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“THE LONG, HOT SUMMER”: THE MISSISSIPPI RESPONSE TO FREEDOM SUMMER, 1964

By
John R. Rachal*

I

“We now need a large number of students and faculty who are willing to commit their very beings as well as their minds to our common struggle.” Thus was the “Summer Project” in Mississippi announced on February 29, 1964, in a joint statement by James Farmer of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), James Forman of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC, pronounced “Snick”), and Robert Moses, representing SNCC and an alliance of civil rights organizations called the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and local chapters (but not the national organization) of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) also comprised COFO, but SNCC and Moses were the Project’s prime movers. The Project, later called Freedom Summer, would have two aims: “the intensification of voter registration and educational activity” and “the establishment of freedom schools and community centers throughout Mississippi.”¹ COFO, particularly the more activist young Turks of SNCC and CORE, began in early 1964 laying the foundation for the summer: recruiting college students, fundraising through “Friends of SNCC” groups, issuing press releases, and organizing book drives. The Project would bring what Moses called “a searchlight from the rest of the country on Mississippi.”² Dave Dennis of CORE also thought a major push in the state was necessary, noting in an October, 1963 letter that “no Civil Rights organization seems to want to tackle Mississippi.”³ SNCC’s and the other organizations’ slow, methodical, and occasionally harrowing registration and educational work in “the rural” was making little headway against the segregationist current in the state generally regarded as the most recalcitrant in the field of civil rights. The Summer Project would recruit, train, and bring to Mississippi a large cadre—perhaps a thousand—of mostly white volunteers to work with mostly black COFO staff to promote education and voter registration. The scale of the Project, coupled with the participation of very visible white students who were often from elite colleges, intended to give the movement a jump start while simultaneously bringing national attention to the state’s dismal civil rights record.

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The announcement of the project unleashed a furious response from Mississippi's press, elected officials, and some of its citizenry. The state's press and politicians almost universally railed against the project as an "invasion" seeking to destroy what Governor Paul B. Johnson had called in his 1963 campaign "the last stronghold of individual liberty."⁴ From their perspective, the Project represented a colossal insult to "our way of life" from holier-than-thou outsiders—Northern college kids, no less—who presumed to impose their naïve, liberal, and probably communistic values on the Magnolia state. The aim, as Mississippi leaders saw it, was to roil the state's racial harmony by sowing the seeds of discontent among its contented Negro citizens. Nothing less than modern carpetbaggers, they luxuriated in their moral superiority, undermined order, defied a respected tradition and gave the state an undeserved black eye.

In this volatile atmosphere, the shrill invective against the invasion muffled the simultaneous calls for calm, effectively canceling them out, and even making them seem provocative and alarmist in themselves. When the McComb *Enterprise-Journal*, under the headline "Planned Invasion of Mississippi," proclaimed that "the purpose of this series of editorials is not to arouse fears and angers among our people" but "to inform our people of what may happen in Mississippi this summer," the intent to inform carried with it an unintended element of disquiet and provocation.⁵ Governor Johnson epitomized the consensus view in noting that "these agitators . . . have come down here to provoke trouble." The mayor of Ruleville went so far as to warn blacks in his community that the invaders were coming down to kill them, prompting a local black minister to tell him, "You're so low you're going to need a step ladder to climb into Hell."⁶

Among the public name-calling issuing from senators, the former and current governors, and newspaper editors were "invaders," "intruders," "left-wing agitators," "professional agitators," "carpetbaggers" (this from a former NAACP member who "turned Tom" and became editor of a black Jackson weekly), "communists," "trouble makers," "do-gooders," "misled pawns," "racial zealots" (both from Senator John Stennis), "meddlers," "integrationists," "ideological manipulators," "propagandists," "CORE creeps," "weirdos," "beatnik sophomores," "immature collegians," "motley missionaries," and "pseudo-religious reformers" (ministers representing the National Council of Churches had been picketing the Forrest County courthouse in Hattiesburg since January). In the non-public language of operatives of the Sovereignty Commission, a state spy agency organized in 1956 to protect the state's "sovereignty" by combating the kind of federal intrusion represented by the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, the loathing reached new lows: the "hatemongers" from CORE, the "goon squads of CORE and SNCC" (neither with a trace of ironic intent), and a "flea-bitten crowd of white screwballs."⁷ As the black-owned *Jackson Advocate* inhosptably put it, "We are not on the welcome committee."⁸

The intensity of the invasion fever derived not merely from xenophobia but from a long heritage of segregation which the Summer Project sought to destroy. Segregation implied not merely racial division but racial hierarchy. As such, it was as natural to most Southerners as breathing. By no means did it automatically imply hatred of blacks, but it assumed inequality and the need for each race to remain in its assigned place in the hierarchy. All violations of place met with some sanction, and some violations could meet with extreme sanctions. Thus fourteen year old, Chicago-raised Em-

mett Till would be found in the Tallahatchie River with a 75 pound cotton gin fan tied around his neck in 1955 for saying "Bye, baby" to a white woman, an offense likely to have been treated merely as the teenaged machismo it was had it been the act of a white boy. It was not for nothing that black mothers admonished their sons never to even look at a white girl, as Freedom Summer volunteer Sally Belfrage discovered at the home in which she stayed.⁹

The "colored only" and "white only" physical separation in bus station waiting rooms, restrooms, courtrooms, and at water fountains reinforced and symbolized the social divisions and were not to be transgressed by either race. By enforcing segregation concerning the smallest of social points, such as seating on a bus, the larger issues of racial purity, identity, and supremacy could be maintained. The Klan's consuming fear of "mongrelization" from consensual interracial sex represented the ultimate threat to the racial supremacy that segregation supported. Non-consensual miscegenation between white men and reluctant black women, however, could be tolerated (as evidenced by numerous Mississippi mulattoes), but throughout the South black men even thought to have defiled white women provoked mobs to hideous and sadistic torture-murders. Thus inter-racial sex was more a matter of racial and gender power relations—reprehensible when black men wielded that power, but tolerable when white men did—than a genuine concern over racial purity. But one did not have to be a Klansman to support segregation. It was sincerely, if self-servingly, defended as best for both races. Inevitably, long custom hardened into natural law. In a post-segregationist era such views are easy to dismiss as morally repugnant, but in the Mississippi of 1964, contravening or questioning segregation required not only moral courage but intellectual insight.

