8. Showdown

8.1. Setting the Stage

Assessments of SNCC's 1964 Summer Project—known as 'Freedom Summer'—have been as divergent as its initiators' opinions. Literature on it, historian Charles Payne observed, far exceeds that "on the three years of organizing that preceded it," partly because it "involved large numbers of white people." But also because its story, as Moses stated in 1991, is "about the coming together of a number [of] historical forces" in which "no-one comes out undamaged," including SNCC, COFO, the Democratic Party, and Moses himself. Yet "somehow [in] this process state-sponsored racism gets rooted out."[1]

Judging the Project as a failure or success therefore depends on whether its national, internal, or local impacts are investigated. Historiography treats it similarly to the movement in general. In the 1960-1970s its national effect was emphasized as the volunteers' stories found a widespread market. In 1983 historian Clayborne Carson chronicled its impact on the movement's shift to Black Power and SNCC's decline. Studies by John Dittmer (1994) and Charles Payne (1995) stressed the Project's positive influence on black Mississippians. Participants generally share this view. If measured in "numbers of people touched by the civil rights movement in Mississippi," Julian Bond affirmed, "it can't be anything but a success."[2]

Yet no consensus has emerged. Historian David Garrow rules the Project a "strategic blunder," while sociologist Doug McAdam maintains that it represented a "highwater mark for the New Left as a whole." It can also be argued that its effect upon SNCC, and even its consequences in Mississippi, were less significant than how the Project changed America. Freedom Summer made the introduction of voting legislation all but inevitable, and black enfranchisement changed the face of American politics. The Project deeply influenced the future generation of American leadership, many of whom participated as volunteers, among them Mario Savio, Harold Ickes, and Joe Lieberman. The volunteers' experiences aided the emergence of new social movements, like the Berkeley Free Speech and the anti-war and women's movements. Historian and Freedom Summer participant Staughton Lynd called the Summer "a tragedy in the classical Greek sense, wherein the tragic flaw in a good thing produces a bad thing." Moses likewise saw it "as something good" that "[cut] both ways all the time."[3]

Like other great turning-points in the civil rights movement—the Freedom Rides, McComb, Birmingham—Freedom Summer has been mythologized. It came to symbolize the essence of the Southern-based civil rights movement. This perpetuated its image of an interracial movement rooted in coalition-building and local empowerment that refused to be stopped despite violence. Because it was predominantly his brainchild, the Project and Moses have become synonymous. "However participatory… SNCC was," one worker noted in 2009, "he was nevertheless the real leader of Freedom Summer." Aaron Henry agreed: "Moses was the real architect of the program. We all contributed ideas, but whenever he felt strongly about a particular suggestion, we would heed his advice, and usually it proved to be solid." The Project represented the most challenging, and final, test of his organizational leadership approach. For the summer's duration he succeeded in uniting national and local black leadership, and northern white

[1] Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 301; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Taylor Branch, 15 February 1991, Box 108, Folder 3, Taylor Branch Papers.

[2] Dittmer, *Local People*, 264; Julian Bond, interview by John Britton, January 22, 1968, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Howard University.

[3] David Garrow, lecture, (Leiden University, Leiden, the Netherlands, May 1, 2007); Doug McAdam, "Let It Shine, Let It Shine, Let It Shine," and Staughton Lynd, "Freedom Summer: A Tragedy, Not a Melodrama," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 484-491; Bell Gale Chevigny, "The Fruits of Freedom Summer," *The Nation*, August 8-15, 1994; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Joe Sinsheimer, December 5, 1984, Taylor Branch Papers.

liberals, around the goal of prioritizing ending racial violence and democratizing the South. Ultimately, however, this broad-based coalition split apart at the Democratic National Convention in August.[4]

Freedom Summer represented a shift in SNCC's modus operandi: although it worked towards local development it now simultaneously sought national attention 'SCLC-style.' As Moses put it, the volunteers "brought the rest of the country down with them for a look and we knew Mississippi couldn't stand a hard look." That summer, *The Student Voice* noted, SNCC had more staff in Mississippi "than other rights groups have throughout the South." Only SNCC, it can be argued, was capable of such an effort: its past slow organizing made its ambitious 1964 activities possible. "This is what social change is about," Howard Zinn explained in 1965, "You move on to a new level and the minute you appear, the forces that defend the old situation…react violently. When you've established yourself there, they adapt to this, there's a period of relative peace and then you move an inch beyond that." With inventive projects like Freedom Schools, Community Centers, and its own political party, spearheaded by hundreds of white volunteers, the SNCC-led project represented, to quote Martin Luther King, "one of the most creative attempts I had seen to radically change the oppressive life of the Negro" in the history of the civil rights movement.[5]

White Mississippians' responses underscored the Project's audacity. According to *Newsweek* they acted "as though Armageddon were just around the corner." During the spring cross burnings, bombings, and beatings reached record numbers. The KKK and new white supremacist organizations, like the Association for the Preservation of the White Race, mushroomed. In February one KKK-division from Natchez, the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi, formed a state-wide organization and adopted a four-stage retaliation plan, with the final stage labeled "Extermination." The FBI considered them "the most furtive, vicious, and close-mouthed of the Klans." Its Imperial Wizard, Samuel Bowers, urged its members—estimated at 6,000 by summer—to form "swift and extremely violent" covert groups which could instantly "destroy and disrupt [our enemy's] leadership."[6]

Local authorities, many of whom had close ties to the White Citizens Councils, the KKK, and the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission,[7] prepared for the "expected invasion" by reaching for the tools of repression. Jackson Mayor Allen Thompson even bought a twelve-man tank "with shotguns, tear-gas guns, and a sub-machine gun." The State Legislature allowed other cities to use 'Allen's Army.' It also gave the highway patrol "full power in civil disorders," and permitted the Governor to deploy it as he saw fit, with or without local authorities' requests. Even the conservative *Delta-Democrat Times* questioned whether a "private army…used at the governor's own discretion" was "a healthy kind of temptation."[8]

---

[4] Paul Lauter, email interview by author, April 13, 2009; Henry and Curry, *Aaron Henry*, 164.

[5] "Progress Report I: Summer Project," in *The Student Voice* 5, no. 16 (July 15, 1964): 3-4, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 169-170; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 158; Carson, ed., *The Autobiography of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, 249; Howard Zinn, interview, November 11, 1965, transcript, Box 3, Folder 10, Howard Zinn Papers.

[6] Harold H. Martin and Kenneth Fairly, "We Got Nothing to Hide," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 30, 1965, 27-33, Box 4, Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 64-66; Dittmer, *Local People*, 215-217.

[7] One SNCC document that researched the connections of the state legislature with the WCC and MSSC found that at least 10 of the 53 members of the Senate were WCC-members and in the House at least 19 out of 122. WCC- and MSSC-members also chaired several state commissions, including the Rules Committee, the Oil and Gas Committees of the Senate, the Fees and Salaries, Finance, Forestry, and Corporations Commissions, and the Labor, County Affairs, Federal Relations, Public Utilities, Education, and Insurance Committees of the House. The President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House automatically belonged to the MSSC too. (Untitled SNCC-report, Spring 1964, Box 2, Folder 6, Howard Zinn Papers)

[8] "Mississippi: Allen's Army," *Newsweek*, February 24, 1964, see File #0031, Reel 10, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, SNCC Papers; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 161-163; "Mississippi Prepares for Summer Project," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 14 (June 9, 1964): 1-2, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 159-160; COFO, "Report on new Mississippi laws," June 2, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; "1964 new Mississippi laws," report, no date, File #0788, Reel 4, Burke Marshall Records.

National reactions to the Project were generally negative. Opinion polls showed that 65% of Americans "opposed the trek of Northern students to Mississippi." The White House was appalled. It considered the COFO-workers a "nuisance," because it well understood that their escalation plans meant a possible reversal of its carefully staked-out position of neutrality. As a "worried Washington official" complained to *The Louisville Times*, COFO-workers "would like to be killed. They want the Federal Government to occupy the state." Moreover, with the imminent passage of the new Civil Rights Act, Mississippi was already explosive. "[T]here's going to be the damnedest shootings," President Lyndon Johnson privately grumbled, because "[COFO's] sending them in by buses in the hundreds." He nonetheless refused to talk with Mississippi Governor Paul Johnson for fear of "talk about my trading out."[9]

Despite his grumbles, President Johnson knew that the federal government was facing a very serious situation. After Burke Marshall reported on the increased activity of the KKK following an early June trip to the state, Robert F. Kennedy warned him repeatedly that "the situation in Mississippi [is] very dangerous." FBI liaison officer to the CIA Cartha DeLoach documented that Johnson "was particularly concerned over reports that law enforcement officials have either participated in or tolerated acts of terrorism." At the Justice Department's request, the President urged the FBI to increase its investigations of "fundamentally lawless activities" in Mississippi; Kennedy even asked the FBI to utilize its techniques for "infiltration of Communist groups" in order to prevent bloodshed.[10]

The FBI complied, but mainly to investigate the COFO-workers instead. Its reasons were twofold. First, the FBI was deeply concerned with its image. When CBS News for instance aired a clip of Stokely Carmichael criticizing the FBI, its agents instantly investigated him with the aim of discrediting him. Likewise, when Moses noted in a July press conference that the KKK possessed automatic firearms and hand-grenades, it spent considerable time uncovering the source of his information and appeared less interested in verifying the truth of his claims. J. Edgar Hoover even accused Burke Marshall and the Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) Staff Director Howard Rogerson of distributing FBI "information to unauthorized persons." Marshall denied it, although he privately admitted that "the Department had received information indicating that COFO…had undoubtedly been furnished information." This again suggests that the relationship between federal officials and COFO was closer than hitherto acknowledged.[11]

Second, the FBI targeted COFO because of its alleged communist associations. It concluded in June that it had found "no indication…that COFO is operating as a communist front organization," and that of the 2,000 (potential) volunteers only a handful "had some association with subversive movements or their parents have." It nonetheless continued to investigate individuals "in policy-making and leadership capacities," as well as scrutinize "any publications…prepared by COFO."[12]

Many white Southerners were convinced that Communists were guiding COFO. Indeed, according to historian Jeff Woods, "[d]uring the summer of 1964, the southern red scare reached its most frantic and

---

[9] Rothshild, *Northern Volunteers and the Southern 'Freedom Summers,'* 35; "Rights Fight Heading for a Bitter Summer," *Louisville Times*, April 29, 1964; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 159; Dittmer, *Local People*, 238-239; Beschloss, ed. *Taking Charge*, 312-313, 420-421.

[10] Robert F. Kennedy to Lyndon B. Johnson, memorandum, June 5, 1964, and Lee C. White to Lyndon B. Johnson, memorandum, April 8, 1964, Files #00085-00087 and #00082-00083, Reel 7, Part I, White House Central Files, Papers Lyndon Johnson; Cartha DeLoach to J. Edgar Hoover, letter, June 8, 1964, Box 101, David Garrow Freedom of Information Act Collection, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 161-163.

[11] O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 178-179; Report SAC Albany, July 8 1964, and M.A. Jones to C. DeLoach, memorandum, July 8, 1964, and SAC New Orleans to J. Edgar Hoover, memorandum, July 31, 1964, and Hoover to Burke Marshall and Howard Rogerson, memoranda July 2 and 13, 1964, and A. Rosen to Mr. Belmont, memoranda, July 8 and 10, 1964, and Hoover to W.C. Sullivan and to SAC Jackson, memoranda, November 24 and 25, 1964, and SAC Jackson to Hoover, memorandum, October 28, 1964, Box 101, Folder 62-109384, David Garrow Freedom of Information Act Collection.

[12] SAC New Orleans, memorandum, June 23, 1964, and Hoover to SAC New Orleans, memorandum, November 25, 1964, and W.C. Sullivan, memorandum, November 24, 1964, Box 101, Folder 62-10938, David Garrow Freedom of Information Act Collection.

reckless point." On July 22 Senator James Eastland even tried to convince the US Senate of "communist infiltration into the so-called civil rights movement" by citing countless examples of 'suspect' Freedom Summer participants. The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, which privately characterized SNCC as a "nappy crew of un-Americans," gave him the list after Governor Paul Johnson had authorized it to bug Freedom Houses. Although SNCC-workers found such accusations "faintly amusing," Hollis Watkins said that they recognized that many local blacks "didn't have no understanding of what communism was," and that the allegations accordingly could "frighten black people away."[13]

As much as he had pushed hard for its acceptance, Moses faced the Project with some foreboding. He was convinced that its achievements could only be limited. "We may not break Mississippi," he told *The Detroit Free Press*, "But we will dent it." In private he sounded less confident. During a speech in April he candidly admitted his concerns: "[N]obody really knows what might happen…we're back in that same kind of dilemma [of] victims and executioners [but] when you come to deal with it personally, it still rests very heavy." By June he was so tense that several workers recorded how little he smiled. Due to his role in the Project's acceptance, he felt personally responsible for its outcome. Moreover, Freedom Summer brought the added weight of being, in effect, a national movement leader.[14]

The Project changed the pattern of Moses' daily activities from February through the Project's inception in June[15]. He spent more time on bureaucratic dealings, like networking and making arrangements with outside groups. Above all, he sought ways to reduce the Summer Project's dangers. With lawyers from Detroit he "formulate[d] a plan to end the blockade imposed against out-of-state lawyers practicing" in Mississippi. He met representatives of lawyers' associations in Washington in order to ensure that the Project would have access to sufficient legal representation, the few cooperating local attorneys already being overwhelmed. A SNCC-report highlighted the problem: "[O]ur entire legal aid picture is one of confusion. Trial dates go by unremembered, cases are argued with little or no preparation, and grossly unconstitutional situations are allowed to continue without challenge." Several organizations pledged their aid, including the NAACP's Legal Defense and Education Fund (or "Inc. Fund"), the CORE-affiliated Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee (LCDC), the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), and the left-leaning National Lawyers' Guild (NLG).[16]

---

[13] Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 147, 154, 199-200, 207-210; King, *Freedom Song*, 289; Paul B. Johnson, interview, September 18, 1970, Files #00432-00446, Reel 2, Part 3, Oral Histories, Papers Lyndon Johnson; James Eastland, "Communist Infiltration in the So-Called Civil Rights Movement," July 22, 1964, transcript in *The Congressional Record* and in Rubin, ed., *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee 50th Anniversary,* 94-97; Hollis Watkins, interviews by John Rachal, October 23, 29, 30, 1996, transcript, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, University of Southern Mississippi; Tom Scarborough, "Lafayette County" and "Lafayette—Marshall Counties," investigative reports, May 5 and 19, 1964, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Online, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS, http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/ (accessed November 22, 2007).

