



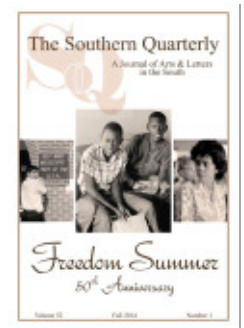
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Listening to Freedom's Voices: Forty-Four Years of Documenting the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement

LOUIS M. KYRIAKOUCES and HAYDEN NOEL MCDANIEL

No state in the nation has exhibited the extremes of the American condition as starkly as Mississippi. Possessed of some of America's richest agricultural lands, Mississippi's deeply flawed agricultural institutions have yielded a bitter harvest of privation and oppression. Plantation slavery and its successor labor system, sharecropping, have ensured a grinding and inhumane poverty that ensnared both whites and blacks. With the largest proportional African American population among the states, white Mississippians maintained the deepest commitment to state-sanctioned segregation and white supremacy. In Mississippi, America's complex and tragic history of race has played out in its starkest and most brutal form.

The totality of state-enforced racial oppression did not squelch African Americans' desire for human rights and access to the privileges of American citizenship. During Reconstruction, black southerners organized in Union Leagues to support the Republican Party and engaged headlong into political activity. Black officeholders were elected across the South as part of a vibrant Republican political organization. In Mississippi, the legislature sent two African Americans to the United States Senate. These impressive gains were short-lived. Across the South, conservative whites mobilized to undermine black electoral activity. In Mississippi, that challenge came in two waves: first in the violent challenge and overthrow of the state Republican administration in 1875, and again with the formal adoption of voter disfranchisement devices such as the poll tax and literacy test in 1890 (Kousser). Increasing segregation, political oppression laid the foundations for what the historian James Silver would call in the 1960s, "the closed society" (Silver).

While formal black political activity in Mississippi all but stopped with disfranchisement at the end of the nineteenth century, black activism for the rights of citizenship persisted and grew even as Mississippi whites sought to draw an indelible color line. The pace of black activism quickened after World War II, laying the foundations for the mass movements of the 1950s and 1960s. The battlegrounds, however, were in the South, and the most difficult of those battles were fought in the state of Mississippi. Roy Wilkins, head of the NAACP during those tumultuous years, said bluntly that Mississippi was “the worst state.” Historian John Dittmer wrote, “In not another southern state was the use of terror against the black population so systematic and pervasive.” Yet he goes on to note that “despite the intensity of white opposition, the Mississippi movement became the strongest and most far-reaching in the South” (Dittmer, 423).

Oral history has stood at the methodological forefront of civil rights scholarship. It has been through the preservation of the stories of the Movement’s leadership and rank-and-file that we have learned how the movement worked. The first wave of oral history work sought to preserve the stories of movement leaders. More recently, oral history methods have played a deeper role in transforming our understanding of history of civil rights activism by discovering the complex interactions between local activists and the national movement. Oral histories have allowed scholars to uncover the story of hundreds of civil rights activists, and thus shift the focus of our understanding of how the movement developed and functioned away from national leaders and their organizations to the community leaders and local activists whose organizing gave the movement its energy and direction. It is, as John Dittmer has argued, a movement that grew from the aspirations and actions of “local people” taking control of their own destinies and winning their own freedom. In a work that draws upon the materials in The University of Southern Mississippi’s Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, Dittmer shows how the mobilization that led to Freedom Summer and the formation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party developed organically from black Mississippians insistence upon claiming their human and citizenship rights. J. Todd Moye, also drawing heavily on materials in our collections, shows how the movement in Sunflower County, Mississippi—home to both arch segregationist, US Senator James O. Eastland and iconic civil rights activist, Fannie Lou Hamer—grew from local activism nurtured by national leaders. Moye also explores the anti-civil rights movement, showing how whites mobilized to resist their black neighbors’ demands for dignity and freedom. White opponents of the equal rights were fond of blaming “outside agitators,” but Dittmer and Moye both show it was local people who agitated for and acted as the agents of their own freedom struggle.