II

Among the rabble racists, certainly the most common term of opprobrium for whites was "nigger lover," applied to any white perceived as remotely soft on the race question. As one jailed British correspondent was told by another inmate in May of 1964, "If there was one thing he 'hated more than a nigger' it was 'nigger lover' " — presumably because such whites represented a kind of racial apostasy.¹⁰ The most rabid screed came from the intensely Negrophobic White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan of Mississippi, which by July was claiming, along with many other more reputable state representatives, that the June 21 disappearance of James Earl Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman was a "Communist hoax." The frenzied prose of *The Klan Ledger* darkly warned that

We Knights are working day and night to preserve law and order here in Mississippi. . . . We are deadly serious about this business. We have taken no action as yet against the enemies of our State, our Nation and our Civilization, but we are not going to sit back and permit our rights and the rights of our posterity to be negotiated away by a group composed of "Jewish" priests, bluegum black savages and mongrelized money-worshippers. Take heed, Atheists and Mongrels, we will not travel your path to a Leninist hell, but we will buy *You* a ticket to the Eternal if you insist. Take your choice, *Segregation, Tranquility, and Justice, or, Bi-Racism, Chaos and Death.*¹¹

The “atheists and mongrels following a path to a Leninist hell” crudely captured the perceived unholy alliance between civil rights and communism. Race-baiting and red-baiting became fraternal twins and were almost interchangeable in the statehouse and on Main street — communists advocated Negro rights and Negro rights advocates were communists. For Sovereignty Commission Investigator Tom Scarborough, the mutual attraction of civil rights and communism hardly required investigation. Not only had Martin Luther King “received his training in this type of work in the Communist training school in Mount Eagle [sic] Tennessee,” but, Scarborough reported, Bob Moses’ home in New York City was “two doors from the Communist Party newspaper, *The Daily Worker*,” and “he is working hand-in-glove with Communist sympathizers if not outright Communist agitators.”¹² Communist charges added credibility to simple racism, though for local politics they were not always needed. For home consumption, race-baiting fell within the pale of local politics and peppered the oratory of electioneering politicians. A dependable gag line from gubernatorial candidate Paul B. Johnson’s 1963 stump speech pilloried the NAACP: “ ‘You know what that stands for: niggers, alligators, apes, coons, and possums.’ ”¹³

In the increasing glare of the national public eye, however, state officials publicly avoided overt race-baiting and relied on the rhetorical weapon of second choice—red-baiting. Railing against communism carried less stigma than venomous racial rhetoric and had the political bonus of sounding patriotic. In the context of the Cold War, the state’s two senators, the governor, the lieutenant governor, and various other officials, including police, found the red menace a convenient target lurking in the shadows of the whole civil rights movement, and especially SNCC and CORE. Senator Eastland rolled his two favorite bogeymen—civil rights and communism—into one, saying that the missing civil rights workers “were laughing it up in a New York hotel room on Moscow gold.”¹⁴ When the discovery of the bodies in early August made that view no longer tenable and forced most of the hoax theorists into silence, the Klan flew over the Neshoba County fair dropping a “special edition” of *The Klan Ledger*. It disingenuously proclaimed that “American Patriots who are determined to resist Communism by every available means” could have killed them, but more likely the culprits were “the Communists themselves who will always sacrifice their own members in order to achieve a propaganda victory,” as they had done in the Kennedy assassination.¹⁵

Picking up the chorus, some editors and local officials ferreted out the same red threat: “Communists try to use Negroes” warned an editorial in the April 27 *Hattiesburg American*, while at the national level columnists Novak and Evans of *The Washington Post* issued a series of editorials trumpeting communist influence throughout the movement.¹⁶ When five SNCC workers on their way to Atlanta for a SNCC meeting in early June were all arrested—driver and passengers—and kept overnight for allegedly running a stop sign and reckless driving, a justice of the peace described a quantity of literature confiscated from their vehicle as “communistic,” adding that “some of it was printed in Cuba.” Echoing the Cuba connection six weeks later, city officials in Greenwood, where SNCC had moved its national office, leaped to the conclusion that SNCC’s funding could only come from its presumed communist puppeteers.¹⁷ By late July a state legislative committee was investigating alleged communist influence in the civil rights movement, while a few days earlier Martin Luther King,

Jr. of SCLC, then visiting Jackson, denied Senator Eastland's charge that the movement was "pro-Communist."¹⁸ Septima Clark, also of SCLC, noted in an undated open letter that it would be "tragic" if the movement were "subverted to ends other than those of a truly democratic" America. Alluding to the Senator's own affinity for despotism, she acidly observed that "we in the South have a great deal of difficulty respecting Senator Eastland of Mississippi as an upholder of democratic principles." Equally dismissively, an ACLU lawyer drolly noted the fractiousness within SNCC by observing, "would to God there *were* communists in Snick. . . . They would have been a moderating influence."¹⁹

While charges of communist influence can largely be attributed to Cold War jitters and political demagoguery, SNCC did not take as hard a line against communism as the SCLC or the NAACP. Charlie Cobb, who became a SNCC field secretary after a year at Howard University, commented later that the SNCC staff had the same range of political views held by other organizations of the sixties.²⁰ Allard Lowenstein, who had seen communist influence firsthand in his work with labor unions, dissociated himself from SNCC rather bitterly in the spring of 1964 over the issue of SNCC's acceptance of legal help from the leftist National Lawyers' Guild, which Lowenstein considered "a Communist infiltrated organization." Essentially SNCC's position was to accept help wherever it could be found. Lowenstein, still smarting from the fall, 1963 heated arguments over white participation in Freedom Summer, found SNCC's acceptance of legal help from the Guild outrageous since many in SNCC had "so bull-headedly refused student help."²¹ A more direct charge of communist influence came from one of several Sovereignty Commission infiltrators of COFO ("Operator number 79") who felt that the CORE people in Jackson were "extremely bold about their Communist affiliation," even displaying a picture of Khrushchev in the SNCC office. Sovereignty Commissioner Johnston was sufficiently struck with the Khrushchev poster that he mentioned it in a letter to the governor.²²