[14] *The Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1964; Bob Moses, "Speech," (West Coast Civil Rights Conference, April 23, 1964), transcript, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, University of Southern Mississippi, Jackson, MS.; Paul Lauter, email interview by author, April 19, 2009; Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer* (Charlotte: University of Virginia Press, 1990), 24; Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer*: *The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Viking Press, 2010) 29.

[15] During the spring months Moses worked on non-Project-related activities, such as co-coordinating SNCC's Selma Literacy Project and renewed commodities-drives in Greenwood, Ruleville, and Cleveland, as well.

[16] Dittmer, *Local People*, 229-230; Casey Hayden to Jon L. Regier of the NCC, letter, February 14, 1964, File #0020, Reel 6, and Mary Varela to James Forman, letters, September 24, 1963, February 3, 1964, and no date, Files #0858-0859, #0869, and #0872, Reel 10, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, SNCC Papers; Hunter R. Morey, "The Problem of Legal Aid in Mississippi," Box 3, Folder 1, and Jack Greenberg to Bob Moses, letter, April 6, 1964, and John Kiefer (of Hand, Kiefer, Allen & Ryan Attorneys and Counselors in Detroit) to Bob Moses, letter, March 18, 1964, Box 3, Folder 4, Hunter R. Morey Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

Moses reached out to more Northerners with resources. He contacted the faculties of universities and colleges and asked them to serve as observers, researchers, teachers, and political advisers. He documented that he and Bob Spike of the National Council of Churches tried to "involve the labor movement in [Mississippi] in the same way the church has been." He wrote to union leaders, including George Meaney (AFL-CIO), James Carey (Industrial Union of Electrical, Radio, and Machine Operators), Walter Reuther (United Automobile Workers), and A. Philip Randolph (Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters). Stressing that labor had a stake in the success of the civil rights movement, he pointed out that "the struggle for the right to vote in Mississippi has largely been a struggle for the right to organize [and] to picket." Labor could help the Project by sending observers to the June primaries[17], walking picket lines with locals, and sending speakers to COFO-meetings. The presence of national labor officials, he added, would "be a good experience for local labor leaders and for workers." In May he went to Detroit and Washington to discuss the Project with Reuther and other union representatives.[18]

Moses tried to influence President Johnson. Howard Zinn had written him that federal protection might be secured if a group of "national prominent figures" met with the President. Zinn's proposal underscores the significance of activists with broader strategic visions in the movement: as Moses acknowledged in 1991, such a meeting was "not something [the field staff] would be concerned with…That was a thousand miles away from anything that was on our minds." In April Moses proposed the idea to twenty people, including the heads of the national civil rights organizations, singer Harry Belafonte, actor Marlon Brando, and Harlem rent-strike leader Jesse Gray. "The President must be made to understand that this responsibility rests with him, and him alone," Moses emphasized, "and that neither he nor the American people can afford to jeopardize the lives of the [summer workers] by failing to take the necessary precautions." On Ella Baker's advice, Moses decided that any delegation seeing the President should consist mainly of Mississippians "who can speak from personal involvement." The letter that went to the President on May 25 did not state any concrete demands. It merely asked "to meet with you to discuss preparations for the summer." Howard Zinn had recommended demonstrations in Washington if the President refused a meeting. Although Moses liked the idea as long as the demonstrations' "impetus" came from the South, nothing came of it. Roy Wilkins and Martin Luther King opposed demonstrations on the grounds that they would put "too much pressure on the President all at once."[19]

The White House refused a meeting regardless. It informed Aaron Henry that the President's schedule was too "heavy," although the real reasons were entirely political. Presidential Assistant Lee

[17] See Chapter 9.

[18] Bob Moses, Aaron Henry, and Dave Dennis to "Dear Faculty Member," letter, April 8, 1964, File #0021-0022, Reel 6, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, and Bob Moses to Robert Spike, letter, May 1, 1964, File #0800, and Bob Moses to George Meaney, A. Philip Randolph, James Carey, Walter Reuther, letters, no date, Files #0800-0806, Reel 70, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, and Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, May 10, 1964, Files #0993-0997, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers.

[19] "To Prevent or Minimize Violence and to Maintain Constitutional Rights in Miss in the Summer of 1964," memorandum Zinn to Moses, no date (likely March or early April 1964), Box 2, Folder 6, Howard Zinn Papers; Moses to Julian Bond, letter, no date, File #0029, Reel 6, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, Moses to "Friends of Freedom in Mississippi," memorandum, April 6, 1964, Files #1225-1226, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, and Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, May 10, 1964, Files #0993-0997, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, and Aaron Henry, Robert Moses, and David Dennis to Lyndon B. Johnson, letter, May 25, 1964, File #0142, Reel 14, Series VII, Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; Dittmer, *Local People*, 239; Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers; Bob Moses to Martin Luther King et al, letter, May 17, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress. The others Moses directed the letter to were: Martin Luther King, James Farmer, Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, John Lewis, James Baldwin, Dick Gregory, Ossie Davis, Aaron Henry, Ed King, Robert Spike, Larry Landry, Clyde Ferguson, Noel Day, and Ella Baker. CORE-lawyer Carl Rachlin, however, considered a pre-summer meeting "tactically unwise" as the President might extract "a counter-promise." (Carl Rachlin to Marvin Rich, Norman Hill, Gordon Cary, Jim McCain, Val Coleman, Bob Gore, memorandum, April 13, 1964, Box 22, CORE Records)

White wrote President Johnson that he believed it was "nearly incredible that those people who are voluntarily sticking their head into the lion's mouth would ask for somebody to come down and shoot the lion." Moses refused to take no for an answer, and on June 14 he wrote the President again. "[S]urely the number of persons who would sit down, plan, and execute" terrorist acts, he wrote coolly, "are relatively few [and] can be singled out." He bluntly demanded the presence of the Justice Department, "special teams of FBI," Federal Marshalls, and troops. "We are asking that the Federal Government move before the fact," he concluded, "I hope this is not asking too much of our country." Although he never got a reply, behind the scenes the federal government was acting. By late June the Justice Department had established files on the KKK and other extremists, catalogued counties with frequent interference of civil rights, and had sent four "of its most experienced Mississippi lawyers" to travel the state.[20]

Moses instituted another tactic to force federal protection. Because his requests to the Commission on Civil Rights for hearings on Mississippi went unheeded, he helped to organize unofficial, 'parallel' ones at the National Theater in Washington. On June 8 twenty-five Mississippi blacks, including Elizabeth Allen, Fannie Lou Hamer, and Jimmy Travis, testified about civil rights violations before a panel of "nationally prominent and respected persons." The panel included novelist Joseph Heller, then at the height of his fame; writer Michael Harrington, author of *The Other America*, an influential study of poverty; and C. Van Woodward, a southern-born historian best known for his powerful indictment of racial segregation, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*. Howard Zinn had composed the panel and Moses had arranged with Aaron Henry and Wiley Branton that COFO became its official sponsor. He had gained endorsements from the national civil rights organizations and, after meeting Bob Spike in Washington, the National Council of Churches. SNCC invited Congressmen and transcribed the testimonies for publication. "The purpose of this meeting," Moses stated in opening the hearings, "is to try to open to the country and the world some of the facts which we who work in Mississippi only know too well," facts that "have not been publicly aired and [are] very difficult to get across to the country." The panel then added its voice to SNCC's call for federal protection and for official hearings in Mississippi by the Civil Rights Commission. Two days later the CCR indeed informed Moses that it wanted to meet in Jackson to hear from COFO representatives. It asked SNCC to keep the meeting confidential, and emphasized that "this is <u>not</u> a Commission hearing, but a staff meeting for the purpose of assembling information and appraising witnesses." Still, COFO regarded it as a victory.[21]

---

[20] Dittmer, *Local People*, 239; Lee C. White to Lyndon Johnson, memorandum, June 17, 1964, Reel 7, Part 1, White House Central Files, Papers Lyndon Johnson; Robert Moses to Lyndon Johnson, letter, June 14, 1964, Files #0160-0161, Reel 14, Series VII, Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; Doar and Landsberg, "The Performance of the FBI in Investigating Violations of Federal Laws Protecting the Right to Vote – 1960-1967," 43.

[21] Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, Box 6, Folder 2, and "Washington Hearings on Mississippi," memorandum, no date, and Memo to Members United States Congress, June 3, 1964, Box 6, Folder 8, Ella Baker Papers; Bob Moses to Martin Luther King et al, letter, May 17, 1964, James Forman Papers; Julian Bond to John M. Pratt (NCC), letter, June 2, 1964, File #0190, Reel 8, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, and "June 9 hearing and June 10 meeting with President Johnson" memorandum to "Friends of Freedom in Mississippi, Freedom Centers, and Others," no date, File #1095, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, and Washington hearings, transcripts, in *Congressional Record* of June 16, 1964, see Files #0641-0644, Reel 42, Series XVII, Other Organizations, and Judge Justine Polier, "Summary of Major Points in Testimony by Citizens of Mississippi," no date, Files #0111-0113, Reel 58, Series II, Subject Files, Washington Office, SNCC Papers; Mike Thelwell to Howard Zinn, letter, May 19, 1964, and "Mississippi Hearings—Procedural Outline—SNCC Washington Office," memorandum, no date, and "Lyndon Johnson and the Mississippi Summer," report, 1964, Box 2, Folder 5, Howard Zinn Papers; "Brutality Hearing Held in Capital," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 14 (June 9, 1964): 1, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 159; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 329; Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, 78-79, 81-82; Michael O. Finkelstein (CCR) to Bob Moses and Bob Weil, letter, June 10, 1964, Box 3, Folder 4, Hunter R. Morey Papers; COFO Legal Coordinator to "All Project Directors and Law Students," memorandum, July 28, 1964, Box 1, Folder 12, Council of Federated Organizations Panola County Office Records (hereafter cited as COFO Panola County Office Records), Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

Moses tried to diminish the dangers further by creating a tight organization in Mississippi itself. There would be forty-four individual projects statewide. Each project had an administrative council consisting of the Freedom School, Community Center, and Voter Registration directors, a lawyer, and a local minister. This was the area's "basic decision making group," but the Jackson office had "the final review." Moses and CORE's Dave Dennis were key members in an "appeal board for decisions."[22]

Moses and Dennis were closely involved in the selection of summer volunteers. The latter were interviewed at FOS-offices ("Freedom Centers") at individual colleges, with a final review of the applicants in Jackson. The Jackson screening committee included Mendy Samstein, Ivanhoe Donaldson, and Dona Richards, with Moses acting as a consultant. As Director, he reserved "the right to make final decisions," allowing him to safeguard his concerns for safety and local empowerment. "There will be danger," he explained to *The Reporter*, "in accepting anyone who greatly misunderstands himself, the movement, or Mississippi." He advised recruitment centers to reject people who were arrogant or trying to be heroes, and instead to identify "the willing ones (i.e., willing to do anything) and the *non*-rugged individualists" who would adhere to "strict discipline." He informed volunteers of Project specifics (like assignments and costs) and suggested ways how they could raise funds. But "in the final analysis," he concluded characteristically, "you would be the best judge of what [fundraising] approach would produce the best results." He also wrote rejection letters. While they were standardized letters, they featured Moses' distinctive emphasis on personal worth. Everyone had something worthwhile to contribute, he replied, even if only through contributions or pressuring politicians: "[Y]our role…will still be of critical nature…[N]o revolution can continue without its supply base or support troops."[23]

Moses influenced recruitment most directly through his tours of Northern colleges. As a graduate of elite white universities, he easily connected with these students. At Stanford University, for instance, he summarized the lessons he learned from Mississippi's sharecroppers in the style of philosophy classes familiar to them: "The questions that we think face the country…go very much to the bottom of mankind and people. They're questions which have repercussions in…international affairs and relations. They're questions which go to the very root of our society. What kind of society will we be?" At others he simply held question-and-answer sessions. Louis Lomax' coverage of one such session at Queens College in New York City for *Ramparts* noted how Moses constantly tried to ensure that those who were accepted understood the consequences. When the students laughed at James Forman's description of preparing for unsavory conditions like doing "your business in outhouses," Lomax stated Moses lost his cool: "'Don't laugh,' Moses screamed. 'This is for real—like for life and death.'" While Julian Bond later wrote *Ramparts* to rectify that "Moses never screams," Lomax' embellishment does indicate a perceived shift of emotion on Moses' part that betrayed his preoccupation with preventing bloodshed. Moses' communication skills helped present Northern reporters to better understand the Project's goals as well. Sympathetic journalists from magazines like *The Saturday Evening Post* and *The Reporter* invariably explained the Project to a national audience through him; some, like the editor of *The World*, sent reprints of their articles to him for distribution, hoping it caused "much good publicity [for] you and your cause."[24]

---

[22] "Mississippi Summer Project," memorandum, no date, Files #0034-0036, Reel 64, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, and Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, Files #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 149-150.

[23] Richard Woodley, "It Will Be a Hot Summer in Mississippi," *The Reporter* 30, no. 11 (May 21, 1964); Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 154; Moses, "Memo to Freedom Centers," no date (likely April 1964), Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and Moses, Rejection letter, no date, Miller Civil Rights Collection, University of Southern Mississippi.; Minutes SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers; John Maguire to COFO and Moses, letter, May 11, 1964, Files #0849-0850, Reel 69, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, and Moses to accepted volunteers, letters, no date, File #0804, Reel 39, Series XV, State Project Files, SNCC Papers; Moses to accepted applicants, memoranda, no date, William Heath Papers.