As scholars have followed Dittmer's lead, they have discovered how civil rights activism grew out of many local movements to interact with, and sometimes confront, national leaders. Local movements could be at odds with national strategies, particularly when it came to non-violence. Robert F. Williams, the North Carolina NAACP leader and author of *Negroes with Guns* (1962) was not the only activist to challenge Martin Luther King, Jr.'s philosophy of non-violence (Tyson, 2001). In Mississippi towns like Tchula and Hattiesburg, activists like Hartman Turnbow and Vernon Dahmer, respectively, advocated vigorous defense against state-backed and Klan-instigated terror. In Bogalusa, Louisiana, and Port Gibson, Mississippi, black men formed mutual protection societies, the "Deacons of Defense," to confront violence with strength (Crosby 2005).

Founded in 1971 in an effort to document the Mississippi civil rights movement, The University of Southern Mississippi's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage (COHCH) has been conducting and collecting interviews for forty-four years. COHCH holdings of nearly four thousand distinct interviews documenting the broad expanse of the experiences of Mississippians over the course of the twentieth and now twenty-first centuries, now comprise the largest existing collection of oral history holdings relating to the history of Mississippi and the northern Gulf Coast region. The Center is one of the largest and most important archives of civil rights-related oral histories in the nation with over four-hundred interviews documenting all facets of the movement.

These interviews range from politicians to judges, from civil rights activists to members of the white opposition. The interviews cover such topics as efforts to desegregate public accommodations, Freedom Summer, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, voter registration, school desegregation, and the everyday reality of life during Jim Crow. One series of interviews documents the memories of Mississippi Highway Patrol officers who were responsible for much of the law enforcement at the time. Another series of interviews explores out-of-state residents who came into Mississippi in 1964 for Freedom Summer. Interviews are with Mississippians who were movement leaders at the local level, including people such as Unita Blackwell from Mayersville and J.C. Fairley of Hattiesburg. Another series of interviews is with leaders in the school desegregation movement. Some of the collection's earliest interviews are with people who became nationally-recognized leaders in the movement, such as Fannie Lou Hamer, Lawrence Guyot and Amzie Moore. Others are with leading politicians such as former governors Ross Barnett and J.P. Coleman or members of the white resistance such as Citizens Council leader William J. Simmons, Ku Klux Klan leader E.L. McDaniel, and the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission leader, Earl Johnston.

Recent collection efforts under the state-funded Mississippi Oral History Project, a cooperative initiative of the COHCH, Mississippi State Department of Archives and History and Mississippi Humanities Council, have shifted to less well-known, but nonetheless critically important participants in civil rights activity that shed light on the development of black social and political institutions. For example, extensive interviews with Gilbert Mason and Felix Dunn, two African American physicians who resided on the Mississippi Gulf Coast, provide critical insight into the history of the Mississippi NAACP, segregated health care, and the Biloxi Beach Wade-In movement, a pioneering 1959 effort to integrate the beaches through non-violent protest. Palmer Foster, the first full-time black executive in Mississippi's Boy Scouts organization, explores the history of black scouting traditions and their roles in fostering later activism. Other collections illuminate the history of school desegregation in the 1970s, including the integration of teaching faculties—an often-overlooked component of school integration.

Larger themed projects have brought movement veterans together to recall their experiences. Interviews conducted at reunions at Rust College and Tougaloo College, at Holmes County Union for Progress, and in the cities of Canton, Gulfport, Holly Springs, Meridian, Vicksburg, and West Point reunited northern activists with their local, Mississippi counterparts, many for the first time since the 1960s. These interviews yield powerful stories. For example, Karin Kunstler Goldman, daughter of the distinguished civil rights attorney William Kunstler, vividly describes protest activity during her 1963 year as a visiting student at Tougaloo College.

An extensive series of interviews in Jones County explores the history of race relations and civil rights protest in a county that was the site of the Willie McGee execution in 1951, the last public execution in the state of Mississippi. Indeed, the Center holds in its collections an archival recording of the live radio broadcast of McGee's execution—audio that formed the foundation of an award-winning National Public Radio/Radio Diaries audio documentary on the execution (Radio Diaries, 2010). These interviews also shed light on Sam Bowers, the Klan leader who ordered the deadly attack on civil rights leader, Vernon Dahmer, as well as the extensive mixed-race communities in the county that figure prominently in Victoria Bynum's *The Free State of Jones* (2001).

