge of the circumstances of the disappearance of the three men, we obtained permission from Rainey and the FBI to follow the sheriff's car to the garage where the station wagon (which the men had driven on June 21) was being kept, in order that I could see it. Several young white men, who I believe were workers at the garage, laughed and made screams which are usually referred to as rebel yells when they realized who I was. When we left the garage the sheriff's car was close behind ours, and the blue pick-up truck once more followed after us to the outskirts of town, with the sheriff making no attempt to stop it or question the occupants about the lack of license plates.

Footnotes

1 Testimony of Rita L. Schwerner (1964). In *Mississippi Black Paper: Fifty-Seven Negro and White Citizens' Testimony of Police Brutality, the Breakdown of Law and Order and the Corruption of Justice in Mississippi* (New York Random House, 1965), pp. 59-60,61, 62-63.

2 The Council of Federated Organizations

<http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/schwernertestimony.html>

'I question America': Remembering Fannie Lou Hamer's challenge to white supremacy

This week marks 50 years since Fannie Lou Hamer, a leader of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), delivered a historic speech to the credentials committee of the Democratic National Convention about voter suppression and racist law enforcement violence -- themes that are making headlines again today.

The MFDP was organized in 1964 during the civil rights movement by African Americans in Mississippi with help from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Council of Federated Organizations. It sought to challenge the legitimacy of what was then the segregationist Mississippi Democratic Party.

In August of 1964, more than 60 MFDP members traveled by bus to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey with the aim of unseating the official, all-white Mississippi delegation by challenging the legality of the segregated delegate election process, which violated party rules and federal law.

The Democratic Party referred the MFDP's challenge to the convention's Credentials Committee, which televised the Aug. 22 proceedings. Fearing that an MFDP victory would result in his losing Southern support to Republican opponent Barry Goldwater, President Lyndon Johnson preempted Hamer's televised testimony with a press conference. But later that night, the major news networks broadcast the former sharecropper's shocking story of the racist brutality she suffered simply for registering to vote and encouraging other black citizens to do likewise.

The speech garnered widespread support for the MFDP, though in the end the party's effort to be seated at the convention failed. Johnson, with the help of Vice President Hubert Humphrey and party leader Walter Mondale, offered a deal in which the national Democratic Party would give the MFDP two at-large seats, allowing them to watch the floor proceedings but not take part. The MFDP refused.

"We didn't come all this way for no two seats when all of us is tired," Hamer famously said.

While the MFDP didn't succeed in unseating the Mississippi delegates, it did draw attention to white supremacist violence and black disenfranchisement in the South. That in turn helped secure the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which led to a dramatic increase in the number of registered black voters in Mississippi and other Southern states.

But today, gains made by African Americans as a result of the Voting Rights Act are in jeopardy following last year's U.S. Supreme Court *Shelby County v. Holder* decision that struck down a key provision of the law and weakened federal oversight in jurisdictions with a history of discrimination, most of them in the South. Following the decision, [legislatures from North Carolina to Mississippi](#) made changes to election laws and procedures that make it more difficult for blacks and other minorities to vote.

Hamer also drew attention to racist brutality by law enforcement, another issue in the headlines again today because of the recent deadly police shooting of unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in Ferguson,

Missouri -- a place that in its [segregation, poverty, and lack of black political representation](#) is not completely unlike the Mississippi of Hamer's time.

Though law enforcement officers did not kill Hamer, they came close: On June 9, 1963, she was traveling home to Mississippi on a bus with fellow activists who had attended a voter registration workshop in South Carolina when they were arrested on bogus charges. Hamer was brutally beaten in jail by two other black prisoners using a blackjack under orders from a Mississippi Highway Patrol officer, leaving her with a damaged kidney and eye.

"All of this on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens," Hamer told the Credentials Committee. "And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America."

Though the MFDP lost its bid to be seated in 1964, four years later Hamer became the first African American since Reconstruction and the first woman ever to serve as an official Mississippi delegate to the Democratic National Convention, where she spoke out against the Vietnam War. She continued to be active in the civil rights movement until her death from heart failure in 1977 at the age of 59. Her tombstone features one of her famous quotes: "I am sick and tired of being sick and tired."