[24] Hammerback and Jensen, "Robert Parris Moses," in *African-American Orators*, ed. Leeman, 265; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 295-296; Henry and Curry, *Aaron Henry*, 164-165; Louis E. Lomax, "The Road to Mississippi," *Ramparts*, Special Edition

Despite Moses' aversion to publicity, SNCC-historian Vanessa Murphree noted that he and other SNCC-leaders "accepted many public relations responsibilities as natural extensions of their positions." Moreover, Moses understood that publicity was essential. In meetings and memoranda he suggested that COFO "get Bayard Rustin…to give the project a national focus." He asked volunteers for pictures of themselves for publicity purposes, and advised recruitment centers to gather the volunteers "from your area…to hold a press conference" at which they should call for federal protection. Yet his prime motivation in doing all this remained empowering locals, not the projection of the volunteers or himself. He still refused to be interviewed for a CBS documentary that included Governor Paul Johnson because, he explained during SNCC's June 9-11 meeting, the "concept of group leadership [is] more important than one man." After all, "I didn't want myself projected as [a] leader as [I] would be if [I sat] next to Johnson." Furthermore, he added, if reporters came by "following the Northern kids," COFO could *then* "project local people." His insistence on temporarily moving headquarters from Atlanta to Greenwood, which SNCC finally agreed to, likewise reflected his concern for protection of locals and staff members. "The move," he asserted in April, "will create greater publicity" because "local newspapers of participating workers would be more responsive to calls actually coming from inside the state."[25]

To recruit volunteers Moses contemplated using Allard Lowenstein again. While his doubts about Lowenstein had remained unaltered, he believed that his involvement was critical. He invited him to COFO-meetings, including its State Convention on February 9 when locals voted to endorse the Project. But Lowenstein again tried to assume control, including setting up a recruiting office in Boston without contacting its FOS-group. "Al wanted," Julian Bond still grumbled in 2008, "to run the Summer Project—from New York." Moreover, from as early as January he questioned SNCC's overrepresentation in COFO and in the Summer Project. According to Ed King, Lowenstein even pondered "creating a new leadership structure for the Mississippi movement" that was more closely aligned to his moderate allies in the NAACP. Several annoyed SNCC-workers believed that he recruited volunteers independently in order to "keep volunteers with radical views out." Moses acknowledged this in 1989: Lowenstein "did not trust the COFO-operation to run [the Project and] that really surfaced around the question of who should be allowed to come down." In February Moses nonetheless begged for his support: "If you pull out it won't reduce any tensions absolutely, it will merely be an exchange of one set for another. You know yourself that nothing political and significant can be done without public tension—it stands to reason they won't be done without private ones also. You not only have to stay—you must."[26]

1964, 8-23, Box 1, Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection; Julian Bond to Edward Keating, letter, November 3, 1964, File #0524, and William Kreger (editor *The World*) to Bob Moses, letter, March 26, 1964, and Bond to Kreger, letter, April 6, 1964, Files #0384 and #0401, Reel 12, Series VII, Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; Woodley, "It Will Be a Hot Summer in Mississippi"; James Atwater, "If We Can Crack Mississippi…," *Saturday Evening Post*, July 25-August 1, 1964, 15-19; Joanne Grant, "Freedom Story: Mississippi's Way of Life," *National Guardian*, September 19, 1964.

[25] Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 64-65; "Notes on Staff Executive Meeting," January 17, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Moses to accepted volunteers, memorandum, no date, William Heath Papers; Bob Moses, "Memo to Freedom Centers," no date (likely early April 1964), Mississippi Department of Archives and History, University of Southern Mississippi, Jackson, MS; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, minutes, Reel 3, Series III, Staff meetings, SNCC Papers; Hogan, *Many Minds, One Heart*, 370, n37. Moses added at a SNCC meeting in June that moving headquarters to Mississippi represented SNCC's organizational leadership principle at its best: "Decision-making should be geared to programs, not to hierarchy. We need the executive committee for review of decisions and long range planning [but] for the summer we need people who can make key decisions on the spot." (SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, Handwritten and typed minutes, Files #0887-0909 and #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff meetings, SNCC Papers)

[26] "Minutes of the COFO Convention," February 9, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Dittmer, *Local People*, 232-234; Julian Bond, interview by author, Washington DC, October 27, 2008; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 189-192, 206; Robert Parris Moses, interview by William Chafe, October 7, 1989, transcript, Allard Lowenstein Papers;

A month later, however, conflicts between SNCC and Lowenstein reached a climax when SNCC accepted the National Lawyers' Guild's (NLG) assistance. The NLG had been targeted for its non-exclusion of Communists since the 1930s, and Lowenstein, as one historian put it, was "as committed to anti-Communism as he was to black civil rights." He convinced Stanford volunteers to invite Moses and demand that he decline the NLG's offer. Other Project-supporters agreed. Jack Greenberg informed Moses that the Inc. Fund, like the LCDC, "will not engage in any joint ventures…with the National Lawyers' Guild, and that we will not agree to any division of jurisdictional lines with them as you suggest. If SNCC or COFO enter into an arrangement with the Guild we will be unable to participate." Bob Spike wrote Moses that the National Council of Churches considered the Guild's involvement "so serious a complication" that it jeopardized "the possibility of extensive legal help this summer." The national civil rights organizations likewise condemned the move. SCLC's Andrew Young asked SNCC to reconsider; the NAACP's Roy Wilkins flatly refused cooperation; and CORE's Carl Rachlin even informed Burke Marshall and the FBI of the NLG's involvement.[27]

This backlash upset Moses. Although the NCC had agreed to pay for the volunteers' training and transportation, he was loath to repudiate the NLG's help. He begged Greenberg and others to see that the Communist-issue "is not our fight. Don't make it our fight." After all, in life-and-death cases, Moses told *The National Guardian*, the Communist-issue was "irrelevant. Some of the best legal service we have received has come from the Guild. We have found the Guild willing to take cases that we could get none of the other lawyers to handle." Moreover, his critics' assumptions were patronizing and hypocritical, he stated in 1989: "[Y]ou're trying to do what you say [Communists] want to do. I mean, you're going to say, 'They're going to come in and tell us who we can associate with'—that's why you don't want them in. [But] you're just doing that right now…[W]e're our own people and are able to figure out who we want to associate with [so] you don't really credit us with being able to do that [as if] we are somehow people that need to be protected and you are the people to protect us."[28]

The issue forced national SNCC to debate its 'open door'-policy again. At a mid-April meeting it agreed that "we could not allow the legal establishment to make policy for us" and confirmed its commitment to free association. As Mississippi Director, Moses faced most of its consequences. When he travelled to Stanford University a week later he staunchly defended COFO's choice not to have "that whole atmosphere of the fifties injected into the movement." Furious, Lowenstein advised the students to withdraw from the Project, alleging that Moses was "run by Peking." While publicly criticizing SNCC, Ed King claimed that Lowenstein privately asked him to have Moses appoint him an important position in the Project in return for not abandoning it. This went against SNCC's modus operandi, and SNCC-workers insisted that he could only stay as "an obscure volunteer in some place." Moses now carefully avoided him. He even had Mendy Samstein "covering for me [so] I didn't have to [deal with him]." According to his biographer, Lowenstein "could not resolve his ambivalence" over the Project and left for Europe in June. He later briefly came to Mississippi and attended the Democratic National Convention. He and Moses saw each other occasionally but never spoke. With Lowenstein's departure SNCC not only lost an important recruiter with valuable political connections, but also a much needed mediator between the different civil rights groups. This is partly why Moses begged Lowenstein to stay in February: "We are just beginning to

"Black and White Together: The Freedom Summer Experience," report, November 13, 1980, and Bob Moses to Allard Lowenstein, letter, no date (likely February 1964), William Heath Papers.

[27] Woods, *Black Struggle, Red Scare*, 206-207; Dittmer, *Local People*, 230, 233-234; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 193; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 273-274; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 181-184; Greenberg and Spike to Moses, letter, April 7 and 27, 1964, Folder 4, Hunter R. Morey Papers; Carl Rachlin to Marvin Rich, Norman Hill, Gordon Cary, Jim McCain, Val Coleman, and Bob Gore, memorandum, April 13, 1964, Box 22, CORE Records; "Meeting Following Atlanta CUCRL Meeting," minutes, May 15, 1964, Files #0998-0999, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers.

[28] Robert Parris Moses, interview by William Chafe interview, October 7, 1989, Allard Lowenstein Papers, see also Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 207; *National Guardian*, June 27, 1964.

open up the Pandora of inter-civil rights organizational territory, you have got to help us iron them out. If we lose dialogue, then we will be lost."[29]

On the national level the groups aligned in COFO seriously mistrusted each other. Moses acknowledged that "[n]obody is happy with COFO [except] local Mississippi Negro folk." The Project intensified inter-organizational rivalry. "I see the summer project as sort of a confrontation (SNCC [versus] the others)," reported Charlie Cobb, "As things stand now, COFO is not a reality and the other civil rights groups have made minimal steps to make it a reality." SNCC especially resented the fact that other organizations used COFO for their own projection, but were unwilling to commit significant amounts of money and manpower. During the 1963 Greenville meeting SNCC had already considered excluding the NAACP if that organization "was not going to lend its full weight behind COFO," but decided to tolerate it because "the NAACP's name was of benefit to us." The NAACP in turn resented its limited role in COFO's decision-making structure and considered the Project a waste of money. As Roy Wilkins told SNCC: "The NAACP doesn't put anything into a project where it doesn't expect to get something out." In an internal memorandum Gloster Current recognized the "strength in unity," but criticized "some of the antics of SNCC, which we cannot support." The upshot was that SNCC faced a huge financial challenge. "CORE plans to put $1,000 per month into the program," Moses noted. "SCLC's investment will come via the citizenship schools; NAACP is not interested…Which leaves the problem of whether SNCC wants to underwrite the balance of $5,118.92 per month projected costs."[30]

But national SNCC was not fully supportive of COFO or the Project either. Apart from concerns over bloodshed and grassroots leadership, it worried about SNCC's place in COFO's structure. Its goal had always been facilitating local organizations as independent units, but, historian John Dittmer noted, when COFO adopted a constitution and held monthly meetings, some SNCC-workers felt threatened. "[A]cknowledging [COFO's] independence," James Forman admitted, "meant submitting to the will of a body which could make decisions in conflict with important principles of ours." During spring some SNCC-workers even discussed whether "COFO should develop as a membership organization rather than as a federation of local affiliates." They eventually "voted to favor the latter," but the discussion in itself indicates that, despite popular memory, not everyone in SNCC believed that non-hierarchical grassroots control was always a self-evident choice for organizing. It further demonstrates that COFO's development was in a continuous flux—leaving its workers never entirely sure of its purpose—and rather depended on the views of the staff of professional organizations than on that of locals.[31]

SNCC headquarters regarded "the continued existence of COFO as detrimental to SNCC's growth" in terms of finances and media coverage. In the first quarter of 1964 SNCC staff went unpaid three times because of SNCC's precarious financial situation. Donors preferred giving money to COFO even though SNCC-workers were doing most of the work. Naturally, Casey Hayden stated in 1986, "national

[29] "Minutes of SNCC's Executive Committee Meeting," April 19, 1964, Files #0857–0868, Reel 3, Series 3, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers; Dittmer, *Local People*, 233-234; Robert Parris Moses, interview by William Chafe, October 7, 1989, and Ed King, interview by William Chafe, March 30, 1988, Allard Lowenstein Papers; Chafe, *Never Stop Running*, 189, 192-194; Moses interview Carson, 1982; Mendy Samstein, "Notes on Mississippi," report, no date 1963, Folder 1, Mendy Samstein Papers; Moses to Lowenstein, letter, no date (likely February 1964), William Heath Papers.

[30] Charlie Cobb, memorandum, no date, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Robert Parris Moses, interview by William Chafe, October 7, 1989, Allard Lowenstein Papers; Ed King, interview by Anne Romaine, September 5, 1966, transcript, Anne Romaine Papers; Current to Henry, letter, March 17, 1964, Reel 10, Group III, Box C-74, Part 27, Records NAACP; "Minutes of the Meeting of the SNCC Executive Committee," December 27-31, 1963, Files #0313-0328, Reel 3, Series II, Executive and Central Committees, Executive Committee, SNCC Papers.

[31] Dittmer, *Local People*, 236; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, minutes, Files #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers; Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 377; "Notes of a Discussion of Possible Agenda for COFO meeting [1964]," no date (likely early 1964, after the Freedom Vote but before the final decision on the Summer Project), Folder 1, Mendy Samstein Papers. The SNCC-workers present were J.E. Collier, Mat Suarez, Mike Sayer, MacArthur Cotton, Jesse Harris, Oscar Chase, and Mendy Samstein.

SNCC [felt] threatened by what was going on in Mississippi." When the media began reporting on the Project, all national organizations, including SNCC, tried to generate publicity for themselves and boost their own fundraising. Aaron Henry calculated in a letter to Gloster Current "what springboard it would be for the NAACP [to pronounce] a contribution on [the Project's] announcement day." As a result, Ivanhoe Donaldson complained, COFO threatened to become "a confederation [projecting] the national programs of national organizations" rather than a local initiative with its own programs.[32]

Incidents like James Farmer's announcement of the Summer Project in *The Washington Post* on February 23—despite COFO's agreement to announce it at a joint press conference in Jackson on March 15—deepened this concern. "[I]f the national organizations insist on releasing press statements which give the impression that the entire program is their own," Moses wrote Farmer, "then that will inexorably lead to cynicism and demoralization of the staff which must work very closely together in the field." Consensus-minded as he was, he assured Farmer that "it is possible to all work together," and confessed that *Newsweek* had wrongly implied that the Project was SNCC's. In reprimanding Farmer his main concern was not SNCC's projection, but, he wrote, the damage for Mississippi blacks "who are in desperate need of a united front to give them psychological courage." In April he proposed that SNCC should "develop some means of publicizing good points of the various civil rights groups and their programs."[33]

Despite Moses' attempts to guard everyone's interests, the unity between the civil rights groups remained tentative. In May, SNCC Executive Committee members repeatedly called "to project SNCC's image or else we'll be continually overridden." At the June meeting some even questioned Moses' loyalty to SNCC, because how "could Bob set up a confederation like COFO through which these other groups would…raise funds for their own operations and use the publicity if Bob really cared about SNCC?" Moses characteristically responded with calm pragmatism. "My commitment is basically as a SNCC person," he vowed, but what mattered was not projection but that "[t]he energy that makes COFO positive comes from SNCC." Mary King later commented that "the prospect of one thousand white volunteers…was what [really] was bothering people and that was why they had turned on Bob." But it was not even that, one worker explained at the meeting: "[I]t's not whites that are feared but *death*." But there was no way back now. The time for what Moses in December had called the "final showdown" had come.[34]

8.2. Are You Kidding?

To minimize dangers, Moses had argued since January that SNCC organize orientation sessions for the volunteers before the Project's start. Their purpose, he told *The Reporter*, was "recognizing our own attitudes and the attitudes of the people here." The Project's "tougher problems," he explained, were answering such basic questions as: "Is the whole program worthwhile? What are the goals? What is the black-white relationship?" It was essential, he asserted in June, that SNCC should "set a tone at the orientation [so the] volunteers can understand…what they're getting into." To finance the sessions he secured $25,000 from the NCC, and following up a suggestion by Myles Horton, substantial donations from Chicago philanthropist Lucy Montgomery. Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, agreed to

[32] McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 40; Casey Hayden, interview by Blackside, Inc., May 15, 1986, for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, Missouri; Aaron Henry to Gloster Current, letter, March 8, 1964, Reel 10, Group III, Box C-74, Part 27 Selected Branch Files, Microfilm, Records NAACP.