Other interviews document African American labor organizing. Interviews conducted among railroad workers at the Illinois Central shops in 2003 at McComb, provide insight into the ways in which race structured hiring and work in the railroad industry. The extended interview with Donald Evans, long-time head of the International Longshoreman's Association, AFL-CIO Local 1303 in Gulfport, reveals an African American organized labor

tradition not usually acknowledged in the state. Another set of interviews documents the efforts of Robert Zellner—a movement veteran—and other union organizers to build a bi-racial pulpwood/timber cutters union in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In 2014, Center Director Louis Kyriakouides won funding from the Division of Preservation and Access of the National Endowment of the Humanities to support a two-year project to digitize and publish to the University of Southern Mississippi's extensive digital collections over four hundred civil-rights related interviews. The project—"The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi: Providing Access at the 50th Anniversary,"—is digitizing, indexing and publishing online a set of over four hundred oral histories documenting the Mississippi civil rights movement. Many of these interviews, as well as a treasure trove of letters, diaries, photographs and other primary sources are now available through the University of Southern Mississippi's digital interface, the *Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive*. Mississippi civil rights oral history interviews will also be accessible through the *Mississippi Digital Library*, a state-wide online archive. When this project is completed in April 2016, it will comprise the largest online oral history archive of interviews documenting the Mississippi phase of the movement.

Below is a sampling of some of our most compelling interviews from the local people in Mississippi who organized and led the movement and from the volunteers who came into Mississippi to help during Freedom Summer. Each of these interviews—and many more—can be read as transcripts or listened to via streaming audio through the *Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive*.

* * *

Dr. Aaron Henry (1922-1997), was a Clarksdale pharmacist and physician who founded that city's NAACP branch, and served as leader of the Mississippi NAACP. He played a leading role in organizing and implementing Freedom Summer and in August 1964, he led the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Delegation to Atlantic City to challenge the credentials of Mississippi's Regular Democratic Party, which excluded African Americans. He would go on to serve in the Mississippi state legislature. He recalls his early refusal to accept whites' racism:

I really never have accepted the thing [difference based on race]. The first experience that I had, that I rebelled against, even then—you see, I've never accepted it. I'll never accept the theory that because of specificities: color of skin, texture of hair that makes any difference between the opportunity, or

the intellect or whatever else man has. There was a young boy who lived near us as I was four or five—we went to school when we wanted to, you know, there wasn't no age limit, you would just go to school. Randolph Smithers, a young white boy who was my age, when we got ready to go to school, he had to go to one, me to the other and neither one of us was at all happy with it. We couldn't wait to get back home in the evening to, you know, identify with each other. And I worried my mama to death and he worried his mama to death about why. Now my mama told me about the time I was fourteen, fifteen like that in trying to get me to understand and to do better. Her jargon was, you know, if I'd really messed up bad, tore it—she'd say, "You know, white folks wouldn't do that." And her reasoning was that the morals or mores, the conduct of whites, was the thing that this country responded to, and that this was recommended, that you act like white folks.

Clarence Magee (b. 1932), a graduate of Alcorn State and Harvard Universities, served as a teacher at the Prentiss Institute and in Hattiesburg. He remembers an incident which impressed upon him the indignities of racism:

But anyway it was on a Saturday and we were—he was carrying a load of people to town on his bus. We stopped at this store. The guy who owned the sawmill and owned the store. And my dad was a very proud man. And I happened to have been out—and let me just back up now. I'm not sure now whether he was on the bus or he was just on it in his vehicle. But anyway, the story is I was out there at the store, and the owner came by and my daddy says, "Son, I want you to meet Mr. Morris." He was honorable, you know. And I says, "How do you do, Mr. Morris." And I made the mistake of extending my hand to shake his hand, and his remark was, "I don't shake hands with niggers." I'm young and tender you know. This hurt me, but it hurt my daddy even worse than that for me to hear that kind of remark. So you know, basically, you know, here again you follow the reaction of your parents and you're learning what you do and what not to do. (8)

J.C. Fairley (1921-2011) led Hattiesburg's NAACP chapter in the 1960s, and spearheaded the city's voter registration and civil rights protest efforts. He was a member of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's delegation

to the Democratic National Convention in 1964. Here he remembers how his father coped with racism:

My father was one of the people that believed in the white man so much so until he really—and really what got me set up like I did. He could meet a white man on the road and he'd pull his hat off and call him "Captain," and all that old kind of stuff. Mother and I would have a fit. So they were loyal people, loyal to their masters so to speak. When one would deceive him, well, he would just forget about it and go on to another one. Nothing never was a lesson. He never did take a lesson from what one did to another. They were just looking for hope. Hope that they would find one day who would—and there was some real good ones that treated their laborers right and some stayed there for lifetimes. They never would move. (15)