Marking the 50th anniversary of Hamer's historic testimony, we share the audio of her speech and the full transcription:

Mr. Chairman, and to the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 626 East Lafayette Street, Ruleville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Sen. James O. Eastland, and Sen. Stennis.

It was the 31st of August in 1962 that 18 of us traveled 26 miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to become first-class citizens.

We was met in Indianola by policemen, highway patrolmen, and they only allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. After we had taken this test and started back to Ruleville, we was held up by the city police and the state highway patrolmen and carried back to Indianola where the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color.

After we paid the fine among us, we continued on to Ruleville, and Rev. Jeff Sunny carried me four miles in the rural area where I had worked as a timekeeper and sharecropper for 18 years. I was met there by my children, who told me that the plantation owner was angry because I had gone down to try to register.

After they told me, my husband came, and said the plantation owner was raising Cain because I had tried to register. Before he quit talking the plantation owner came and said, "Fannie Lou, do you know -- did Pap tell you what I said?"

And I said, "Yes, sir."

He said, "Well I mean that." He said, "If you don't go down and withdraw your registration, you will have to leave." Said, "Then if you go down and withdraw," said, "you still might have to go because we are not ready for that in Mississippi."

And I addressed him and told him and said, "I didn't try to register for you. I tried to register for myself."

I had to leave that same night.

On the 10th of September 1962, 16 bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. That same night two girls were shot in Ruleville, Mississippi. Also Mr. Joe McDonald's house was shot in.

And June the 9th, 1963, I had attended a voter registration workshop, was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailway bus. When we got to Winona, Mississippi, which is Montgomery County, four of the people got off to use the washroom, and two of the people -- to use the restaurant -- two of the people wanted to use the washroom.

The four people that had gone in to use the restaurant was ordered out. During this time I was on the bus. But when I looked through the window and saw they had rushed out I got off of the bus to see what had happened. And one of the ladies said, "It was a state highway patrolman and a chief of police ordered us out."

I got back on the bus and one of the persons had used the washroom got back on the bus, too.

As soon as I was seated on the bus, I saw when they began to get the five people in a highway patrolman's car. I stepped off of the bus to see what was happening and somebody screamed from the car that the five workers was in and said, "Get that one there." When I went to get in the car, when the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.

I was carried to the county jail and put in the booking room. They left some of the people in the booking room and began to place us in cells. I was placed in a cell with a young woman called Miss Ivesta Simpson. After I was placed in the cell I began to hear sounds of licks and screams, I could hear the sounds of licks and horrible screams. And I could hear somebody say, "Can you say, 'yes, sir,' nigger? Can you say 'yes, sir?'"

And they would say other horrible names.

She would say, "Yes, I can say 'yes, sir.'"

"So, well, say it."

She said, "I don't know you well enough."

They beat her, I don't know how long. And after a while she began to pray, and asked God to have mercy on those people.

And it wasn't too long before three white men came to my cell. One of these men was a state highway patrolman and he asked me where I was from. I told him Ruleville and he said, "We are going to check this."

They left my cell and it wasn't too long before they came back. He said, "You are from Ruleville all right," and he used a curse word. And he said, "We are going to make you wish you was dead."

I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The state highway patrolman ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack.

The first Negro prisoner ordered me, by orders from the state highway patrolman, for me to lay down on a bunk bed on my face.

I laid on my face and the first Negro began to beat. I was beat by the first Negro until he was exhausted. I was holding my hands behind me at that time on my left side, because I suffered from polio when I was six years old.

After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the State Highway Patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack.

The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro who had beat me to sit on my feet -- to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush.

One white man -- my dress had worked up high -- he walked over and pulled my dress -- I pulled my dress down and he pulled my dress back up.

I was in jail when Medgar Evers was murdered.

All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?

Thank you.

<http://www.southernstudies.org/2014/08/i-question-america-remembering-fannie-lou-hamers-c.html>

What does Mississippi Have to Do With Harlem?