[33] Bob Moses to James Farmer, letter, March 2, 1964, File #0582, Reel 42, Series XVII, Other Organizations, SNCC Papers; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, minutes, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers.

[34] Meeting SNCC Executive Committee, minutes, May 10, 1964, Files #0093-0097, and SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, minutes, Files #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, and "Minutes of the Meeting of the SNCC Executive Committee," December 27-31, 1963, Files #0313-0328, Reel 3, Series II, Executive and Central Committees, Executive Committee, SNCC Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 309-310.

host the two, week-long orientation sessions[35]. The first session, for 300 volunteers who would work on voter registration, started on June 14, and the second, for 175 Freedom School teachers, on June 21.[36]

Moses left an indelible stamp on both sessions. He outlined the Project's goals in the keynote address and spoke regularly throughout both weeks. COFO had no money, he told the volunteers, so they should depend on local leadership: "[W]here you have people and programs and the minimum materials, a lot can be done." He emphasized the dangerous realities of their jobs. COFO's lawyers would help them when arrested, he reassured them, but told them not to be distracted by allegations about the National Lawyers Guild. "This kind of thing bogs us down. I don't want to get caught up in a discussion of communism in the movement. It's divisive, and it's not a negotiable issue." He urged the volunteers to avoid arrests if at all possible and to post bail if they were. Female volunteers should wear modest clothing, he advised, and avoid going to bars. "Don't come to Mississippi this summer to save the Mississippi Negro," he told them. "Only come if you understand, really understand, that his freedom and yours are one." The volunteers should be realistic in terms of what they could achieve. "Maybe we're not going to get many people registered [or] into Freedom Schools. Maybe all we're going to do is *live* through this summer. In Mississippi, that will be so much!" One volunteer wrote that Moses considered merely "our spending the summer in Negro homes…a very important victory." When addressing the second group Moses added: "You are not going to Mississippi to try to be heroes…You are heroes enough just going into the state. This is not a Freedom Ride…You have a job to do. If each of you can leave behind you three people who are stronger than before, this will be almost 3000 more people we will have to work with next year."[37]

Moses discouraged direct action, telling the volunteers that they should always identify themselves as "working on voter registration, that you did not come down to organize any sit-ins[,] marches or demonstrations." Integrated restaurants were of no interest to Mississippi's black poor, he explained, and "a sit-in" or "unwise individual action" in northeast Mississippi "might provoke a killing in the southwest." In a memo to the volunteers' parents he underlined the fact that "we are specifically avoiding any demonstrations for integrated facilities, as we do not feel the state is ready to permit such activity at this time." Several COFO-workers disagreed, especially now the new Civil Rights Act, effective on July 2, begged testing. Stokely Carmichael and Bob Zellner grudgingly urged teenagers in Greenwood to follow Moses' directives, but local youth—spearheaded by Laura McGhee's son Silas—moved independently. As Moses predicted, this eventually provoked white mob violence and Silas' near-fatal shooting.[38]

Because most volunteers did not know what to expect, COFO-staff lectured them on Mississippi history and law, aided by role-playing workshops. Drawing a map of Mississippi on the blackboard, Moses explained its different areas in terms of black population strengths, leniency towards civil rights, and the

[35] Originally the orientation was planned at Kentucky's Berea College, but the College withdrew its consent following protests from alumni and trustees.

[36] Woodley, "It Will Be a Hot Summer in Mississippi," *The Reporter* 30, no. 11 (May 21, 1964); SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, minutes, Files #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, and Casey Hayden to Jon L. Regier (NCC), letter, February 14, 1964, File #0020, Reel 6, Series IV, Executive Secretary Files James Forman, SNCC Papers; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, minutes, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers; COFO Staff Executive Committee Meeting, January 10, 1964, minutes, and Summer Project Committee to COFO Staff Executive Committee, memorandum, January 17, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Myles Horton to Bob Moses, letter, April 17, 1964, Box 21, Highlander Research and Education Center Collection; Greenberg, ed., *A Circle of Trust*, 201.

[37] Summer Project Committee to COFO Staff Executive Committee, memorandum, January 17, 1964, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 9-11; Lise Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Lise Vogel Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Watson, *Freedom Summer*, 29; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 155-156; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 256-257; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 13.

[38] "Rights Workers Off for Mississippi to Register Negro Voters," *New York Times*, June 21, 1964; Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Lise Vogel Papers; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 9-11, 170-177; Moses to Parents Volunteers, memorandum, no date, William Heath Papers; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 389-390; Carmichael and Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 395-397; Payne, *I've Got The Light of Freedom*, 210-214.

absence or presence of "anti-Negro organizations." Volunteers should memorize the Inc. Fund's "If You Are Arrested in Mississippi"-pamphlet and COFO's Security Handbook. SNCC staff members read out hate mail they had received. One such letter called the volunteers "morally rotten outcasts" who upon entering Mississippi deserved to "get their just dues as infiltrators of an enemy power." But not all the volunteers appeared to understand what they were getting into. As Cleveland Sellers pointed out: "Many of them talked about Mississippi as if it were somehow the same romanticized scenes they had read in *Gone with the Wind*."[39]

Most volunteers were white, came from urban areas in New England or California, and attended elite universities like Harvard and Berkeley. Their median family income was twice the national average. Only 10 percent was black—not a bad showing in view of the fact that blacks accounted for only 2.9 percent of the nation's college students, and that very few attended the top universities where SNCC recruited. Because the volunteers had to be self-supporting and those under 21 needed parental consent, most were older than the 1960 sit-in students. In early July about 450 volunteers were in Mississippi. They were later supplemented with 400 more, but there were never more than 650 at any one time. Several hundreds of doctors, educators, and clergymen volunteered as well through organizations like the Delta Ministry and the Medical Committee on Human Rights.[40]

Race and class tensions emerged even before the volunteers had set foot in Mississippi. Although some SNCC staff members welcomed the volunteers—"We need you," Fannie Lou Hamer pleaded, "Help us communicate with white people"—others were openly hostile. They mistrusted the volunteers' inexperience, fearing that "that idiot in my group [will] get me killed by doing something stupid." It did not help that reporters swarmed around the volunteers. "*Look*-magazine is searching for the ideal naïve northern middle-class white girl," one wrote home, "For the national press, that's the big story." Naivety and a desire for gratitude in turn blinded many volunteers: "*I want to be your friend, you black idiot*, was the contradiction everywhere." Tension reached a crisis on June 16 when some volunteers laughed at cartoonish registrar Theron Lynd during a showing of the documentary Moses helped to film in 1962. Several COFO-members walked out in a fury. Afterwards volunteers and staff "had the whole thing out" until Jimmy Travis soothed the conflict by promising the volunteers that "SNCC will not let you down" during trouble.[41]

Feeling guilty, Moses resumed his role as mediator. "What happened was quite profound," he reflected later, because "we were…trying to sharpen the volunteers' sense of reality." One volunteer documented that during the clash "Bob and Dona Moses were both in tears." Staughton Lynd wrote that just four days earlier Moses had stated "that if anyone was to blame for cutting off the discussion of feeling toward whites too soon, it was he." He had tended "to discourage the kind of soul-sharing Sherrod cultivated in SW Georgia," and simply put twenty of SNCC's black NAG-workers in the Delta and made Stokely Carmichael District Director to "eliminate staff misgivings" about whites taking over. But this clearly proved inadequate, so he informed the second volunteer group of COFO's endless discussions "about race hatred," of which the first group had known nothing. He used an analogy from Albert Camus' *The Plague*, in which state authorities refused to recognize the disease at great expense. The same was true for the "plague of prejudice," he explained. "The country isn't willing yet to admit it has the plague,

[39] Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Lise Vogel Papers; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 9-11; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 15; Watson, *Freedom Summer*, 29; Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 82-83; Security Handbook, Files #0694-0695, Reel 39, and James Forman to "Friend," letter, June 18, 1964, and Charles Benner (National States Rights Party) to John Lewis, letter, June 16, 1964, File #1096, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, SNCC Papers; "If You Are Arrested in Mississippi," pamphlet, Box 1, Folder 6, COFO Panola County Office Records.

[40] Dittmer, *Local People*, 244-245; Julian Bond, "1964 Miss Freedom Summer," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 78-84. For more details on the volunteers' backgrounds, see Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer*.

[41] Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 7; Dittmer, *Local People*, 242-244; Carson, *In Struggle*, 112-113; Watson, *Freedom Summer*, 30, 33; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 22; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 351-352; "Preparing for Mississippi—How to Absorb a Blow," *The New York Herald Tribune*, June 18, 1964.

but it pervades the whole society. Everyone must come to grip with this, because it affects us all." He made a plea to "discuss it openly and honestly, even with the danger that we get too analytic and tangled up. If we ignore it, it's going to blow up in our faces."[42]

When John Doar addressed the volunteers, Moses again served as a mediator. The volunteers had just written a poignant plea to President Johnson: "[A]s we depart for that troubled state, [we ask] to hear your voice in support of those principles to which Americans have dedicated and sacrificed themselves." But when asked what protection they could expect, Doar bluntly told them: "Nothing. There is no federal police force." Angry, the volunteers started booing until Moses intervened. "We don't do that," he reprimanded, and explained that "Doar was only being honest." He shamed the group by observing that "we are all—the whole nation—deeply involved in the crimes of Mississippi." As an example he used Harvard University, which was the largest stockholder in the holding company for Mississippi Power and Light "on whose board sit several White Citizens Council leaders." He told the second group to "be polite" to Doar: "A year ago this week Medgar Evers was buried. It was a near riot situation, and Doar was sent in to prevent worse. He has helped us." "Because of Moses' admonition," one volunteer recorded, "most of the [volunteers'] muttering remained only that."[43]

Moses was decisive in the debate over nonviolence as well. For him this was not only a practical necessity in order to minimize bloodshed, but also a basic principle. James Lawson and John Lewis are often considered the embodiment of philosophical nonviolence in SNCC, but no-one, historian Timothy Tyson claimed, "more closely identified with [it] than Moses." John Lewis agrees: "Maybe he didn't say he was the most nonviolent person [but] he *lived* nonviolence…his very existence [and] rare demeanor was [all nonviolence]." By 1964, however, Moses' views were shared by a declining minority of SNCC staff members. As Moses acknowledged in February, most were "not sympathetic to the idea that they have to love [those] they are struggling against…there's a constant dialogue at meetings about nonviolence." Due to whites' increased hostility, a lack of training in nonviolence, and federal inertia, workers accepted locals' armed defense of the properties they stayed at. "No-one here has lived the life of Gandhi," Sam Block exclaimed at SNCC's June meeting, "Bob's too valuable to be killed in Mississippi, because there's nothing in Mississippi worth dying for! I'm not going to carry a gun but if someone else is going to protect himself, then let him protect me as well!" Some admitted to having had guns in the Greenwood office "since January."[44]

To create a consensus Moses therefore took a pragmatic approach. While he had argued in April that "if you do nothing to change the violent beliefs of people with whom you work, then you're inconsistent with these [nonviolent] beliefs," he now maintained that "[s]elf-defense is so deeply

[42] *Freedom On My Mind*, directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford, Clarity Educational Productions, 1994; Terri Shaw, "Freedom Summer Recollections," no date, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, University of Southern Mississippi, Jackson, MS; Watson, *Freedom Summer*, 30-31; Moses and Cobb, *Radical Equations*, 79; Staughton Lynd to Howard Zinn, letter, June 12, 1964, Box 2, Folder 7, Howard Zinn Papers; Carson, *In Struggle*, 114; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 9-11; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 13.

[43] Volunteers to President Johnson, letter, June 17, 1964, File #0161, Reel 14, Series VII, Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; Watson, *Freedom Summer*, 34, 36; Dittmer, *Local People*, 239-240, 245; Carmichael and Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 369-371; Anne Braden, draft article, 1964, Box 56, Folder 1, Carl and Anne Braden Papers; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 22-23; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 157-158; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Joe Sinsheimer, December 5, 1984, transcript, Taylor Branch Papers.

[44] Timothy Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 212; John Lewis, interview by author, Washington DC, November 16, 2009; Hogan, *Many Minds, Many Hearts*, 84-85; Warren, *Who Speaks For the Negro?* 91; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 9-11, 1964, minutes, Files #0975-0992, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 311-313; Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom*, 169; Fleming, *Soon We Will Not Cry*, 112-113; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 204-205. SNCC-workers acceptance of self-defense also seemed logical; studies of Southern communities have shown that self-defense was a traditional aspect of blacks' lives. As Joyce Ladner said: "All our parents had guns." For more on southern self-defense tradition see Tyson's *Radio Free Dixie* and Lance Hill's *The Deacons for Defense*.

ingrained in rural southern America that we as a small group can't affect it. It's not contradictory for a farmer to say he's nonviolent and also to pledge to shoot a marauder's head off." Yet "[t]he difference is," he reminded SNCC at its June meeting, "that we on the staff have committed ourselves not to carry guns." The group subsequently adopted his compromise: SNCC-workers and volunteers should remain nonviolent, but they should not attempt to impose their principles on locals.[45]

When the issue resurfaced at the orientation session in Ohio, Moses' views again held sway. He informed the volunteers of SNCC's decision, but acknowledged its practical difficulties by citing Camus' "grey area" between victims and executioners. "If you were in a house which was under attack, and the owner was shot, and there were kids there, and you could take his gun to protect them—should you? I can't answer that. I don't think anyone can." Bayard Rustin and James Lawson—both, like Moses, pacifists—then outlined the case for philosophical nonviolence, but Stokely Carmichael rebutted them. Most volunteers supported Carmichael, one volunteer wrote home: "I feel very strongly that [Lawson] does NOT represent the Movement…nonviolence is a perverted way of life, but a necessary tactic." After a heated debate, Moses stood up. "[A]s he spoke—slowly, gently—a subtle [and] permanent change came over the room," another documented, "He was ultimate reality and ultimate possibility. [He said:] 'In Mississippi we have two ground rules: 1) No weapons are to be carried or kept in your room. 2.) If you feel tempted to retaliate, please leave.' Questions were [now] resolved. The session ended."[46]

Fears about what lay ahead still troubled volunteers and staff. Many released their anxieties during late-night parties. Veteran staff members, a volunteer wrote, pushed "fears into the back of their minds by drinking, dancing, singing, telling jokes, and playing cards." Moses turned to folk dancing. Bob Cohen recalled "Bob leading a bunch of us in a Yugoslavian line dance to a record he had brought." Staughton Lynd noted how after leaving one "very somber" staff meeting they saw volunteers "dancing the *hora*. Without a word, Bob put down the papers he was carrying and joined."[47]

On June 22 Moses was addressing the second group when a SNCC staff member whispered something in his ear. He crouched and stared at his feet before standing and telling the volunteers: "Yesterday morning, three of our people left Meridian, Mississippi, to investigate a church-burning in [Philadelphia,] Neshoba County. They haven't come back, and we haven't had any word from them. We spoke to John Doar…He promised to order the FBI to act, but the local FBI still says they have been given no authority." It seemed, one volunteer recorded, as if Moses "was somewhere else; it was simply that he was obliged to say something, but his voice was automatic." A pale Rita Schwerner substituted for the shaken Moses and revealed the missing men's names: her own husband, twenty-four-year-old white CORE-worker Michael Schwerner; twenty-one-year-old black CORE-worker James Chaney from Meridian; and twenty-year-old white summer volunteer Andrew Goodman. Dazed, the volunteers split up to contact federal authorities. Moses left and sat down on the college cafeteria steps. He instinctively realized "they

[45] SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, minutes, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers; SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, June 11, 1964, minutes, Files #0887-0909, Reel 3, Series III, Staff Meetings, SNCC Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 311-325; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 150-151.