Hollis Watkins (b. 1941) grew up in Summit Mississippi and joined SNCC after meeting Robert Moses in nearby McComb. He went on to take leading roles in voter registration in McComb, Hattiesburg and Holmes County. Violence was an ever-present threat. Here he recounts being followed one evening—and the measures he took to escape:

I see it's a pickup truck and its beginning to approach me so I start to driving fast—and just driving out in the rural area, trying to get away, this is a time you are thankful for dirt roads because the dirt roads to put a little distance between you. So after a few minutes, *now* it's *dark* and you are driving in the dark, and I—at some point in the process of turning off on different roads trying to get away—got on the road to where I didn't have no idea where I was going....And now grass begin to grow in the road, and the further I went the *higher* the grass got. And I thought I was going to end up in some white man's pasture. Now I'm planning how I'm going to end up in this pasture, jump out of this car, and with enough time ahead of the folks that are chasing me to get away. Cause I *never* considered being caught. But after a period of time the grass begins to get lower—the grass had actually gotten tall enough that you could just hear it hitting under the bottom of the car as I ran over it. And that's why I just knew I was going to end up in some white man's pasture. But ultimately, the

grass began to get lower and that road did end into a road to where I knew where I was—which actually, at this point, I am right near the Pike County border line and right near Highway 98. So I did two or three quick turns, because I knew where I was, got on 98 and got away, because the distance that the dust allowed me to have between us.

Fred Clark, Sr. (b. 1943) grew up in Jackson, Mississippi and joined SNCC. He recalls the omnipresence of fear of violence and retribution civil rights activists faced:

And it just so happened that during this span of time there was a lot of fear. It was just a taste that a black kid my age walked around with. My grandmother's contention was to be careful and praise God and go to church and live right and stay out of that civil rights stuff. But, of course, being young and had a lot of fire in my heart and a very big distaste for racism, having experienced it, and I didn't want to have to live that way all of my life. . . . Of course, my grandmother didn't want me involved in civil rights activities. She wanted me to be a good boy and this and that. They were tense, very tense. The police were just beating on folks because blacks were making gains. They was riding in cars. The police would stop a black riding a new car or a new suit, dressed well, and harass them and call them 'uncle' and 'preacher' and cuss them out, do whatever they wanted to do, you know, and get away with it, harass them. And they was getting bad with it, because we at the time was spreading literature for people to go register to vote. And they had a campaign to beat up any young black or anybody they saw walking the street with their literature. So when they would come by, we would just dump it in the sewer pipe till they leave and then go back and get it or put it in the weeds and pretend we don't know nothing. (10)

Freedom Summer brought northern, largely white, volunteers into Mississippi to assist the already well-organized efforts in voter registration, organizing, and education. At first, Hollis Watkins recounted that many in the movement opposed bringing in northern volunteers for the summer of 1964:

Well, those discussions, those debates [over the summer project] definitely were heated and long. And I was one of

those who was on the side of . . . not being for the influx of northerners. Now in most cases, in latter terms, in latter times, people have taken it out of the context and really made it an influx of blacks, I mean influx of whites. But at that particular time it was *not* really the black-white issue as much as it was the north-south issue. It was our opinion that, number one, people from the North, be they black or white felt that they were better than us from the South. And with that attitude existing then we knew that the minute they came they would automatically attempt to take over and run things. The other thing we felt is that by them taking over, or attempting to take over, that would automatically bring about friction between them and local people. When the dust settles, we the Mississippians would be left to sweep up the particles and try to recollect them and get them set back on the right course. We also felt that this kind of action would seriously thwart the initiative that black local leaders were just beginning to develop and take. So those were some of the things that we felt who was along that line.

Charles Cobb (b. 1942) came to Mississippi in 1962 and served as SNCC field secretary in Ruleville, Mississippi. The next year, he outlined the idea for Freedom Schools, which became a major initiative during Freedom Summer, the following year:

SNCC saw itself largely as an organization of organizers, not as an organization of leaders, even though we led sometimes. But it was primarily an organization of organizers, so a lot of the work--a lot of the practical day-to-day work then was finding local leaders who could begin to organize around and articulate some of the basic concerns of the community. That is the way the organization functioned. At least some of that was a reaction to the way we saw a lot of the established civil rights leadership functioning.