Whatever the truth of Operator 79's allegations, neither SNCC nor CORE internal documents from the period suggest a communist conspiracy or even sympathy. Lists of books sought in the book drives for the freedom schools and community centers reflect a spectrum of literary and social thinking, but Lenin and Marx are not among them. Even moderate dissent from the prevailing zeitgeist invited red-baiting or worse, and SNCC and CORE were well beyond moderate dissent, actively operationalizing democracy through education and the ballot. In the hands of a Senator Eastland, the charge of "communist" was meant less to curse than to intimidate and smear, discrediting the movement and attempting to separate local blacks from COFO workers. Mississippi native Hollis Watkins barely knew what communism was when a judge called him an "outside communist agitator," as if he hailed from Kiev rather than being raised five miles from the judge's home near Summit.²³ Keeping blacks leery of civil rights workers by branding them with the hammer and sickle may have made COFO's work a little harder with some locals. Certainly many feared participating in "that mess." Yet the fairly numerous comments from SNCC workers about the challenges of recruiting voter registrants never mention communism as the source of their reluctance. Probably most of them, even though unschooled in the subtleties of dialectical materialism, recognized the smear for what it was. In any event, according to Burner,

"extensive FBI investigations reveal no communist inroads into SNCC or the rights movement."²⁴

III

With the "invasion" imminent and the state increasingly assuming a siege mentality during the spring of 1964, the legislature scurried to introduce bills outlawing picketing, distribution of leaflets, unlicensed freedom schools, and other anti-Summer Project legislation. Another bill enlarged the highway patrol and expanded its powers.²⁵

In February, the Lieutenant Governor had demanded a probe of Tougaloo College in Jackson, a private black college with a number of politically active students and a sympathetic white president, saying that Tennessee got rid of Highlander "which was a hangout for communists and agitators. We ought to see if we have the same situation." Two days later a bill was introduced to revoke the charter of the "so-called college." In May, Sovereignty Commission Director Erle Johnston proposed to Governor Johnson an alternative legislative bill that would separate Mississippi and Southern Association of Colleges and Schools accrediting authority, a move meant to discourage Tougaloo's independence, but not to shut it down.²⁶ By summer, Tougaloo's activism had been reined in, though who pulled the reins is unclear. Just before the summer project, its liberal president was forced into retirement, largely through the behind-the-scenes efforts of Brown University president and Central Intelligence Agency informant Barnaby Keeney. Tougaloo, which had a cooperative relationship with Brown, soon tempered its political activity and quickly thereafter received a substantial Ford Foundation grant. With the change in course, a Tougaloo-based, SNCC-initiated project testing literacy teaching methods dissolved.²⁷

Other legislation aimed at the Summer Project included a law "to insure domestic tranquility"; another targeted picketing, by outlawing protests near public buildings (largely in response to the ongoing picketing at the Forrest County courthouse in Hattiesburg); a third took scatter-shot aim at passive resistance by making illegal "the failure or refusal to comply with certain requests, orders, or commands of certain officers to do or perform or refrain from doing or performing certain acts under certain circumstances"; a fourth made it illegal to distribute boycott literature.²⁸ Another law required out-of-state attorneys to qualify with the state bar association, pay a \$50 fee, and be vouched for by two local attorneys. At the national level, meanwhile, Senator Stennis introduced a bill in Congress to make it a federal offense to cross state lines for civil rights activities.²⁹ Simultaneously, he and other Southerners dug in against President Johnson's civil rights bill.

The legislative assault continued with a "criminal syndicalism" law passed in June, essentially outlawing political organizing among groups deemed subversive. Though the law ostensibly aimed at both integrationist and segregationist groups, law enforcement yawned when a few days later in Pike County the Klan held what was billed as the largest Klan rally in the state's history. More rallies and cross burnings followed, with the goal of recruiting every "eligible" man in the state.³⁰ In addition to the Klan and the newly formed but less effective Americans for the Preservation of the White Race, the Citizens' Councils were more upscale but hardly less hostile. Wielding con-

siderable power, they influenced legislation and saw to it that credit was denied, contracts were voided, or insurance canceled, and generally they set a tone of implacable intolerance for change. Composed largely of respectable businessmen, the Citizens' Councils were regarded as civic organizations defending segregation and were more mainstream than the Klan, increasing their influence.

Meanwhile, the Sovereignty Commission, a well-funded state agency, conducted investigations, planted informants in civil rights organizations, collected information and literature, funded private individuals and groups, and used economic intimidation where necessary. In one case of inter-agency cooperation, Sovereignty Commission Director Erle Johnston wrote Public Service Commissioner Norman Johnson about a black motel owner who was "subject to certain rules and regulations of the Public Service Commission. . . . [E]verything possible [must] be done to discourage the subject from making his motel available to these groups [SNCC and NAACP]." ³¹ In a lengthy memorandum to Governor Johnson, Commission Director Johnston summarized the highlights of the Commission's activities for the first eight months of 1964, including: arranging for the schooling of two young boys denied admission to the Jasper County white schools because they were one-thirty-second black; discontinuance of state college extension courses to the military at Keesler Air Force Base since the military was integrated, which might result "in an influx of Negro ex-servicemen on our university campuses"; conversations with a television station to see if the series "Bonanza" could be dropped from its programming when three of its stars refused to appear at a public appearance in Jackson when they learned it would be a segregated audience; consulting with the newly-organized Alabama Sovereignty Commission; arranging to receive "publications of communist front organizations" through a third party; compiling and distributing to all sheriffs and municipal police a list of state laws potentially useful in impeding COFO workers; orchestrating the firing of the progressive white president of black Tougaloo College; making a "surprise call" on the mother of the activist white chaplain of Tougaloo; soliciting from all the state's sheriffs the "names, addresses, and any other information they might have on COFO workers in their county"; and beginning "an expanded research program and indexing system on subversives." ³²