[46] Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 15, 34-35; Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Folder 1, Lise Vogel Papers; Eilen L. Barnes, "Account of Orientation at Western's Campus," File #23, Reel 2, Microfilm, Lucy Montgomery Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 32.

[47] Terri Shaw, "Freedom Summer Recollections," and Terri Shaw, interview by Stephanie Scull Millet Shaw, June 7, 1999, transcript, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, University of Southern Mississippi; Bob Cohen, "Sorrow Songs, Faith Songs, Freedom Songs: The Mississippi Caravan of Music in the Summer of '64" and Barbara Dane, "Michigan to Mississippi: A Journey," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 177-189, 222-227; Lynd, "Mississippi: 1961-1962," 8. Later that summer singer Barbara Dane likewise documented seeing "Moses [and] volunteers relaxing from all the tension by dancing the twist, the mashed potato, the hitchhike."

were dead…I knew that in my bones." According to Carmichael, "[h]e sat motionless, staring silently into space" for the rest of the afternoon.[48]

The Chaney-Schwerner-Goodman-story is the most well-known of Freedom Summer. It dominated headlines for two months. After the three investigated the burning of pro-civil rights Mt. Zion Methodist Church, deputy sheriff Cecil Price arrested and incarcerated them in sheriff Lawrence Rainey's jail for a trumped-up traffic charge. Around 10:30 p.m. Price released them after contacting Ray Edgar Killen, the ring leader of one of the White Knights' covert squads. Its Imperial Wizard, Sam Bowers, had already ordered Schwerner's death; as a pro-integrationist atheist of Jewish descent he considered Schwerner "a thorn in the flesh of everyone living." Price stopped the three again outside of town until Killen's squad arrived. They killed Schwerner and Goodman with a single shot and Chaney with three after beating him. They burned the trio's car, which local Choctaw tribe members found in a swamp on June 23. On August 4 their bodies were found in an earthen dam.[49]

Project critics, like columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, instantly blamed SNCC, in the same vein as SCLC had attracted criticism for victimizing children in Birmingham. Journalist Joseph Alsop charged that COFO "must have wanted, even hoped for, martyrs;" *The Washington Post* charged that the government was not "so apathetic, stupid, hypocritical or cowardly that it must be constrained to act by the threat of piling martyrs' corpses on its doorstep." Moses said in 1984 that Justice Department officials likewise pursued "the theme of Evans and Novak…that we were causing all of this." So "I reminded Burke [that] the campaign of terror really could be traced back to the summer of '63." In a memo to "project contacts" he reiterated that Freedom Summer had not caused but "simply revealed the terror" that "is a continuing fact of life."[50]

The accusations upset COFO-workers, particularly Moses. Vehemently denying them, they pointed to the many precautions they had taken. Thirty years later the charges still angered Moses: "I don't think people appreciate what [that accusation] means. Because, believe me, if it had been possible in any way…to stop [violence] from happening, it would have been done." In 1985 Dave Dennis compared it to warfare: "[W]hen you're in a war, you don't send soldiers out to be killed, you send soldiers out to win the war, hoping like hell that they're not gonna be killed." Ed King continued the military metaphor: "We did not want [the volunteers] as cannon fodder…we expected [the leaders] would be killed first." The decision to risk participants' lives had not been made lightly; as late as June SNCC-workers grappled with the realization that "[i]ts our hands and our minds that created a project that's going to stimulate violence." If COFO exploited anything, Moses admitted to the volunteers in Ohio, it was the sad reality that "you bring with you the concern of the country. It does not identify with Negroes. It identifies with whites." The volunteers well understood this. As one wrote home: "[W]e're not dupes…I am being used, but I know why and how, and will that Bob Moses so use me."[51]

---

[48] Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 11-12; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 320-321; *Freedom On My Mind*, directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford, Clarity Educational Productions, 1994; "Whatsoever A Man Soweth," transcripts documentary on Mississippi by Dale Minor and Chris Koch for Pacific Radio, recorded on June 27, 1964, Files #0362-0372, Reel 20, Series VIII, Research Department, SNCC Papers; Carmichael and Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 373; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 264.

[49] See Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 1-46, 278-301; Marsh, *God's Long Summer*, 66-72. Both Price and Rainey were Knights-members.

[50] Bob Moses to "Friends of Freedom in Mississippi," memorandum, April 6, 1964, Files #1225-1226, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, and Bob Moses to "Mississippi Summer Project Contacts," memorandum, June 27, 1964, File #0648, Reel 42, Series XVII, Other Organizations, SNCC Papers; "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," *Newsweek*, July 13, 1964; "Mission to Mississippi," *The Washington Post*, June 25, 1964; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Taylor Branch, July 30, 1984, Taylor Branch Papers. For criticism on SCLC in Birmingham, see among others Diane McWorther's *Carry Me Home*.

[51] "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," *Newsweek*, July 13, 1964; Dave Dennis and Robert Moses, interviews by Blackside, Inc, November 10, 1985, and May 19, 1986, for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries; Ed King,

The murders nonetheless shook the COFO-workers. "[I]t really took [the Project] into a different emotional space [and] level of commitment," Moses reflected in 1994, "You have got to reevaluate your going into Mississippi in light of the knowledge that some in your crew are already dead before you even get there." Ed King claimed that Moses "would not, almost could not, talk about Neshoba" for days. As with Herbert Lee and Louis Allen, he could not shake his feelings of guilt. In 2010 SNCC-photographer Matt Herron illustrated how much. Near the summer's end he encountered Moses in Jackson for the first time in months: "So I greeted him effusively[:] 'Bob, it's great to see you! How are you?' And he stopped me dead. He looked at me with these haunted eyes, and said: 'Are you kidding?' And I realized then that he carried the murder…with him through that whole summer. It absolutely haunted him, and colored everything that he did." As Director of the Neshoba-area but absent that day, Dave Dennis felt the same: "[W]e would have been on top of it quicker if I had been there. The people…there just didn't know what to do." Aaron Henry, who had helped Moses to recruit Andrew Goodman at Queens College, felt especially responsible to his parents: "They lost [their] son because of me."[52]

After his initial immobilization, however, Moses decided that "to give meaning to [the trio's] lives" COFO should "make the project actually fulfill its goals." Withdrawal was no option, he wrote the volunteers' parents: "Negroes of Mississippi have suffered for decades from [this] kind of incident…Only our presence in Mississippi ensures the continued concern of the nation for the Negroes of that state." He joined John Lewis and James Forman in calling the federal government and asked the volunteers and their parents to do likewise. He insisted they were "not looking for generalized chaos in which troops can come and take over" but "for a framework in which people can do their work." He, Forman, Henry, Lawrence Guyot, and Charles Evers met CIA-director Allen Dulles in Jackson on June 25. Meanwhile FOS-groups held support demonstrations in New York, Chicago, and Boston. They planned civil disobedience in Washington too, but Moses "quietly" instructed national SNCC to reject the plans because it implied that COFO wanted to embarrass the government. Inciting "a steady stream of individuals to meet" with Burke Marshall, Robert Kennedy, and the President was more productive, he argued, since "there was already a sufficient statutory basis for the federal government to act."[53]

Moses nonetheless pressed for increased legal action. On June 26 he and other COFO-members met with Arthur Kinoy and William Kunstler in Oxford. "We cannot sit here and do nothing," Kinoy recalled Moses as saying, "Think of something! We want you to do something that says loud and clear we are not running…We're hitting back!" They devised an unprecedented lawsuit, *COFO vs. Rainey*, on behalf of all local blacks against Lawrence Rainey and all "other [racist] country sheriffs in Mississippi." Volunteer lawyers compiled affidavits from both locals like Fannie Lou Hamer and outsiders like Rita Schwerner and Mario Savio. COFO distributed copies of the brief for publicity. In August the lawyers filed a suit on behalf of Moses, Henry, Dennis, and SNCC's Hunter Morey, challenging the new state laws passed "to hinder

interviews by William Chafe, March 10 and October 30, 1988, transcript, Allard Lowenstein Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 247, 318; "Last Summer in Mississippi," *Redbook Magazine*, November 1964; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 30; *The Detroit Free Press*, June 22, 1964; Eugene Nelson, letter, June 26, 1964, Eugene Nelson Letters 1964, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin.

[52] Moses interview Biewen, American Radio Works, 1994; *Freedom On My Mind*, directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford, Clarity Educational Productions, 1994; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 158; Carmichael and Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 373, 377; Matt Heron, interview by author, Raleigh, NC, April 17, 2010; Dittmer, *Local People*, 248-250; Aaron Henry, interview by Robert Wright, September 25, 1968, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Howard University.

[53] Russell, *Black Genius and the American Experience*, 334; Bob Moses to parents volunteers, letter, no date, William Heath Papers; "Mississippi Summer Project—1964," report by a student volunteer, no date, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, University of Southern Mississippi; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 321-322; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 15; "Rights Workers Still Missing," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 15 (June 30, 1964): 1, 3-4, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 163-166; Henry and Curry, *Aaron Henry*, 168-169; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 167; King, *Freedom Song*, 388-390.

civil rights activities." NLG-lawyer Victor Rabinowitz spoke with Moses and James Forman about lawsuits against Greenwood, Clarksdale, and Canton authorities.[54]

Moses further increased COFO's safety precautions. He insisted that nobody should travel alone without leaving details of the destination. COFO installed a two-way radio system that linked its offices and its cars. Communications workers were instructed to call the Jackson office every two hours and maintain "instruction boards" with time lines when someone left. Moses reversed the decision to send volunteers to southwest Mississippi "until the reactions in the other part of the state were known." A week later, however, he decided that COFO could not desert locals around McComb again. Since "[a]nyone who goes in faces a high probability of death," he told *Newsweek*, experienced staff members went instead. "Then nobody can accuse us of sending [volunteers] in for the purpose of getting killed. Then the whole question will be whether the country will do for us and for Negro people what they have done for the volunteers." He privately admitted that this deployment also provided a means for black staff members to "escape from the volunteers." Remembering Ella Baker's lessons about safeguarding what became "of the students in the long run," he flew to California to recruit his Harlem friend Alvin Poussaint, now an established psychiatrist. He joined COFO's medical team as a physician for staff and volunteers.[55]

Getting through to the volunteers was Moses' biggest concern. After the burned car was found "I was sure they were dead," he said in 1986, but "[b]ecause of [Rita] I really didn't want to come out and say that. But then there were the volunteers. They had to be told the truth." He and other staff "did their best to discourage our coming," one volunteer wrote, "Moses said he wished they would find the bodies…just to make us fully realize what we were getting into." During "one long 'soul-session' discussion," another reported, "he sent us away for hours to rethink." Some volunteers were shaken. "[T]houghts are going crazy," one wrote. "Moses just told us now is the time to back out. Should I? I don't know—I am scared shitless." COFO's medical staff reported "a noticeable increase" in "those openly anxious, fearful or unable to sleep soundly."[56]

For some outsiders, however, the murders gave the Mississippi "adventure" a romantic aura. Reporters' depiction of the volunteers as heroes encouraged this feeling. Across the nation various organizations announced plans to come to Mississippi in "carloads." Even the NAACP spoke of sending "one thousand individuals." Fearing chaos, Moses and Forman rushed to media outlets to discourage

---

[54] Mississippi's 'Freedom Summer' Reviewed, conference October 30-November 2, 1979, transcript, Session 8, Folder 7, Mississippi's 'Freedom Summer' Reviewed Collection; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 384-385; "Omnibus Rights Suit Filed Against Miss.," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 21 (August 19, 1964): 1, 4, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 187, 190; Affidavits *COFO vs. Rainey* lawsuit, Files #0187-0195, Reel 63, and #0703-0704 and #0721, Reel 66, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; "United States Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit," petition by Henry, Moses, and King, no date (likely spring 1964), and "United States District Court for the Southern District of Mississippi," petition by Dennis, Moses, Henry, and Morey, Box 3, Folder 12, and Rabinowitz to Arthur Kunstler, Ben Smith, Moses, Forman, and Morey, letter, August 5, 1964, Box 3, Folder 4, Hunter R. Morey Papers.

[55] Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 265; Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 66; Jim Kates and Alvin Poussaint, email interviews by author, May 25, 2009, and October 2010; Jim Kates, "June 1964" and "August 1964," unpublished essays, in author's possession; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 386; Hampton and Fayer, *Voices of Freedom*, 191; "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," *Newsweek*, July 13, 1964; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Taylor Branch, August 10, 1983, Taylor Branch Papers; Moses interview Dittmer, 1983. In 2010 Alvin Poussaint said Moses had not only wanted him as a physician, but also to "spearhead the desegregation of hospitals and other health facilities" in Mississippi.