Ruby Magee (b. 1940) was a student at Jackson State University when she joined SNCC to secure voting rights. She recalls her first attempt at registering to vote:

When I went home that summer, I would attempt to register to vote in Walthall County, Mississippi. Now Walthall County

has always been considered one of the, well I suppose you would say one of the worst counties in the state; I mean it's a very poor county and there was a time many years ago, when my parents first moved to Walthall County, that blacks were not allowed to park on the front street—they remember this quite vividly and they were naturally very reluctant to see me attempt to do anything in my home county. However, I was twenty-one years old so they didn't really object too much and I did go down, with a member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and we went to the registrar's office. The registrar's name was John Q. Wood, I'll never forget it; he's deceased now, but anyway, he was the registrar....I did go down to the registrar's office and I asked Mr. Wood for a copy of the literacy test because at that time Mississippi had a literacy test which was required of all persons who wanted to become qualified electors in any county in the state. So Mr. Wood sort of looked at me as if he thought that I had rocks in my head when I asked for a copy of the literacy test but he gave it to me....

Sandra Adickes (b. 1933) came to Mississippi from New York City to teach in the Freedom Schools of Hattiesburg. She recalled that intimidation and threats of violence kept many adults away from the evening classes, but the day classes for young students continued:

One night we heard that the white folks were coming in cars, and that we should shut down the [freedom] school. And we did that. We just dispersed people to their homes, and they never came back. They never came back afterward, so the evening classes, we had had the classes in the day for the regular students and then the evening for the adults, but after that incident, I don't think adults ever came back. (24)

Adickes's students made the decision to integrate the public library in downtown Hattiesburg, Mississippi:

[My students] were furious at the inequity . . . about the [lack of] books, about the fact that they couldn't use the [white] public library. That's why we chose [to integrate it]....They had a little room downtown that they could go. I never saw it, but they talked about this little room where all the cast-off

books were kept, and those were the only [libraries facilities for blacks].

We went to the library, and when we walked in, there was a young woman sitting at the desk. And this is the first time in my life I had actually seen this happen. Her eyes rolled to the back of her head when she saw us come in, the six students and me. And we went up to the desk and the students said, 'We want to get library cards.' And she immediately called her supervisor who came down and started berating the students. And I didn't say a word, because I didn't think that was my place, and the students were very polite, but very insistent. And every time she would give them a reason for not giving them library cards, they would say, "Well, we don't see why, if anybody else uses this library, we can't, also." She, at one point, mentioned the Council, which I understood to mean the White Citizens' Council, would close the library down if she issued cards to the black students. And they would not give it up. They were just very polite, but they were very insistent [and] felt it [was] their right to have library cards."

So, eventually [the librarian] said, "Well, if you won't leave, I'm going to call the police." So, then, I said to the students, "What do you want to do?" And they said, "We'll stay." So, we sat down and the police came. About twenty minutes later, the police came and ordered everybody out of the library. Everybody, including us. So, we left because the library was closed. Closed for inventory.

Zoya Zeman (b. 1943) came to Clarksdale, Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to organize health education and literacy classes. She recalls the intimidation and harassment of local officials, hostile to their work:

At the Freedom House one day . . . we were typing things and organizing things and some other people were on the phone. And our refrigerator and all the lights went off, just everything went whoa, like that. And we looked outside, and here was this crazy-looking white guy who had undone our electric meter. He was a guy who had been circling in his truck, and so Lafayette Surney, who was one of the SNCC leaders of the group, went outside and said, "What you all doing," and he said, "I'm checking your meter." And so then we all kind of were crowding around looking out. And then the police came