As the volunteers entered the state on the June 21 weekend that Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman were murdered, Moses' "spotlight" of national attention did not inoculate them against danger. COFO blacks, some authorities and editorialists feared, intended to overthrow the state and install themselves in power. Blaming "Communist forces," Jackson's *Clarion Ledger* warned in July that "the ultimate aim, we believe, is a black revolution." Gubernatorial candidate Paul B. Johnson ("Stand Tall with Paul") had noted in a 1963 campaign brochure that "we cannot turn Mississippi over to our minority race" and that what was at stake in the election was "our way of life." ³³ In contrast, the white volunteers were regarded with the special malice reserved for traitors. Iowa minister Rims Barber remembered "some white lady [who] looks in all respects otherwise like my mother coming up into my face and giving me the finger" in Canton. " . . . [T]hey were housewives, they were businessmen and church members. . . . And yet here they were acting in outrageous fashion." ³⁴

The "invasion" of outsiders touched a xenophobic nerve and was seen as deliberately provocative. The result was some eighty assaults and beatings and an estimated

thousand residents and COFO personnel being arrested over the course of the summer.³⁵ Accepted white applicants for Freedom Summer were expected to provide \$500 in bond money in advance on the likelihood of their arrest. The pattern and pettiness of the arrests had been set before most arrived, however. In January, Hattiesburg police arrested two white New Yorkers, one for breach of the peace for standing in the "colored only" section of the bus station, the other for "unlawful parking and obstructing traffic." By summer, others across the state were arrested for littering, distributing leaflets without a permit, violating a curfew, interfering with a police officer (in one case for asking to see a search warrant), shoplifting, obstructing the flow of traffic, disturbing the peace, trespassing, withholding pertinent information, profanity, vagrancy, loitering, and failure to have a selective service card.³⁶ When no charges came to mind, workers were held "for investigation" or "on suspicion" or taken into "protective custody" and simply held in jail. Larry Rubin, working in Marshall County, was arrested once "on suspicion" of stealing his car and again "on suspicion" for stealing the shirt he wore because he did not have the sales slip.³⁷

Most of the arrests, however, were on trumped up traffic violations. COFO staff and volunteers made certain that they came to hard stops at stop signs, stayed under the speed limit, and carried both vehicle registration and bill of sale in the car. According to SNCC Field Secretary Hollis Watkins, state authorities had descriptions and license tags for all the COFO cars, a view confirmed in Johnston's lengthy September 1 memo to Governor Johnson.³⁸ For all their punctilious obedience to traffic laws, COFO workers were arrested for illegal parking, speeding, illegal turns, improper lights, reckless driving, and other charges. In Batesville, workers driving 35 mph in a Volkswagen in third gear were arrested for doing 110 mph and fined \$17.³⁹ Jail time, at least overnight, was common. For many towns, civil rights workers before, during, and after the summer project supplied a welcome source of hard cash.

Despite their tenacity in subduing COFO workers, with some exceptions, Mississippi law enforcement was remarkably inept at catching local whites who assaulted, shot, shot at, tried to run over, or verbally harassed (often in the coarsest language) COFO staff or volunteers. No one was ever convicted for any of the church burnings—though Schwerner and Goodman were held "on suspicion" for the Mt. Zion church fire on the day of their deaths. The tendency to arrest the victim when local whites were the perpetrators was fairly common, especially in assaults and beatings. The dispassionate prose of COFO's "Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents" (1964) lists several assault victims who found themselves arrested, usually for breach of the peace; and generally the numerous incidents of the Running Summary depict, like pointillist dots on a Seurat canvas, the resentful and simmering atmosphere in which volunteer and staff workers conducted voter registration and education.⁴⁰

Still, most of these out-of-staters would be going home, which led some local blacks to fear even greater reprisals after the project ended. In an August letter soliciting Northern support, Moses quoted an elderly resident's comment that "if you people leave, they will just pile up our bodies, one on top of the other."⁴¹ Sensitive to this fear, COFO staff had for two years avoided abandoning a community when the resistance heated up, while trying to balance that by operating on the philosophical principle of working to create indigenous leadership that would not be dependent on outsid-

ers. Both to allay fears and to continue the work, Moses announced on August 19 that the project would continue into the fall, with some 200 volunteers and 95 SNCC and CORE staff staying on. On the other hand, the continued presence of movement people posed a particular hazard to local folks brave and generous enough to house white volunteers. That offense cost a Ruleville man and a Moss Point woman their jobs, a Gulfport woman threats by the police against her children, another Ruleville man his car windshield, and a Batesville family death threats and a tear gas bomb.⁴² In a region where black and white were not allowed to sit together in a bus station, much less dine together in a private home, outsider whites *living* with blacks affronted the very foundations of Jim Crow.

Seeing local law enforcement as openly hostile, COFO expected similar treatment from the local press. While willing to refer editorially to June riots in New York City as “terrorist attacks,” the *Hattiesburg American* never mustered the same “terrorist” rhetoric any time during the summer for home-grown white violence. In the *Hattiesburg American*, the *Laurel Leader Call*, and the *Greenwood Commonwealth* a defensive “you too” mentality set in advocating that the “invaders” return home and deal with problems there. It was still present in August when McComb mayor Gordon Burt, mindful of the COFO “invasion,” mischievously solicited contributions to send COFO volunteers to New York and other trouble spots.⁴³ The *Hattiesburg American* blamed the New York violence on youths who have seen “their leaders encourage and take part in massive assaults against law and order by demonstrations, obstructionist tactics.” A citadel of status quo conservatism, the *Hattiesburg American* ran over sixty race-related editorials from January through early June, sometimes two a day. In February it denounced “agitators” leading “Negroes down the road of folly” in picketing the Hattiesburg courthouse; by July, it ranted against “every silly demonstration put on by CORE creeps.” The connection between the civil rights workers in Mississippi and the federal civil rights bill, perceived as an un-American, diabolical plot, deepened the hostility. The Hattiesburg paper railed against the civil rights bill, labeling it as a scheme of “force laws to crush basic human rights under the guise of ‘civil rights’ legislation.” The civil rights bill would “sweep away individual and private rights that have belonged to citizens since this nation was founded.” The Jackson *Clarion Ledger* was no less shrill, decrying the “evil plot” behind the act that would be passed on July 4 and calling it the “Socialist Omnibus Bill” that was the “most insidious piece of legislation in the history of our country . . . now being railroaded through Congress.”⁴⁴