[56] Zoya Zeman, interview by John Rachal, April 18, 1996, transcript, and Jan Handke, report June 29, 1964, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, University of Southern Mississippi; Carmichael and Thelwell, *Ready for Revolution*, 372; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 15; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Blackside, Inc., May 19, 1986, for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, Missouri; Hampton and Fayer, *Voices of Freedom*, 190; Jim Kates, "June 1964" and "August 1964," unpublished essays, in author's possession; "Last Summer in Mississippi," *Redbook Magazine*, November 1964; Robert Coles and Joseph Brenner, "American Youth in a Social Struggle: The Mississippi Summer Project," report, no date, William Heath Papers; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 38-39.

them. "People coming into Mississippi will not help the program as it has been developed and will not help black people," Moses stated. They helped best by remaining in the North, where they could "act as a force for political pressure." When people kept calling the FOS-offices, he reiterated on June 27 that "untrained and unoriented volunteers…would serve only to disrupt what is now a well-controlled plan of operation" because it would be "impossible for us to house them, supervise their activities, or protect them."[57]

After only a handful of volunteers quit, Moses addressed the group once more in a final speech that represented the quintessence of his leadership style. As Moses spoke, he hung his head and stared at his feet. Speaking slowly and softly, he made an analogy from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: "There is a weariness from constant attention to the things you are doing, the struggle of good against evil." His focus on Tolkien is revealing. It allowed him to express his emotions while hiding behind a fictitious character. His and Frodo's struggle in resisting an unwanted corrupting power, and the exhaustion of constantly battling evil, were essentially the same. His invocation of Tolkien, rather than the Bible, underscored Moses' cosmopolitan background and helped him to reach the northern students. This modern fantasy, written by an English professor of Anglo-Saxon literature, was becoming, in the mid-1960s, one of the most widely-read books among educated young people. Of all COFO-staff, Cleve Sellers noted, "Moses communicated best with the white students." In 1991 Moses related that he chose the book because "[i]t was fashionable to read when I was in graduate school [so many] college students knew [it]." It helped "to get them to understand what it was like, what SNCC-workers…were going through." It worked, one volunteer wrote home. "For those…who knew the book, it was a great and beautiful moment and it gave us an understanding which we might otherwise never have had." One volunteer called his speech a "near sacred moment" which "increased my commitment…The impact on me was riveting and life affecting." Another termed it "one of my most profound experiences of leadership…I would have done anything he asked me to do—I trusted him so much."[58]

Moses then said: "The kids are dead." He paused, one volunteer noted, "without regard for dramatic effect. But long enough for it to hit us." The group turned silent. "There may be more deaths," Moses added, and, after another pause, "I justify myself because I'm taking risks myself, and I'm not asking people to do things I'm not willing to do." Moreover, "people were being killed already, the Negroes of Mississippi, and I feel, anyway, responsible for their deaths." He cited Herbert Lee and Louis Allen. But "[i]f you are going to do anything about it," he sighed, "other people are going to be killed. No privileged group in history has ever given up anything without some kind of blood sacrifice." He again stared silently at the floor. "Obviously," one volunteer wrote home, his rationales "don't satisfy him…Moses almost seemed to be wanting all of us to go home." Moses then continued: "[I]n our country we have some real evil…If for any reason you're hesitant about what you're getting into, it's better for you to leave. Because what has got to be done has to be done in a certain way, or otherwise it won't get done." An "absolute" silence followed until a girl sang "They Say That Freedom Is a Constant Struggle." All stayed.[59]

---

[57] Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 66; King, *Freedom Song*, 394-395. For Moses' June 27, 1964, statement, see also File #1099, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, and File #0352, Reel 16, Series VII, Communications Department, Internal Communications, SNCC Papers.

[58] Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 352-353; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 25-26; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 72; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 374; Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 82; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Taylor Branch, February 15, 1991, transcript, Box 149, Taylor Branch Papers; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 28-29, 36-37; Joseph Ellin, letter, June 28, 1964, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, University of Southern Mississippi; Robert Parris Moses, interview by Blackside, Inc., May 19, 1986, for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries; Heather Tobis Booth, email interview by author, November 2009; *Freedom On My Mind*, directed by Connie Field and Marilyn Mulford, Clarity Educational Productions, 1994.

[59] Ibid.

Ironically at this point COFO had already largely accomplished what it sought to achieve. Freedom Summer became a classic example of successful nonviolent direct action: it invited white retaliation but its effect on a national audience paradoxically inhibited new violence. In this the Neshoba-killings proved decisive. The visibility they brought poignantly confirmed Moses' justification for the Project: federal authorities and Mississippi's white elite finally determined to eradicate the state's terrorist groups. As Moses told *Newsweek*: "The country, unfortunately, moves only in response to acts of violence." He stated in August that, apart from southwest Mississippi, "there is little harassment of workers…We interpret that as meaning that police put out the word to local citizens." *The St. Louis Post Dispatch* called better police protection the Project's "most important gain." Even Governor Johnson, Senator Eastland, and Mayor Thompson publicly repudiated the violence. Economics, perhaps more than morality, changed their stance. After the murders, Gulf Coast tourism dropped by 50%, the State had to borrow $8 million in expenses, and its tax revenues fell. Some factories even relocated offices to Louisiana to avoid "a Mississippi mailing address." Mississippi's reluctant compliance with the Civil Rights Act, historian John Dittmer noted, "marked the end of the policy of 'massive resistance.'"[60]

Yet neither the KKK nor local authorities surrendered easily. The FBI documented that COFO suffered 1,000 arrests, 35 shootings, and eight beatings during the short summer; COFO reported many more incidents of harassment. WATS-reports of a typical day in July for instance looked like this:

JULY 2:	Harmony:	Cross burned, tacks strewn in Negro community (…)
	Hattiesburg:	Two vote registration canvassers followed and questioned by men describing themselves as state officials (…) Local police stop Negro girl, five white boys en route home. Policeman curses, threatens arrest, slaps one boy
	Batesville:	Panola County Sheriff Carl Hubbard detains several persons housing civil rights workers (…)
	Meridian:	White teenage girl throws bottle at civil rights group outside church, cuts leg of local Negro girl
	Canton:	Local police turn on sirens, play music on loudspeaker near COFO-office, fail to answer phone calls or highway patrol
	Gulfport:	Two voter registration workers threatened (…) Man grabs volunteer's shirt: 'I'm going to whip your ass.' Workers run.

Another worker, volunteer Wayne Yancey, died in a suspicious car crash. In McComb alone, twenty-five bombings and burnings occurred. State officials kept targeting the Project as Communist-led and treated the trio's disappearance as a hoax. Senator Eastland even maintained that the three were "probably laughing up it on Moscow Gold in a New York hotel." They also dismissed the COFO-workers, sometimes literally: when Rita Schwerner, Ed King, and Bob Zellner tried to see Governor Johnson, Schwerner's WATS-report reads, he "slammed the door and locked it."[61]

---

[60] Carson, *In Struggle*, 123, 322; "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," *Newsweek*, July 13, 1964; James Millstone, "Better Police Protection Called Most Important Gain in Summer of Rights Work in Mississippi," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, August 13, 1964; Dittmer, *Local People*, 247-248, 314; "Mississippi Feels Pinch on Economy," *The Sunday Gazette-Mail*, December 20, 1964, Box 56, Folder 1, Carl and Anne Braden Papers; Martin and Victoria Nicolaus to friends, letter, February 19, 1965, Folder 1, Martin and Victoria Nicolaus Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 316.

[61] O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 160, 166-167; Rubin, ed., *Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee 50th Anniversary* (Conference Booklet, April 15-18, 2010), 83, 91; Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 103-106; "Whatsoever A Man Soweth," transcripts documentary on Mississippi by Dale Minor and Chris Koch for Pacific Radio, recorded on June 27, 1964, Files #0362-0372, Reel 20, Series VIII, Research Department, and "Attempts to See Governor," WATS-report Rita Schwerner, June 25, 1964, File #0346, Reel 16, and "Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents," report, June

This was not surprising considering how involved state authorities had been in the crime. In 1970 Governor Johnson admitted to having known that the trio would be taken out of jail to scare them, but that it had simply ended badly. Even Moses barely believed "the idea that at [that] level of the government…this was taking place." The Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission had distributed information on Schwerner to the KKK, and Sheriff Rainey blatantly refused to join the search or speak with the FBI. COFO's compilation of its fifty calls to federal and state authorities showed the latter's deliberate passivity. Prison employees denied the trio's presence and the local FBI ignored COFO's calls. The local FBI even refused action until late afternoon the next day: residential agent John Proctor 'interviewed' Cecil Price while enjoying smuggled liquor. It accordingly "took 24 hours—undoubtedly the critical 24 hours," Moses told the volunteers in Ohio, "to get the Federal Government to act."[62]

The White House seemed equally aloof. Rita Schwerner saw Allen Dulles in Jackson—for two minutes. On June 29 she met an unenthusiastic Lee White in Washington. "If you wish to talk with me," White wrote President Johnson beforehand, "my secretary can get me out of the meeting." Afterward he nonetheless brought her to the President. She asked him for "thousands of extra people," Johnson told J. Edgar Hoover, but "I told her I [had already] put [in] all that we could efficiently handle." He initially refused to meet the parents of Schwerner and Goodman too for fear "that [if] I start housemothering each kid that's gone down there and that doesn't show up…we'll have this White House full of people every day." He eventually agreed to see them because White reminded him that the visit was "highly publicized." White reassured the President that "it would not be necessary to endorse the project [or] blame Mississippi."[63]

President Johnson's telephone transcripts reveal that the case deeply troubled him. The disappearance dominated his telephone calls for ten days. The calls betray his sense of powerlessness, as evidenced by his repetitive questions to each caller whether they thought the men were murdered. While irritated, however, he did not contradict Governor Paul Johnson's and Senator James Eastland's claims of a publicity stunt. He tried to walk a "tightrope" between segregationist Mississippians and the civil rights groups. "I'm doing what I can," he sighed in one call, to "be as considerate of my fellow man as I can and still try to lead the nation." But the civil rights groups made this impossible, he complained to Hoover: "[We have to] show the country that we are really working [on this] because if we don't this crowd's gonna demand everything in the world."[64]

President Johnson subsequently ordered 400 marines to drag swamps for the bodies and sent 100 additional FBI-agents. He told Hoover he did not "want these Klansmen to open their mouth without your

16-July 16, 1964, Files #0139-0142, Reel 17, Series VII, Communications Department, Internal Communications, SNCC Papers; Dittmer, *Local People*, 265-271; "McComb Shaken by Over 20 Bombings," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 23 (November 25, 1964): 1, 4, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 199, 202.

[62] Ben Chaney, "Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman: The Struggle for Justice," *Human Rights Magazine* 27, no. 2 (spring 2000); Paul B. Johnson, interview, September 18, 1970, Files #00432-00446, Reel 2, Part 3, Oral Histories, Papers Lyndon Johnson; Moses interview Dittmer, August 15, 1983; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 164-166; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 336-365, 407-408; "COFO Contacts with Neshoba County Law Enforcement Officers in the Schwerner, Chaney, Goodman Case," June 21-June 24, 1964, report, Files #0365-0366, Reel 16, Series VII, Communications Department, Internal Communications, and "Missing Mississippi Summer Project Workers: Chronology of Contacts with the Federal Government," report, June 26, 1964, Files #0163-0167, Reel 14, Series VII, Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 377-387; "Nation Mourns Slain Workers," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 21 (August 19, 1964): 1, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 187.

[63] O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 166-167; Lee White to Lyndon B. Johnson, memoranda, June 23 and 29, 1964, Files #00099 and #00100, Reel 7, Part 1, White House Central Files, Papers Lyndon Johnson; Lyndon B. Johnson to Lee White, John McCormack, Nicholas Katzenbach, and J. Edgar Hoover on June 23, 1964, transcripts telephone calls in *Taking Charge*, ed. Beschloss, 425-427, 430-438. For this and next two paragraphs see also the Presidential Recording Program, Miller Center, University of Virginia (http://millercenter.org/academic/presidentialrecordings).

[64] Lyndon B. Johnson to Lee White, John McCormack, Nicholas Katzenbach, James Eastland, Paul Johnson, and J. Edgar Hoover on June 23, 1964, to Russell Long on July 20, 1964, to J. Edgar Hoover on June 24, 26, 29, and July 2, 1964, transcripts telephone calls, in *Taking Charge*, ed. Beschloss, 425-427, 430-441 444-445, 448-449, 458-459.

knowing." The latter opened an FBI-office in Jackson for investigations but "most certainly not," he assured *The Clarion-Ledger*, to "give protection to civil rights workers." Yet the new agents, John Doar wrote, "were appalled by the breakdown in local law enforcement [and] ashamed of the Bureau's prior performance." They infiltrated the Klan and interviewed over 1,000 Mississippians, leading to the solving of the Neshoba-case and the breakup of the KKK. Paid informants revealed the men's burial place and federal authorities arrested twenty whites. In 1967 seven of the suspects, including Cecil Price, were imprisoned for depriving the trio of their civil rights (but not for murder since homicide is a state and not a federal crime). In 2005 Ray Edgar Killen was retried and sentenced to 60 years for manslaughter. *The Saturday Evening Post* reported that by January 1965 the KKK's membership in Mississippi had shrunk to 2,000.[65]

For COFO these successes did not outweigh the federal government's initial reserve. "[I]f mass rioting breaks out in America you could attribute a lot of it to President Johnson's handling of this case," Dick Gregory thundered in *Ramparts*. John Lewis placed "the full responsibility for these deaths directly in the hands of the United States Justice Department and the [FBI]." In situations where local police was "in on the planning with the terrorists," Moses likewise charged at SNCC's Fall Conference, "the federal government is more willing to sacrifice the lives of Negroes…than it is to tamper with the structure of the government." He told *Newsweek* that COFO-workers were "very bitter" over the federal government's eventual response because it confirmed that the nation considered white lives more valuable than black ones. "We have been asking for [the FBI] for three years," he had told the volunteers in Ohio, but only "now the federal government is concerned." He tried to see its benefits because "there will be more protection for us, and hopefully for the Negroes who live there." But only a saint would not have resented the fact that suddenly the AP, UPI, NBC, ABC, and CBS called COFO headquarters twice daily, and national papers like *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* now stationed reporters in Jackson. That the search for the bodies of the civil rights workers turned up other bodies—including those of two Alcorn student-activists missing since 1963—fuelled SNCC's bitterness. "As soon as it was determined that these bodies were not the three," Dave Dennis recalled in 1985, "those deaths were forgotten."[66]

At James Chaney's memorial service on August 7 Dennis ventured his anger. He tearfully proclaimed that he had "a bitter vengeance in my heart tonight [and] I'm not going to stand here and ask anybody…not to be angry!" While he did not say so out loud, he had reached "a point whereby I just could not anymore tell people to be nonviolent." For most COFO-workers, James Forman recalled, Freedom Summer "confirmed the absolute necessity for armed self-defense." Yet Moses' influence prevailed. At a Greenwood staff meeting Stokely Carmichael, for example, went "to get the mandate from Bob" to arm himself. After the phone call, one observer noted, Carmichael returned "a different man." As "calm and thoughtful as Moses himself, Stokely said, 'What I think we ought to do is work harder on freedom registration forms.'" For the time-being Moses' consensus-building approach still worked: since both disagreed on self-defense, he convinced Carmichael to focus instead on what they could agree on, the need for voter registration.[67]

---

[65] Lyndon B. Johnson to J. Edgar Hoover on July 2, 1964, transcript telephone call, in *Taking Charge*, ed. Beschloss, 448-449; O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 167-178; Jerry DeLaughter, "FBI Director Tells Plans For Our State," *The Clarion-Ledger*, July 11, 1964; Jerry O'Leary, "Hoover, in Mississippi, Opens Big FBI Office," *The Evening Star*, July 10, 1964; Doar and Landsberg, "The Performance of the FBI in Investigating Violations of Federal Laws Protecting the Right to Vote – 1960-1967"; Martin and Fairly, "We Got Nothing to Hide," 27-33.