right behind him—Ben Collins, the chief of police—and they all looked very menacing and so they—oh, the city had—it was just harassment. The day before the city had delivered to our yard a whole pile of iron piping that they said they were going to use for street drainage, but it was really so that we wouldn't have a yard where the kids could play outside on our yard. So they had filled the yard with these iron pipes that were about twenty inches in diameter . . . we went outside and Ben Collins and this crazy meter reader and the two deputies were all standing there with their hands on their hips glaring at us, so we all decided to sit down on these pipes, facing them. And I remember that Doris was sitting on the pipe in front of me. And he came over, and because she was black, he picked her up by the arms under her shoulders, and he was just sort of flustered, he didn't know what to do, you know, he could have thrown her down or something. And we were trying to talk to them, saying, "How can we help you?" "What is the reason for your visit today?" We were taught to try to speak politely and ask just kind of ordinary questions. And when he did that with Doris, I remember thinking, "Now what shall I do?" but I just waited, and then he said something mean to her, but I don't remember what it was, and he just set her down again. And then he walked toward me, and he looked so confused, he looked baffled because I was white, but I was in the wrong place; he couldn't sort it out. So I just said, "How do you do today?" or something like that, and he walked back to his deputies. And the one deputy was just fascinated with us, I mean he—it was clear that he was really interested in who we were, and the other deputy was giving us a hate stare. So it was just an incredible tableau. And the guy with the meter—we said, "Well, we are going to call the FBI to get our meter turned back on." And we said to Ben Collins—who had been known to be a mean policeman, and he'd hurt people in the community, but he wasn't hurting us that day—we said, "Would you like to talk to the FBI, or would you like to turn our meter on?" or something like that. And he just stomped off and drove around and twirled his lights or something.

A major goal of Freedom Summer was political organizing through the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The MFDP held open, fair

elections, nominating candidates for state and federal office and sending a slate of delegates to the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in August of 1964 to present themselves as the legitimately elected delegates of the Democratic Party in Mississippi. J. C. Fairley recalled:

See, back at that time this whole thing was developing, what we called the Freedom Democratic Party. Well, the pressure was real strong on black people then from the effort of trying to get registered to vote, integration and whatnot. The pressure was really applied. That's during the time the three civil rights' fellows got killed up at Philadelphia, after Medgar Evers got killed; several people was being killed in the civil rights struggle.

We came together and formed this Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. We collected all of this evidence, what the people had done here in Mississippi. We went to the national convention which was held in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and presented this evidence to the convention. Stating that this is what the people, our representatives in Mississippi, are letting happen to us.

We had all kinds of stuff what they had bombed and burned, and pictures and statements, and the people to testify as to the brutality they had received and all of this. We went before the credentials committee and presented this evidence and had people to testify and it really had its effect. And at the time at the hearing we had received seventy-five percent of the members of that committee to vote in favor of seating the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. After this was known throughout the convention, pressure started coming in and being applied to these committeemen, and they began to drop off, drop off. When it came down to the decision making, well, we didn't have enough to support.

Aaron Henry also recounted the Atlantic City Convention as well:

In 1964 in Atlantic City, there were sixty four of us country bumpkins. There was one white man in the state who had the guts to go with us, that was Ed King. . . . sixty-four of us came up from Mississippi on a Greyhound bus, eating cheese and crackers and bologna all the way there, we didn't have no money—suffering the same way.

We got to Atlantic City, we put up in a little hotel, three or four of us in a bed, four or five of us on the floor. You know, we suffered a common kind of experience, the whole thing. Now, hindsight tells me that if they'd given us two votes and permitted us to fraction them into, say one-thirty seconds and we could of carried our whole sixty-four people on the floor, we probably could have sold it.

Cobb recalls his impressions of Mississippi, the value of the Freedom Schools, and the impact of the Movement:

It was consciousness-raising, is what it was, and exposure of what you were trying to do. And I think it did it *fairly* successfully. I mean, even separately from race, Mississippi is—certainly in 1963 or 1964...was a very narrow, parochial place. So that, the more exposure you could offer, the better it would be for the kids. You would get some kind of payoff without thinking—just from the fact you had a student from Yale talking to a Mississippi ninth grader about Asia or about the New York Democratic party or Chicago machine politic—just the exposure. And that's largely what the schools did. . . . [Freedom Summer] succeeded in its way, I suppose; it changed the state forever. After '64 Mississippi became a part of America. What you could see at the end of '64 was that Mississippi was really a part of the US I mean, it wasn't some weird and obscure place.

The stories the Mississippians and their out-of-state allies who mobilized for basic rights of political and economic citizenship still inspire us today. Much of what we know about the movement—its goals, its tactics, and the brave men and women who implemented them—is preserved in the stories movement veterans preserved through oral history. They speak with meaning to us today and will do so in the future.

The University of Southern Mississippi

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Listen to the audio documentary, *We Need Some Freedom: Mississippi and the Coming of Freedom Summer, a 50th Anniversary Retrospective* available for download and podcast from the Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage at <http://www.usm.edu/oral-history> or <http://www.mississippimoments.org>.