IV

Intimidation from citizens and police and condemnation from politicians and editors challenged COFO and the local blacks who participated in COFO activities, but violence was the ultimate threat. A contemporary source summarized the summer’s statistics: “A thousand arrests; 35 shooting incidents, with three persons injured; 30 homes and other buildings bombed; 35 churches burned; 80 persons beaten; at least six persons murdered.”⁴⁵ The COFO Security Handbook required staff and volunteers to call person-to person for themselves when they reached their destination, place locks on

the hoods and gas tanks of their cars, avoid all night travel, avoid sleeping near windows, and always keep the shades closed.⁴⁶ Prompted in May by an NAACP request for a federal investigation of “a wave of brutality, abuse, and killings of Negro citizens,” Robert Kennedy reported to President Johnson over forty cases of “Klan-type activity or police brutality” in the state.⁴⁷ In April, one Northern student who was jailed in Jackson and beaten by other prisoners clearly got the message: “to show me and any other people from the North thinking about coming down to stir up trouble what would happen to them if they came.” This followed another Jackson jail beating two weeks earlier. Two weeks before Freedom Summer, three civil rights workers were beaten by nine men with brass knuckles near McComb, then told that their fate would be “what will happen to all you Northern agitators who come here meddling.” The extent of the police response was to ask the workers why they were in McComb, the southwestern town regarded by SNCCC as “Mississippi’s stronghold of organized terror.”⁴⁸

The final solution and ultimate sanction against civil rights activity was murder—“Project four” in the Klan’s code.⁴⁹ Convictions of whites for murders of blacks were so rare that a barbed joke in COFO’s mass meetings compared the limited hunting season on deer and rabbits to the open season on black Mississippians.⁵⁰ Even in a high profile trial, a conviction of a white for a black death was rare. In June of 1963, fertilizer salesman and avowed white supremacist Byron de la Beckwith murdered Medgar Evers as the NAACP state field secretary was getting out of his car in his driveway. Despite both de la Beckwith’s acknowledgment that the recovered rifle was his as well as the genuine efforts of the prosecutor, two juries failed to reach a verdict, and he was released. (A third trial in Jackson thirty years later, however, resulted in a conviction and a life term).⁵¹ A CORE document cited fifteen racial murders in the state from April 1963 to February 1965. Two of the murder victims were black college students who were roped, maimed, and abducted on May 2, 1964. There were no published reports of their being missing, and they were not found until two months later in the course of the widely publicized search for Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner.⁵² Authorities arrested two Klansmen but released them for insufficient evidence, prompting Hodding Carter, editor of the most liberal daily newspaper in the state, to ask toward the end of the summer why murderers of blacks are never punished: “The roll call of the dead is long. The list of those convicted is still a blank page.”⁵³

As the “long, hot summer”—almost a mantra in the press—unfolded, however, fire became the Klan’s, and other malcontents’, weapon of choice. By June 24, three days into Freedom Summer, four churches had been destroyed or damaged by fires during the previous ten days.⁵⁴ By no accident did the Klan and other reactionaries target churches. Not only were churches unguarded at night, they were independent of white people and their institutions, and they emerged as the physical symbol of the movement. Next to family, the church was the most important institution in the black community. Faith, most tellingly expressed through music, inspired the most obvious source of personal as well as communal empowerment, and the tender shoots of any kind of power in the black community needed uprooting in the arsonists’ view. Nor should one easily dismiss the intense animus that moral impoverishment and degradation can have for that which is spiritual. Subconsciously recognizing a lack of a desir-

able quality in oneself may invite hostility to it when it is present in others, especially when the hostility can be manifested anonymously and with little threat of punishment or retribution. In this light the strange metaphor of burning crosses—the signature of the organization “dedicated to the preservation of Christian civilization”⁵⁵—seems an act of self-loathing, a perverse and satanic baptism, a macabre inversion of sacred and profane. Fusing religious and racist fanaticism, the Klan was motivated by discontent, weakness, and the looming fear of occupying the lowest rung on the socio-economic ladder. Religion for the Klan was neither about spirituality nor justice, but rather about the tribal and racial solidarity of the white race rightfully perched at the top of the chain of being. If black churches did not subscribe, it was *they* who were profane, and it was a small step from burning crosses to burning churches.

COFO also understood the centrality of the church. Belfrage, in her impressionistic and richly descriptive memoir, notes that COFO staff and volunteer alike were encouraged to attend black church services, and canvassing presupposed initial contacts with local ministers.⁵⁶ If movement people could gain admission to the churches, they would not only have acquired the obvious physical facility for group communication, but they could reinforce their temporal political and educational objectives by aligning them with the spiritual power of the church and individual faith. As Stokely Carmichael told a group of new arrivals: “. . . [Y]ou’ve got to understand what [religion] means to the people here. . . . The church is the only place that the Negroes can call their own. . . . We are doing the Lord’s work. Don’t forget that. The movement developed largely out of the churches, and if God can start a movement, hooray for God.”⁵⁷ Rather than attempting to co-opt the church, COFO recognized the natural confluence of the spiritual, the political, and the educational—God helping those who help themselves.