[66] O'Reilly, "*Racial Matters*," 176, 192; Dick Gregory, interview, in "Mississippi Eye Witness" special edition of *Ramparts* 1964, 36-39; "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," *Newsweek*, July 13, 1964; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 163; Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 67; Moses and Cobb, *Radical Equations*, 62; Dave Dennis, interview by Blackside, Inc., November 10, 1985 for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries.

[67] Dave Dennis, "Oration for Funeral of James Chaney," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 360-363; Dave Dennis, interview by Blackside, Inc., November 10, 1985 for *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years (1954-1965)*, Film and Media Archive, Henry Hampton Collection, Washington University Libraries; Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, 26, 84; McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, 122-123; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 182-183; Carson, *In Struggle*, 122-123.

8.3. This Is What It's All About

Focusing on grassroots empowerment helped Moses to persevere. On August 19 he stated that the Project was "eminently successful" in its goal of "the development of local leadership and staff who will help sustain projects." Local participation in its parallel projects, he proudly noted, "was beyond our expectation." In Leflore County, for example, where only two out of 123 blacks managed to become registered voters that summer, 3,384 signed up for COFO's mock 'freedom' registration lists[68]. This constituted progress, Moses explained in *Pacific Scene*,

"in terms of what happens to the people we are working with…They don't have any participation in society but they've found freedom. They can do things that they've wanted to do for a long time. They've been able to confront people who are on their backs. They take whatever is dished out—bombings, shootings, beatings, whatever it is. After people live through that they have a scope that they didn't have before."

Amzie Moore praised the Project as "the best thing that's happened here since the 1940s."[69]

Historian Charles Payne has pointed to COFO's Freedom Schools—forty-seven of them enrolled 2,500 students aged seven to seventy—as proof of SNCC's community-organizing tradition's success. Charlie Cobb had envisioned the schools in November 1963 as a prolongation of Moses' educational programs and as an attack on the "intellectual wastelands" that Mississippi's existing black schools represented. Housed in shabby buildings without facilities, the latter used outdated teaching material and their teachers were sometimes almost as poorly-educated as their students. Black public school teachers, moreover, were notoriously reluctant to support the civil rights movement, and sometimes surreptitiously undermined it. The Freedom Schools served as parallel educational institutions, but also advocated social action. They taught participants "questions which take them inside into their own minds [to] get at attitudes that they have about themselves [and] white people," Moses explained at Stanford, and thereby they could create "another basis [we could] operate from" in the future.[70]

The schools benefitted tremendously from Moses' and SNCC's skills in communicating the Mississippi Movement's needs to outsiders with resources. With John Lewis and James Forman, Moses asked Broadway performers to sponsor them, and he contacted the United Federation of Teachers for "staff, funds, [and] equipment." He approved Jane Stembridge's manual for the schools' prospective teachers, sent pamphlets to the volunteers so they could involve "some church, civic or other group," and sought the assistance of social scientists and education specialists at Boston and Yale Universities. He met Philip Stern in Washington to discuss the schools, and spoke with Myles Horton and the National Council of Churches about using Highlander and Mt. Beulah for a teachers' meeting and additional workshops. With Ella Baker and COFO's John O'Neal he discussed ways of "screening and recruitment of prospective teachers." The curriculum was established at an NCC-sponsored conference in New York during March

[68] See Chapter 9.

[69] "Moses in Mississippi Raises Some Universal Questions," *Pacific Scene*, February 3, 1965; "Statement of Robert Moses," August 19, 1964, transcript, File #0699, Reel 43, Series XVII, Other Organizations, and "Mississippi Summer Project Ends, Mississippi Freedom Drive Begins," news release, August 29, 1964, File #0196, Reel 13, Series Communications Department, Public Relations, SNCC Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 482-483.

[70] Payne, *I´ve Got the Light of Freedom*, 301-306; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 441-442; Charlie Cobb, interview by John Rachal, October 21, 1996, transcript, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, and Bob Moses, "Speech," (West Coast Civil Rights Conference, April 23, 1964), transcript, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, University of Southern Mississippi; Dittmer, *Local People*, 259; Charlie Cobb, "Prospectus for a Summer Freedom School Program," November 1963, Files #0022-0024, Reel 20, Series VIII, Research Department, and "Summer Freedom Schools in Mississippi," memorandum Charles Cobb to SNCC Executive Committee, January 14, 1964, File #0456, Reel 63, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers.

21-22, which Moses attended. Participants there at Moses' invitation included Myles Horton, Tim Jenkins, John Blyth, and programmed learning specialist Joan Countryman.[71]

Moses played a key role in the teachers' orientation program at Oxford too. He advised the volunteers "to be patient" with their pupils because "there is a distinction between being slow and being stupid, and the kids in Mississippi are very, very, very slow." He knew this from personal experience, but he was also influenced by Frank Riessman's "slow v. dull" theories in *The Culturally Deprived Child*, which SNCC's Mary Varela sent him beforehand. Moses emphasized that the teachers should not expect too much. If they could "break off a little chunk of a problem," he said, and "make some steps in examining it thoroughly, then [you] will have accomplished something really significant." He again appealed to his book drive donors, and the French Embassy contacted him about donating French teaching aids. The influx of books fascinated the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, which reported nervously that those "addressed to Robert Moses" included Robert Williams' *Negroes With Guns* and C. Wright Mills' *The Marxists*.[72]

The curriculum included neither Williams nor Mills, but, one historian confirmed, "embraced a radical pedagogy and a radical philosophy" that reflected Moses' thinking. The schools' essence, one volunteer explained in 2009, "was enabling the students to formulate…their own thoughts [and this] was certainly Moses' way." The curriculum was based on pupils' "everyday lives" but built "up to a more realistic perception of American society, themselves, the conditions of their oppression, and alternatives offered by the Freedom Movement." This was done through questions like "How is Bob Moses like Moses in the Bible?" and "Why doesn't Mrs. Hamer stay in the North once she gets there to speak?" COFO advised the volunteers to utilize their own skills and teach what the students requested. The schools, historian Barbara Ransby argued, represented "an extension of [SNCC's] decentralized structure." There were no set opening times and no traditional discipline. Under the influence of Northern educators the schools prioritized remedial work in literacy and math, but leadership development was never forgotten. In typing classes students wrote "freedom newspapers," and French was used "to develop grammar and phonetic skills" in English, which would benefit job searches.[73]

All schools experienced failures and successes,[74] but overall, historian John Dittmer stated, they

---

[71] King, *Freedom Song*, 441; Jane Stembridge, "Notes on Teaching in Mississippi," no date, and Moses to accepted volunteers, memorandum, no date, William Heath Papers; Moses to Vernon Eagle (New World Foundation), letter, May 27, 1964, File #1017, Reel 69, Moses to Dick Parrish (UFT), letter, March 10, 1964, File #1225, Reel 9, Moses to Philip Stern and Robert Cohen (Boston University), May 1, 1964, File #0486, Reel 67, and Moses to Charles McCarthy (Yale), May 1, 1964, and Liz Fusco (Freedom School Coordinator) to Myles Horton, letter, September 2, 1964, File #0465, Reel 67, and Matthew Holden (University of Pittsburgh) to Moses, letter, May 21, 1964, File #0265, Reel 67, and "People Invited to the Curriculum Conference," report, no date, File #0605, Reel 64, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, and Moses, Lewis, and Forman to "Theatre Group for SNCC," letter, no date, File #1020, Reel 1, Series I, Chairman Files John Lewis, SNCC Papers; Ransby, *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement*, 327.

[72] John O'Neal to Ella Baker, letter, April 13, 1964, File #1549, Reel 69, Mary Varela to Bob Moses, no date (likely spring 1964), File #0574, Reel 67, letter Bob Moses to Valida Diehl, March 6, 1964, File #0130, Reel 64, and Edouard Morot-Sir to Bob Moses, letter, September 11, 1964, File #0466, Reel 68, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; Cagin and Dray, *We Are Not Afraid*, 353; Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Lise Vogel Papers; Murphree, *The Selling of Civil Rights*, 74; Tom Scarbrough, "Lafayette—Marshall Counties," investigative report, May 19, 1964, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Online, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS, http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/ (accessed November 22, 2007).

[73] Paul Lauter, email interview by author, April 13, 2009; Ransby, *Ella Baker & The Black Freedom Movement*, 327-328; Liz Fusco, "Freedom Schools in Mississippi, 1964," report, no date, Files #0005-0008, Reel 39, and Staughton Lynd, "Mississippi Freedom Schools: Retrospect and Prospect," report, July 26, 1964, Files #0332-0337, Reel 38, Series XV, State Project Files, and "Citizenship Curriculum," report, no date, File #0133, "Resources for Teaching Negro History," report, no date, File #0029, "Overview of the Freedom Schools," memorandum from Mississippi Summer Project Staff, May 5, 1964, Files #0044-0045, Reel 20, Series VIII, Research Department, SNCC Papers; Rothshild, *Northern Volunteers and the Southern 'Freedom Summers,'* 115-127; Dittmer, *Local People*, 261.

[74] With 600 students, the Hattiesburg one was the most successful. Rural schools, like in Shaw, had more problems: few

"stand out as a major achievement." On August 6 Moses attended a three-day Freedom School Convention in Meridian. Each school sent three student representatives and a coordinator. The Holly Springs school performed a play about Medgar Evers. Speakers included A. Philip Randolph and James Forman. Moses merely "asked questions" to help students "articulate what they wanted for the future." He gleefully watched as the students formed committees to formulate a platform for the Mississippi Movement's new political party. "It was the single time in my life that I have seen Bob happiest," Staughton Lynd observed, "He just ate it up…He just thought this was what it was all about."[75]

Moses described the establishment of sixteen community centers statewide, one volunteer recalled, as additional tools for "[creating] a parallel society." Like the Freedom Schools they had a dual function. For youth they provided daycare, educational assistance, and recreation, but gave adults leadership training, political education, job training, and help with health and social security problems. Moses' own involvement was limited to enlisting his uncle Bill to construct one center and, through Myles Horton, in recruiting two wealthy Californians to provide a building crew and job training for locals in Mileston.[76]

As Moses had hoped, the schools and centers were of lasting significance to the locals participating in them. Some even became scholars or news anchors later in life. Several centers stayed open after the summer, but others faltered for lack of facilities, money, and local personnel. To continue them, COFO's reports confirm, it had "to find support in large doses from outside of the state." The schools did continue into the fall and were revived in the 1965 summer. "I have learned…much more this summer than I learned in many, many years," one teenager wrote elated, "Freedom School ment more to me then I can explain."[77]

Moses made sure to include music and drama. He helped to recruit forty New York musicians for a "Caravan of Music." Bob Cohen, Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, Judy Collins, and other singers taught musical workshops and performed spirituals at Freedom Schools and community centers. To encourage locals' artistic aspirations, Moses helped organize a folk and drama festival in early August at which they

showed up because regular school was held simultaneously (so black pupils could pick cotton in the fall), teachers had a high turn-over rate because they were unsatisfied with the slow pace that SNCC's community organizing demanded, and parents used the schools as daycare centers. Successful schools unintentionally created a "super-bureaucracy and a tendency toward more 'conventional' methods of teaching" as large numbers even led to "bells between classes." (Dittmer, *Local People*, 260; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 305-306; Rothshild, *Northern Volunteers and the Southern 'Freedom Summers,'* 134-137; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 118; Wally to Staughton Lynd, letter, July 11, 1964, File #0242, Reel 68, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers).

[75] Rothshild, *Northern Volunteers and the Southern 'Freedom Summers,'* 138-140; Dittmer, *Local People*, 260-261; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 441-442; Kathy Emery, et al., *Lessons from Freedom Summer*: *Ordinary People Building Extraordinary Movements* (Monroe: Common Courage Press, 2008), 278-297. The eight committees that formulated their ideas for the platform for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party centered on public accommodations, housing, education, health, foreign affairs, federal aid, job discrimination, and voting.

[76] "Mississippi Summer Project—1964," report by a student volunteer, no date, and Zoya Zeman, interview by John Rachal, April 18, 1996, transcript, Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi Collection, University of Southern Mississippi; "Outline of Plans for 1964 for Maureen Murphy," report, December 1963, Folder 1, Mendy Samstein Papers; "The COFO Community Centers," report, no date (likely spring 1964), Files #0707-0717, Reel 21, Series VIII, Research Department, and "Mileston Community Center," report, no date, File #0540, Reel 63, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; "Harmony Builds Center," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 20 (August 12, 1964): 3, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 185; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 129, 132; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 94; Inter-Office Memorandum by Community Center Staff Martha, Claire, and Betty, July 8, 1964, Box 1, Folder 3, COFO Panola County Office Records; "Project Proposal for Mississippi for the Summer of 1964," no date, James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Myles Horton to Bob Moses, February 26, 1964, letter, and Penny Patch to Horton, March 18, 1964, Box 9, Folder 23, Highlander Research and Education Center Collection.