Malcolm X (Fall 1964)

In fall 1964, after the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's delegates had been denied seats at the [Democratic National Convention](#) in Atlantic City, [Malcolm X](#) delivered this speech.

...How can you and I be looked upon as men, with black women being beaten, and nothing being done about it? Black children and black babies being beaten, and nothing being done about it? No, we don't deserve to be recognized and respected as men, as long as our women can be brutalized... and nothing can be done about it except we sit around singing "We Shall Overcome."

...If they don't want to deal with the Freedom Democratic Party, then we'll give them something else to deal with. If they don't want to deal with the Student Nonviolent Committee, then we have to give them an alternative. Never stick someone out there without an alternative. We waste our time. Give them this or give them that. Give them the choice between this or that...

...We will never communicate talking one language and he's talking another language. He's talking the language of violence...Let's learn his language. If his language is with a shotgun, get a shotgun. If he only understands the language of a rifle, get a rifle. If he only understands the language of a rope, get a rope. But don't waste time talking the wrong language to a man, if you want to really communicate with him. Speak his language. And there's nothing wrong with that. If something was wrong with that language, the Federal government would have stopped the cracker from speaking it to you and me.

I might say, secondly, some people wonder well, what does Mississippi have to do with Harlem?... America is Mississippi. There's no such thing as a Mason-Dixon line. It's America. There's no such thing as the South. It's America. If one room in your house is dirty, you've got a dirty house. If the closet is dirty, you've got a dirty house. Don't say that that room is dirty but the rest of my house is clean. You're over the whole house. You have authority over the whole house. The entire house is under your jurisdiction. And the mistake that you and I make is letting these northern crackers shift the weight to these southern crackers.

Every senator from a state where our people are deprived of the right to vote, they're in Washington, D.C. illegally...

...Out of 36 [Congressional] committees that govern the foreign and domestic direction of this country, 23 are in the hands of southern racists. And the reason they're in the hands of southern racists is because the areas from which they come the black man is deprived of his right to vote. If we had the ballot in that area, those racists would not be in Washington, D.C. There'd be some black faces there. There'd be some brown and some yellow and some red faces there. there'd be some faces other than those cracker faces that are there right now. So what happens in Mississippi and the south has a direct bearing on what happens to you and me here in Harlem.

And likewise, out of the Democratic party, which black people supported -- recently, I think, something like 97 percent -- all of these crackers -- and that's what they are, crackers -- they belong to the Democratic

party. That's the party they belong to. Same one you belong to. Same one you support. Same one you say is going to get you this, and get you that.

Why, the base of the Democratic party is in the South. The foundation of its authority is in the South. The head of the Democratic party is sitting in the White House. He could have gotten Mrs. Hamer in Atlantic City. He could have opened up his mouth and had her seated. Hubert Humphrey could have opened his mouth and had her seated. Wagner, the mayor, right here, could have opened up his mouth, and used his weight, and had her seated. Don't be talking about some crackers down in Mississippi, in Alabama, in Georgia. All of them are playing the same game. Lyndon B. Johnson is the head of the cracker party...

...These northern crackers are in cahoots with these southern crackers. Only these northern crackers smile in your face, and show you their teeth, then they stick the knife in your back when you turn around...

Wagner is a Democrat. He belongs to the same party as Eastland. Johnson is a Democrat. He belongs to the same party as Eastland. Now, Wagner was in Atlantic City... Lyndon B. Johnson was in Atlantic City. Hubert Humphrey was in Atlantic City. The crackers that you voted for were in Atlantic City. What did they do for you when you wanted to sit down? They were quiet. They were silent. They said don't rock the boat...

As Mrs. Hamer pointed out, the brothers and the sisters in Mississippi are being beaten and killed for no reason other than they want to be treated as first-class citizens. There's only one way to be a first-class citizen. There's only one way to be a first-class citizen. There's only one way to be independent. There's only one way to be free. It's not something that someone gives to you. It's something that you take... If you can't take it you don't deserve it. Nobody can give it to you...