Focusing on the moral dimensions of the movement, SNCC Field Secretary and Mississippi Gulf Coast native Lawrence Guyot early in 1964 had invited the National Council of Churches into Hattiesburg—to the considerable annoyance of the *Hattiesburg American*, which bemoaned the presence of “misguided ministers” leading protests at the Hattiesburg courthouse.⁵⁸ Guyot later characterized the alliance of the movement and the black church: “It [the church] had legitimacy. It had a history of liberation and of leadership development and so [there was] the nexus between the biblical exaltations for liberation and what we were talking about now.”⁵⁹ But not all black churches wished to be at the forefront of social change. If the way to full citizenship was through the soul, ministerial collaboration often came reluctantly and grudgingly. Many ministers feared the consequences of engaging in “that mess” and were not receptive to COFO, being disinclined to allow their churches to become nurseries of revolution and thus targets of firebombers—not that the arsonists were always nicely discriminating between movement and non-movement churches.

Larry Rubin, a white SNCC staffer transferred to Mississippi from Georgia voter registration work at the beginning of 1964, found getting permission to use a church “the first and hardest part of all of this work.” Annie Devine, an activist resident of Madison County, recounted how police demanded the names and employers of those attending mass meetings.⁶⁰ That some ministers did open their church doors to COFO is partly attributable to their own moral vision. The vision was often helped along not only by COFO workers, but by the ministers’ own congregations as well as the exam-

ple of Martin Luther King (known whimsically as “de Lawd” among SNCC staff). Rubin recalled the introduction a typical minister might give his congregation: “a SNCC worker ‘visited me four or five times. And at first I was very frightened, you know. But then I prayed on it and I prayed to God. And I realized that if I really had faith, you know, I would let them use the church. . . . God told me to let them use the church. God will take care of us if we go ahead and do this.’ ”⁶¹

The ultimate goal of the canvassing work was to get people registered to vote, but the immediate goal was to get people to “mass” meetings, for which the churches were ideal. Mass meetings ranged in size from less than a dozen to occasionally over a hundred. Blending education, politics, prayer, song, and exhortation, the meetings informed, inspired, encouraged, and sometimes shamed. A particularly effective speaker in Clarksdale, eighty-four year old Van Arsdale, at first “played the shuffling Tom, giving all the excuses for not attempting to register, and then proceeded to demolish the argument by demonstrating that Negroes had little to lose and much to gain by making the attempt.” The result was forty “freedom registrations,” presumably a practice form.⁶²

The church’s role in developing solidarity and group identity and cohesion mitigated the fears associated with voter registration. Attempting to register to vote was hazardous, and, on balance, not likely to be successful. The courthouse symbolized a hostile power structure and often housed the sheriff’s office. The atmosphere, in the words of one white volunteer, was “extremely white.”⁶³ Outside the courthouse, prospective registrants might face the malignant stares and jeers of whites. Inside, obviously unsympathetic registrars had sole authority in determining whether or not the applicant passed the test which required a reading and interpretation of a randomly selected section of the Mississippi Constitution. According to one black woman raised in the state, whites routinely passed, whether literate or not; blacks routinely failed.⁶⁴ Seeing blacks coming, the registrar might simply close the office. Often, to heighten the intimidation, only one applicant at a time was allowed in the office. Those attempting to register would find their names listed in the newspaper, in keeping with a new state law putatively passed to allow anyone to come forward and challenge the applicant’s “good character,” but in fact meant simply to intimidate. Attempting to register could also result in losing one’s job. Whether in the fields, the kitchen, the warehouse, or the school system, job loss for attempting to register was common enough that even the normally reactionary *Hattiesburg American* confided in February of 1964 that it “cannot condone” the practice “if it is happening.”⁶⁵

Through mass meetings, the near mystical power of song, and classes in voter registration and literacy, the church emerged as the moral center of the movement. This occurred despite the fact that the black churches were divided over the issue of involvement with the civil rights movement and participation in Freedom Summer. Those churches which opened their doors to Summer Project workers mixed their spiritual roots with temporal politics, and in so doing they subverted the social order and invited retribution. Although the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan flaunted their own overabundant and mawkish religiosity as a political weapon to *preserve* the status quo—“we have no cause but Christ and we seek only to preserve Christian civilization”⁶⁶—they were violently opposed to others using religion as a political weapon to *undermine* the status quo. As with education, religion was for domestication, not liber-

ation or even social amelioration. The *Hattiesburg American* similarly idealized a stand-pat religion devoid of social change. It complained in January of a "new breed of minister . . . more interested in righting social and political wrongs, real or imagined, than in preaching the gospel or saving sinners . . . Happily we have few if any of them in this area."⁶⁷ But by summer adult education classes and mass meetings at black churches, with COFO workers doing much of the speaking, provided strength in numbers and a force for change. The increasing visibility of the church's role as a critical link in voter registration, education, and political awareness further raised its moral stature, but that very visibility also enhanced its attractiveness as a target.

Accounts varied of the number of church arsons and bombings resulting in damage or destruction. The *Jackson Advocate* reported seventeen by August 29, SNCC reported twenty between June 16 and August 26, Moses' biographer reports thirty-seven burned or dynamited over the summer, and another source reports thirty-five. A typed document of uncertain provenance from the Sovereignty files lists by name, location, and date thirty-one churches burned between June 15 and September 20, with two additional ones of unlisted date.⁶⁸ Approximately thirty other homes, places of business, and COFO-related buildings were also attacked, though not all were actually damaged.⁶⁹ The Mississippi White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan officially denied all involvement, stating that "We would like to inform the general public that this organization has had no part in the bombing of Churches, schools and homes for which we have been blamed. The recent bombing of a church and home in McComb, Mississippi is a good example of outside agitation."⁷⁰ Presumably COFO was either torching the churches itself, or provoking unaligned citizens to arson. In a deft move in late July, the United Klans of America (as distinct from Mississippi's White Knights) even offered a \$1000 reward for information leading to the arrest and conviction of church burners.⁷¹ Many in the black communities took collusion between the police and the Klan for granted, and there were apparently no claimants for the reward, just as there were never any convictions for the arsons.