[77] "Progress and Problems of the COFO Community Centers," report, Summer 1964, Files #0558-0559, Reel 63, and Bessie Mae Herring, "What the Summer Project Ment to Me," report, no date, File #0576, Reel 68, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; Dittmer, *Local People*, 261; Branch, *Pillar of Fire*, 441.

could perform. Cohen served as coordinator and Sam Block and Willie Peacock as co-directors. Moses was program chair and secured the festival site. Three other SNCC-workers founded the integrated Southern Free Theater, and travelled the state performing Martin Duberman's play, *In White America*. In Ruleville blacks organized a Freedom Festival at which Freedom School pupils read self-written poems and performed plays, including "a puppet play in which the valiant knight Bob Moses fought the wicked witch Segregation."[78]

Moses' vision of long-term social change encompassed local whites. During SNCC's April meeting he had announced that "we must begin to think about opening up white communities." He wanted SSOC (Southern Student Organizing Committee), a new organization of southern whites founded by SNCC's Sam Shirah, to initiate work-study programs on white campuses and to work in Mississippi's white communities as an autonomous affiliate of SNCC. Stokely Carmichael and others opposed a SSOC affiliation, but SNCC agreed to finance SSOC's projects for COFO in Jackson and Biloxi[79]. Moses supported the projects out of idealism *and* political realism. Since one-third of Mississippi's poor was white, they should unite with their black counterparts. As he explained in 1982, it "was the only way I saw out of the impasse we came to politically in this race question." He also hoped that the projects would diminish "black-white tensions" in SNCC by demonstrating to black staff members that white workers would be "facing the same dangers they are, but in white communities." Some COFO-workers, however, just saw the projects as a convenient way of keeping whites out of black ones.[80]

Internal racial tensions remained present throughout the summer. "[T]he space in the black community was really not a completely welcoming space," Moses recalled in 1994, "so [the volunteers] had to figure out how to walk through that [and it] is to their everlasting credit that they did." Culture shock added to their difficulty in adapting. "I really can't stand it here," one volunteer wrote, "the SNCC field staff with their cold, emotionless eyes and blank, beaten faces…the filthy, vermin-infested living conditions in Ruleville [and blacks'] hopelessness and apathy." Yet tensions were submerged for the time being because most locals treated the volunteers affectionately. According to Charles Payne, this approach evidenced the direct "influence of southern Black culture on the movement" as black Southerners were "sensitive to how social structure shape contradictions in people" and "to people as…potentially changing."[81]

---

[78] Cohen, "Sorrow Songs, Faith Songs, Freedom Songs," and George W. Chilcoat and Jerry A. Ligon, "Developing Democratic Citizens: The Mississippi Freedom Schools," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 177-189, 107-137; "Singers Open Mississippi Freedom School," News Release, July 9, 1964, File #0179, "Folk Festival in Mississippi," News Release, File #0720, Reel 3, Series III, Communications Department, Public Relations, and Judy Walborn, "Freedom School Report," July 15, 1964, File #0502, Reel 67, Ralph D. Ford, James A. Betts, and Lewis S. Flagg to Moses, letters, July 20, 22, and 24, 1964, Files #1246-1247, Reel 69, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; Moses to Ben Griffin, letter, July 18, 1964 and Erle Johnston, "COFO Musical and Dramatics Festival," memorandum, July 20, 1964, Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission Online, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, MS, http://mdah.state.ms.us/arrec/digital_archives/sovcom/ (accessed November 22, 2007).

[79] White organizers contacted local whites in Jackson and Biloxi "through labor organizations, churches, service and civic organizations, and canvassing in working-class communities." Neither project was successful due to the organizers' inexperience, ignorance in the white community, and their association with COFO (SSOC later allied with SDS). (Ed Hamlett, "White Folk's Project," report, no date, Files #0576-0577, and "White Community Project Workshop," report, no date (likely July 1964), File #0577-0578, Reel 63, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers)

[80] SNCC Executive Committee Meeting, April 18-19, 1964, Minutes, Box 6, Folder 2, Ella Baker Papers; Carson, *In Struggle*, 102-103, 118-119; Moses interview Carson, 1982; Bruce Maxwell, "We Must Be Allies…Race Has Led Us Both to Poverty," report, no date (likely fall 1964), Box 2, Folder 7, Howard Zinn Papers; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 250.

[81] Moses interview Biewen, American Radio Works, 1994; Alvin Poussaint, interview by KZSU Radio Station Stanford University, 1965, transcript, KZSU Project South Interview Collection, Microfiche 2479 (E), Library of Congress, Washington DC; Wally to Staughton Lynd, letter, July 11, 1964, File #0242, Reel 68, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers; Dittmer, *Local People*, 264; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 301, 306-315; Carson, *In Struggle*, 116-117. See also Sally Belfrage's *Freedom Summer* and Elisabeth Sutherland-Martinez' *Letters from Mississippi*.

During the orientation and in memoranda COFO-workers had advised the volunteers on how to handle locals. Moses characteristically suggested that they "merely facilitate events and not try to do everything themselves." James Forman told them not to address locals on a first-name basis and "to help with household chores." Historian-activist Vincent Harding warned them not to "'use' each other emotionally and sexually;" Stokely Carmichael pointed out that many black southerners disapproved of alcohol and advised the volunteers to avoid it. SCLC's Annelle Ponder advised on "manners, dress, religion and church." Others told the volunteers to "encourage people to speak up," "go slowly enough to include everyone," and "praise people freely." The training encouraged volunteers not to treat blacks, as Robert Penn Warren put it, as "an abstraction" that they could "decorate with certain self-indulgent theories, feelings, and fantasies, like a Christmas tree." Some whites nonetheless displayed attitudes that were similar to the national media's portrayal of the Project, that is, "nostalgic, romantic, oversimplified." Some even tried to become "more Negro than Negroes." Moses recalled that such whites "became objects of amusement" in COFO, but also invoked "suspicion as to their motives."[82]

Veteran staff members were sometimes guilty of romanticism too. James Forman derisively called this "local people-itis," the idea that "local people could do no wrong," and that "no-one, especially somebody from outside the community, should initiate any kind of action or assume any form of leadership." Such romanticism always existed within SNCC, recalled Julian Bond, "a great mystique of working with the rural poor under great danger." When staff-members could not "bear to hurt the delicate sensitivities of a group of local youths" who had disrupted the COFO-office, some workers penned a furious memo that condemned this "Bourgeois sentimentality." This kind of "middleclass paternalism," its authors wrote, implied that "we done been 'prived so long that we is not capable of observing simple rules of discipline and must be excused for anything we do." The youth's elevation to "the miraculous, the rare and into totally overwhelming sacred cows…bewilders and sickens us," they went on. "If you been poor you know damned well there ain't no nobility in that." Jane Stembridge likewise complained that those "who think it is glorious to put on levis and identify with the people…are full of shit."[83]

Lyrical words about the potential of grassroots leadership occasionally led movement insiders and outsiders to accuse Moses of romantization too. In *The Village Voice* Moses described Mississippi's "pure and uncorrupted sharecroppers" as "the greatest source of strength for the Movement." He told reporter Jack Newfield that he and his wife planned to travel Mississippi next year "teaching Negroes about themselves, those poor, simple folks on the bottom no-one trusts…I'll get them to write about their lives, and I'll send some of it to you because it will be so poetic." He particularly attracted criticism for his unbounded faith in Fannie Lou Hamer. "Even the usually level-headed, reserved Bob Moses," her biographer Chana Kai Lee concurred, "tended to blur the distinction between what Hamer was actually doing and the immensity of her mobilizing potential."[84]

Some volunteers found it difficult to hide their belief that locals could not do it themselves, or at least that they could do it *better*. "[T]here is a kind of Jesus Christ complex that many middle-class

---

[82] Rothshild, *Northern Volunteers and the Southern 'Freedom Summers,'* 67; "The Volunteers for Mississippi Learn Some Vital Do's and Don'ts," *The New York Herald Tribune*, June 17 1964; Vogel, "Notes of 1964 Orientation," Lise Vogel Papers; King, *Freedom Song*, 376; "Re: Adult Program," memorandum Annelle Ponder, no date, Box 1, Folder 3, COFO Panola County Office Records; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 42; "Techniques for Field Work," report, no date, Box 1, Folder 2, Catherine Clarke Civil Rights Collection; Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 315; Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* 120; Staughton Lynd, "Freedom Summer: A Tragedy, Not a Melodrama," in *Freedom Is A Constant Struggle*, ed. Erenrich, 484; Edward Brown, interview by Harold O. Lewis, June 30, 1967, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Howard University; Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, 101.

[83] Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 422; Stoper, *The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee*, 275; "SNCC's Goals and [Bourgeois] Sentimentality," paper, no date (likely fall 1964), Folder 2, Stuart Ewen Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society; Jane Stembridge to Mary King, letter, April 21, 1964, Box 3, Folder 3, Mary King Papers.

[84] Jack Newfield, "Moses in Mississippi: The Invisible Man Learns his Name," *The Village Voice*, December 3, 1964; Lee, *For Freedom's Sake*, 72-73.

whites bring to their relations with people whom they consider oppressed," one volunteer acknowledged in a letter. Another noted that the volunteers had "fresher energy than the veterans," and "less patience with a casual approach." "The inefficiency of people running their own shows tends to bug Northerners," her colleague agreed, so "the tendency is to step in." Most such cases were relatively mild, volunteer Paul Lauter recalled in 2009, citing volunteers who had "learned a lot about black history [and] wanted to tell it to the [Freedom School] kids" instead of letting them "express their own thoughts." Other examples were more severe. "[W]hite college-educated Northerners have a tendency to take command of an assembly through rapid-fire parliamentary [maneuvers]," another volunteer wrote home, "which leave local people baffled and offended." In Vicksburg a volunteer even lectured its native project director on "local problems as if they were issues that had arisen in a college seminar." The volunteer left Mississippi after Moses chose the director's side.[85]

Consequently, James Farmer recounted in 1965, "local people pulled out." They felt "inferior," native SNCC-worker Mary Lane explained in 1969: "After these people came in, you could see…it every day, 'the man' moving up a little more…and you find out that they can do a much better job of it than you could." In 1965 Ulysses Everett, another native worker, recalled his anger when he returned to the Hattiesburg SNCC-office after having spent months in jail. Everything was "completely changed from what it was. And you see all these kids around, typing, you know, talking [but] I didn't understand what they was talking about, because I didn't have an education. I couldn't type [but for us] it was worth something just being in the office working." He fled to the project in Laurel. COFO allowed such withdrawals because the volunteers' skills ensured that things could be done faster. As during the Freedom Vote, the Project's short time span demanded the skills of educated whites but may have weakened local leadership.[86]

While COFO had predicted such strife, it had underestimated the impact of the black community's internal class differences on the acceptance of the volunteers. Locals' willingness to accept veterans' and volunteers' flaws decreased the higher one got on the social ladder. Despite Moses' advise to locate "doctors, teachers, ministers, beauticians etc. and try to involve them in the program," the Summer Project exacerbated tensions between COFO and the black middle class. Although workers adapted their behavior to middle-class mores, a minority rubbed against them through partying, inappropriately casual dress, or acting "snobbish." Moses and Bill Hansen had to travel to the Gulf Coast projects to in order to squelch locals' complaints "about sex and drinking" in the COFO-projects. Laurel's NAACP president, Dr. B.E. Murph, described workers' "erratic irresponsibility" in an angry letter to Gloster Current. They preyed on "our membership," he charged, and displayed amoral behavior including "vivacious looking white girls who smiled at everyone without provocation," and "boys who smoked" and played dice. They painted the NAACP-building without permission, stocked the library with "trashy novels," and left clutter. "The story… is the same all over the State. It is worse in some places. They have taken over the Civil Rights Program," Murph concluded dismayed, "COFO Must Go!"[87]

---

[85] Dittmer, *Local People*, 261-263; Edith Black and Jay Lockard, interview by KZSU Radio Station Stanford University, 1965, transcript, KZSU Project South Interview Collection, Microfiche 2479 (E), Library of Congress; Paul Lauter, email interview by author, April 13, 2009; Martin and Victoria Nicolaus to Friends, letter, December 9, 1964, Folder 1, Martin and Victoria Nicolaus Papers; Lewis and D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind*, 249; Sutherland-Martinez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi*, 235.

[86] Warren, *Who Speaks for the Negro?* 120; Mary Lane, interview by Robert Wright, July 12, 1969, transcript, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Howard University; Payne, *I´ve Got the Light of Freedom*, 335-336; Ulysses Everett, interview by KZSU Radio Station Stanford University, 1965, transcript, KZSU Project South Interview Collection, Microfiche 2479 (E), Library of Congress.

[87] "Notes from Bob Moses," no date (likely January 1964), James Forman Papers, Library of Congress; Payne, *I´ve Got the Light of Freedom*, 241; Dittmer, *Local People*, 263-264; "Letters from Mississippi with regard to sexual tensions," report, William Heath Papers; Minutes 5th District Meeting, November 25, 1964, Box 14, Folder 1, CORE Records; Dr. B.E. Murph to Bishop Stephen Gill Spottswood (NAACP Chairman of the Board of Directors in New York), letter, no date (likely November 1964), Reel 10, Group III, Box C-74, Part 27 Selected Branch Files, Microfilm, Records NAACP.

Other NAACP-members had reached similar conclusions. In July Charles Evers asked Moses for manpower for a citizenship school and "any cooperation you could give us as a real effort towards freedom in Jackson." Moses accepted, but insisted that it should be "a CORE-SNCC-NAACP project" based on "group decision-making." Believing in top-down leadership like "a lawyer leads his witness," however, Evers rejected such restrictions and decided to refuse involvement with COFO and Freedom Summer altogether. Relations between the national NAACP and SNCC also deteriorated. After the mid-July race riots in Harlem President Johnson asked the national civil rights organizations for a moratorium on demonstrations until after his reelection. To the dismay of the President and of the moderate civil rights organizations, John Lewis and James Farmer refused. The NAACP in turn angered SNCC for testing the Civil Rights Act in Jackson, Clarksdale, and Mississippi's Gulf Coast. Despite outward unity, Gloster Current now frankly advised Charles Evers to "encourage Dr. Henry to wean himself away from [COFO]" and to "review our relationship with that outfit at the end of the summer."[88]

When NAACP members did participate in COFO activities, SNCC sometimes resented it. In Batesville, for example, SNCC-workers complained that the community center was "too exclusively of the educated people. The majority are teachers and pretty much dominate the goings and doings." Rather than welcoming such participation as evidence of local leadership, SNCC deplored it. This attitude revealed some of the complexities and contradictions of SNCC's strategy for producing social change. If it perceived the level of locals' education and income a threat to democracy, then who represented "local people" and what did this mean for the Mississippi Movement's survival? The answer became painfully apparent when the divide between middle and working class blacks and the lingering tensions between the civil rights organizations unintentionally came to a head in the Summer Project's political program.[89]

[88] Dittmer, *Local People*, 178, 274-279; Crosby, *A Little Taste of Freedom*, 85-88, 174, 214-216; Charles Evers to Bob Moses, letter, July 13, 1964, File #1240, and Moses to Evers, letter, no date, File #1242, Reel 69, Appendix A: MFDP Papers, SNCC Papers. Charles Evers had even attempted to organize an independent summer program. John Lewis justified the decision not to honor a moratorium on demonstrations by pointing out that SNCC could not decide anything for "individual Negro communities in which we are not working." ("SNCC, CORE Refuse Action Moratorium," *The Student Voice* 5, no. 19 (August 5, 1964): 1, 4, in *The Student Voice*, ed. Carson, 179, 182)

[89] Claire O'Connor, Community Center Batesville, report, August 6, 1964, Box 1, Folder 3, COFO Panola County Office Records.