We obey the law... But at the same time, at any moment that you and I are involved in any kind of action that is legal, that is in accord with our civil rights, in accord with the courts of this land, in accord with the Constitution, when all of these things are on our side and we still can't get it...

We have to let the people in Mississippi as well as New York and elsewhere know, that freedom comes to us either by ballot, or by bullet. That's the only way freedom is gotten. Freedom is gotten by ballot, or bullet. These are the only two avenues, the only two roads, the only two methods or means, either ballot or bullet. When you know that, then you are careful how you use the word freedom...

They've always said that I'm anti-white. I'm for anybody who's for freedom. I'm for anybody who's for freedom. I'm for anybody who's for justice. I'm for anybody who's for equality. I'm not for anybody who tells me to sit around and wait for mine. I'm not for anybody who tells me to turn the other cheek when a cracker is busting up my jaw. I'm not for anybody who tells black people to be nonviolent while nobody is telling white people to be nonviolent...

Source: Malcolm X, speech at Harlem Rally, 1964.

Audio file available at: <http://www.brothermalcolm.net/mxwords/whathesaidarchive.html>

http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesonthepize/sources/ps_noi.html

“I Didn’t Know Anything About Voting:” Fannie Lou Hamer On The Mississippi Voter Registration Campaign

Fannie Lou Hamer, the last of 20 children and a Mississippi tenant farmer, leapt to national prominence during the 1964 Democratic National Convention, when she eloquently challenged Mississippi’s segregated Democratic primary on national television. In 1962, she had become a leader of the African-American voting rights movement in Mississippi that culminated in 1964’s Freedom Summer. Forced off her land when her landlord demanded that she take her name off the voter registration list, Hamer was repeatedly jailed and beaten during her voting rights activities. “The only thing they could do to me was kill me,” Hamer said, “and it seemed like they’d been trying to do that a little bit at a time ever since I could remember.”

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HAMER: Well, I didn’t know anything about voting; I didn’t know anything about registering to vote. One night I went to the church. They had a mass meeting. And I went to the church, and they talked about how it was our right, that we could register and vote. They were talking about we could vote out people that we didn’t want in office, we thought that wasn’t right, that we could vote them out. That sounded interesting enough to me that I wanted to try it. I had never heard, until 1962, that black people could register and vote. . . .

Well, when I first tried to register it was in Indianola. I went to Indianola on the thirty-first of August in 1962; that was to try to register. When we got there—there was eighteen of us went that day—so when we got there, there were people there with guns and just a lot of strange-looking people to us. We went on in the circuit clerk’s office, and he asked us what did we want; and we told him what we wanted. We wanted to try to register. He told us that all of us would have to get out of there except two. So I was one of the two persons that remained inside, to try to register, [with] another young man named Mr. Ernest Davis. We stayed in to take the literacy test. So the registrar gave me the sixteenth section of the Constitution of Mississippi. He pointed it out in the book and told me to look at it and then copy it down just like I saw it in the book: Put a period where a period was supposed to be, a comma and all of that. After I copied it down he told me right below that to give a real reasonable interpretation then, interpret what I had read. That was impossible. I had tried to give it, but I didn’t even know what it meant, much less to interpret it. . . .

Well, when we got back I went on out to where I had been staying for eighteen years, and the landowner had talked to my husband and told him I had to leave the place. My little girl, the child that I raised, met me and told me that the landowner was mad and I might have to leave. So during the time that my husband was talking about it, I was back in the house. The landowner drove up and asked him had I made it back. He [my husband] told him I had. I got up and walked out on the porch, and he [told] me did Pap tell me what he said. I told him, “He did.” He said, “Well, I mean that, you’ll have to go down and withdraw your registration, or you’ll have to leave this place.” I didn’t call myself saying nothing smart, but I couldn’t understand it. I answered the only way I could and told him that I didn’t go down there to register for him; I went down there to register for myself. This seemed like it made him madder when I told him that.

Source: Interviewed by Neil McMillen, 4/14/72 and 1/25/73
Courtesy of Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive McCain Library and Archive, University of Southern Mississippi

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