V

Though newspapers duly reported the church burnings (though not always on page one), few used their editorial pulpits to condemn them. Two exceptions were Hazel Brannon Smith's *The Lexington Advertiser* and Hodding Carter's *Delta Democrat Times* of Greenville. Carter's "Arson in the House of God" editorial, a masterpiece of controlled outrage and moral suasion, thundered not only at the odium of five church fires themselves, but at the hypocrisy and silence of the pious for failing to denounce them. He compared the white silence to "comfortable Christians of the Germany of the 1930s" as "Jews were brutalized, murdered, and incarcerated," only to find that they too were not allowed to oppose the Nazis. Warming to his subject, he continued:

Consider how skillfully our Southern indignation would have been fanned if the rioters in New York City . . . had burned down even one church in a white section [while the thirteen leveled in Mississippi have resulted in] no apparent moral nerve being touched in the white community. . . . Let a church pledge be dropped or whiskey touched, and then hear the thunder roll from the pulpits. But let a place of God be desecrated by modern Huns, and we hear not even a mild admonition. . . . We

white Mississippians talk righteously about the failure of citizens of the big cities of the East to offer aid as women are assaulted in the streets or as men are mugged in broad daylight. But what of the one million whites of our own state who will do nothing as native born thugs carry out a reign of terror against our black fellow Mississippians, with the house of God as their favorite target?⁷²

Mississippi newspapers liberally applied the word “terrorist” to the rioters outside the South, but most, like the *Hattiesburg American*, never applied it to the Mississippi arsonists. But Carter, eighteen years after winning a Pulitzer for editorial writing (as owner Hazel Brannon Smith would do for *The Lexington Advertiser* in 1964), could still write with what Mark Twain called “a pen warmed in Hell.” His propensity to do so led him to take the precaution of keeping a loaded pistol in his desk drawer, even if Greenville was the most moderate town in the Delta.⁷³

Besides earning her a 1964 Pulitzer, Smith’s writing earned her a far different compliment—her other weekly, Jackson’s *Northside Reporter*, was bombed in early August. Smith noted in a letter that the Citizens Councils had been against her since 1954, and that “[t]his fight has cost us nine years of our lives, my husband’s job and about \$200,000 in money.” She spoke publicly of “the Citizens’ Councils and other terrorist, extremist organizations.” Smith discomfited many by excoriating the “rabble vigilante element” and asking in print such questions as “Where is the white Christian conscience in this so-called Bible-belt?” Rather than attack the Freedom Summer volunteers, she told Mississippians to re-direct their outrage: “Much is said about the young ‘do gooders’ in the summer project, but nothing at all about the Imperial Wizard of the KKK. . . . The truth is that these young people wouldn’t be here if we had not largely ignored our responsibilities to our Negro citizens.” She also raised the spectre of federal troops entering the state, the ultimate insult to the state’s sovereignty: “If law enforcement officials will not or cannot control or contain the vicious groups of white extremists responsible for the current crisis, then they should tell Governor Johnson so. U.S. troops could then be called in to occupy the state—and exercise the responsibilities we have abdicated.”⁷⁴ Smith’s bold demand for federal intervention was most Mississippians’ nightmare scenario, reminiscent of both Reconstruction and the still smoldering Meredith incident at Ole Miss two years earlier. Senator Stennis warned that “these racial zealots are making their move which they hope will lead to the Federal occupation of Mississippi.” The Klan dropped leaflets over coastal Pascagoula fulminating against the “black savages” and their white sympathizers who “want Mississippi placed under martial law.”⁷⁵

Smith’s and Carter’s jeremiads against the white violence and the white silence raise the question of how much of the silence derived from a sympathetic complicity with the rabble and how much derived from fear. Aside from the fear of the “invasion,” there was the natural fear of contravening social norms, especially the elaborate Jim Crow code which demanded total social segregation and black deference. Violations could be costly, from ostracism to being run out of the state, as one white family was for socializing on one occasion with white COFO volunteers. Fear of being called a “nigger lover” cowed many whites into silence. One COFO worker observed, “I’d say a good many of them [whites] wouldn’t adopt the kind of views that they have right now if it weren’t for fear. . . . You have a lot of secret sympathizers who are simply afraid to come out and say something.”⁷⁶ Perhaps a majority of whites might abhor the church burnings and other violence and even acknowledge voting rights, but

almost never did they quarrel with the bedrock principle of segregation. If violence were the province of the few (including the police), it was sufficiently widespread to lead Canton civil rights leader Annie Devine to comment that "when you talk about violence, you're just talking about what goes on in Mississippi regularly. That's part of its history, its culture."⁷⁷

Despite the vacuum of state-level political leadership on civil rights, the moral complacency of the state institutions of higher learning, and the see-no-evil segregationist approach of the great majority of the state's press, the white silence was less than absolute, however. According to an opinion poll done in 1964, at least 4% of white Mississippians agreed with President Johnson's handling of civil rights.⁷⁸ A few churchmen joined journalists Carter and Smith in defying the violent minority and tentatively questioning the status quo. Especially in the latter, they tended to leave their flocks behind and jeopardized their jobs. When twenty-eight Methodist ministers took the radical step in 1963 of signing a statement supporting desegregation of the schools (the position of the national denomination), all but seven were gone within a year.⁷⁹ Advocating desegregation or seriously questioning Jim Crow went well beyond most whites' thinking, but condemning the violence fell within the pale of acceptable public commentary. In that context, Mississippi's *Baptist Record* editor Joe T. Odle deplored the "atrocious acts . . . condemned by every right-thinking citizen."⁸⁰ Baptists also cautiously stepped forward to establish the inter-denominational Committee of Concern, aimed largely at collecting funds to rebuild burned churches.⁸¹

Editor Sam Ashmore of the *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* went further by condemning, in accord with the national Methodist church's position opposing segregation in the churches, the refusal of Methodist churches in Jackson to admit small, out-of-state integrated groups of Methodists to Easter services.⁸² The negative reaction to his views was intense, as he indicated three weeks later: "In these tense times, when myth is substituted for reality; when character assassination is the order of the day; when men lose their pulpits for expressing their convictions; when repeated telephone calls in the dead of night voice ugly, whispered threats of violence and death; when crosses are burned on church property; when virtual silence is imposed with regard to existing evils; when Christian teaching is disregarded; the awesome responsibility of holding up the fundamental tenets of the church in the press becomes overwhelming." In May the paper quoted, without demur, Bishop Gerald Kennedy's statement of the national position that ". . . this General Conference should insist upon the removal from its structure of any mark of racial segregation and we should do it without wasting time . . . [To] hesitate is to fight against God."⁸³

