

Mississippi Freedom Summer collection

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1964

Title Statement

Mississippi Freedom Summer collectionMississippi Freedom Summer collection MSS 16933

Author: Ellen Welch

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16933

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

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Unit Date

1964

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1 (folder)

Language

English

source

Tomberg Rare Books

Creator

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (U.S.)

Creator

Council of Federated Organizations (U.S.)

Creator

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

Extent

0.04 Cubic Feet One legal-sized file folder

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

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Biographical / Historical

Freedom Summer, also known as Mississippi Freedom Summer (sometimes referred to as the Freedom Summer Project or the Mississippi Summer Project), was a campaign launched by American civil rights activists in June 1964 to register as many African-American voters as possible in the state of Mississippi.

Black people in the state had been largely prevented from voting since the turn of the 20th century due to barriers to voter registration and other Jim Crow laws that had been enacted throughout the American South. The project also set up dozens of Freedom Schools, Freedom Houses, and community centers such as libraries, in small towns throughout Mississippi to aid the local Black population.

The project was organized by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a coalition of the Mississippi branches of the four major civil rights organizations (SNCC, CORE, NAACP, and SCLC). Most of the impetus, leadership, and financing for the Summer Project came from SNCC. Bob Moses, SNCC field secretary and co-director of COFO, directed the summer project.

Many of Mississippi's white residents deeply resented the outsiders and any attempt to change the residents' society. Locals routinely harassed volunteers. The volunteers' presence in local Black communities drew drive-by shootings, Molotov cocktails thrown at host homes, and constant harassment. State and local governments, the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission (which was tax-supported and spied on citizens), police, White Citizens' Council, and Ku Klux Klan used arrests, arson, beatings, evictions, firing, murder, spying, and other forms of intimidation and harassment to oppose the project and prevent Black people from registering to vote or achieve social equality.

Volunteers were attacked almost as soon as the campaign started. On June 21, 1964, James Chaney (a Black Congress of Racial Equality [CORE] activist from Mississippi), Andrew Goodman (a summer volunteer), and Michael Schwerner (a CORE organizer) – both Jews from New York City – were arrested by Cecil Price, a Neshoba County deputy sheriff and KKK member. The three were held in jail until after nightfall, then released. They drove away into an ambush on the road by Klansmen, who abducted and killed them. Goodman and Schwerner were shot at point-blank range. Chaney was chased, beaten mercilessly, and shot three times. After weeks of searching in which federal law enforcement participated, on August 4, 1964, their bodies were found to have been buried in an earthen dam. The men's disappearance the night of their release from jail was reported on TV and on newspaper front pages, shocking the nation. It drew massive media attention to Freedom Summer and to Mississippi's "closed society."

With participation in the regular Mississippi Democratic Party blocked by segregationists, COFO established the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) as a non-exclusionary rival to the regular party organization. It intended to gain recognition of the MFDP by the national Democratic Party as the legitimate party organization in Mississippi. Delegates were elected to go to the Democratic national convention to be held that year. Source: "Mississippi Freedom Summer" Wikipedia. Accessed 12/18/25
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Freedom_Summer

Content Description

This collection contains printed items pertaining to the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964, a landmark campaign in the Civil Rights Movement aimed at challenging systemic racism and voter suppression in Mississippi. Organized by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and other groups under the umbrella of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), the Freedom Summer mobilized over 1,000 volunteers, including many college students, to join Black Mississippians in a massive effort to register African American voters, establish Freedom Schools, and create the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The associated content is all dated from 1964 and

includes brochures, internal "COFO Publications," a "Memo to Accepted Applicants" for the Mississippi Summer Project, a "Security Handbook," internal memoranda, press releases, a pamphlet titled "Genocide in Mississippi," a pamphlet titled "Mississippi: Subversion of the Right to Vote," correspondence between organizers and movement members, "Freedom School Assignments," teaching frameworks for Freedom Schools, reports on bombings in Pike and McComb County, case studies on non-violent movements and demonstrations, a circular published by the Bay Area Friends of Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the "Basis for the Development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party." Of special interest is a June 22, 1964 internal report discussing the "disappearance of three summer project workers in Neshoba County." On June 21, 1964, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner disappeared near Philadelphia, Mississippi, while working to register Black voters and investigate the bombing of a local church. Their disappearance triggered a massive federal response, led by the FBI under the code name "Mississippi Burning." After weeks of searching, their bodies were discovered buried in an earthen dam. The investigation revealed that members of the Ku Klux Klan, with assistance from local law enforcement, had abducted and murdered the men.

Keywords

Civil rights -- United States

Civil rights movements

African Americans -- Civil rights

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