Even more forceful were Rev. Bernard Law, editor of the Catholic diocesan paper *The Mississippi Register*, Catholic Bishop Richard Gerow, and Episcopal Church rector Duncan Gray, all of whom advocated desegregation not just for churches but for schools. Noting that Mississippi politicians were trapped by their segregationist rhetoric, in March of 1964, Law challenged Governor Johnson to show "tremendous courage" and appoint a Commission on Human Relations to mobilize "all levels of state leadership for smooth and peaceful desegregation."⁸⁴ As Methodist editor Ashmore had similarly noted, Law regretted how progressive ministers were constrained by their constituencies. In April Law lamented the firing of the First Christian Church's minister, as well as the resignations of Methodist ministers Roy Clark and William Se-

lah and the minister of the state's largest Lutheran Church. Referring in an earlier editorial to President Johnson's Rose Garden Speech to Southern Baptists urging their support for civil rights, Law noted that such support was unlikely: "Even when a Southern Baptist minister may wish to speak out clearly for the cause of full justice for the Negro, he is so completely beholden to his congregation that his call might soon be terminated as a result of his bold action."⁸⁵

Responding specifically to Freedom Summer participants, the *Baptist Record* saw "the futility of outside groups, however well meaning they may be" to address the problems that "Mississippians themselves" must solve. Both the Methodist and Catholic papers were more welcoming. The *Mississippi Methodist Advocate* observed that the Freedom Summer workers "are intelligent, hard workers with goals inclusive of the ultimate good for every community in this state." *The Mississippi Register* acknowledged in June that it is "a natural thing to resent outside interference," but urged its readers to accept the volunteers "as fellow Americans with a laudable desire to be of service."⁸⁶ Catholic Bishop Gerow also supported COFO's voter registration as well as the Civil Rights Act, and after its passage in July he ordered the desegregation of Mississippi's Catholic schools.⁸⁷ Most daring of all, Episcopal priest Duncan Gray had advocated desegregation as early as 1956 in a speech at Mississippi State College. He worked with Mississippi NAACP activists Amzie Moore and Aaron Henry and actively worked with COFO in a long career seeking racial justice.⁸⁸

Amid the din of invasion rhetoric from the state's politicians and conservative editors, the few local white voices of moderation who had the courage to make themselves heard came not from elected officialdom or from the all-too-complicit state colleges and universities, but from a couple of editors and a few clergymen. These voices represented fissures in the seemingly monolithic opposition to the "movement." Yet the apologists for the status quo rightly saw Freedom Summer as a threat to "our way of life." COFO's inherently educational program intended nothing less than the subversion of the political and social structure of Mississippi life. It aimed at making full citizenship meaningful through the political and educational enfranchisement of the state's second class citizens.

VI

Based on a well-remunerated tip, on Tuesday, August 5, the FBI found the bodies of James Earl Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman buried in an earthen dam on private property a few miles from where they had disappeared.⁸⁹ The spectrum of opinion reacting to the murders ranged from disingenuous conspiracy theories to occasional genuine outrage. On the far right, *The Klan Ledger* had allowed that "American Patriots" might have killed them, but more likely it was their own Communist allies. One farmer explained that "it was those integration groups that got rid of them. They couldn't let them live after they disappeared for fear everyone would find out it was a hoax."⁹⁰ Rather than spin the hoax theory to this next level of absurdity, many other erstwhile hoax theorists like Senator Eastland simply remained silent.

Somewhere in the middle was the *Hattiesburg American*, which had never endorsed the hoax view. After calling the murders “regrettable, inexcusable and without purpose” and noting that “no intelligent Mississippian condones [them], nor would he want those responsible to go unpunished,” the paper argued in the rest of the editorial that the federal government’s “hands-off policy in the North” obscured Northern racial incidents while Southern ones received an unfair national spotlight. For some, the most regrettable fact surrounding the deaths was the image problem they created — or worsened — for the state, reflected in the café waitress who commented that she was “sorry to hear about it. Mississippi has enough trouble as it is.” Others held a “blame the victim” view, perfectly expressed by an unidentified man who conveniently forgot that Chaney was from Mississippi in noting that “If they had stayed home where they belonged, nothing would have happened to them.”⁹¹

On the moderate left, Hazel Brannon Smith of *The Lexington Advertiser* was a rare voice of outrage, stripped of the sophistry of blame-sharing and collective state self-pity. Attacking the murders and the murderers, themselves, she went right to the heart of the matter: “We can only hope and pray that the killers will be found, tried in a court of law, and sent to the electric chair. They are not fit to live in human society.” No provocations or extenuating circumstances mitigated the brute reality for her; as, the state itself was a co-conspirator with blood on its hands. As she had shrewdly stated a month earlier, “. . . the haters, bombers, lynchers, and murderers could not operate in a society where the overwhelming weight of public opinion is openly expressed against them.”⁹² It was a telling point and severe indictment of the white silence.

This range of opinion about the murders mirrored, in microcosm, the range of judgment about the invaders and Freedom Summer itself. The unnamed editor-author of *The Klan Ledger* represented the radical right:

The “long, hot summer” has passed. Can we measure the results now, or will it take a number of years to weigh the outcome and success? The COFO has no laurels (sic) to their credit, and the general public of Mississippi has had a fill of their very existence. In fact the COFO can be summed up as a complete failure. For this we owe thanks to the general public and the failure of the good people of Mississippi to accept the scum from our land as teachers and leaders in our community which was built to its magnificent splendor by the sweat and blood of our great White Fathers. For the success of our struggle against this scum, we offer our thanks to Almighty God, our Creator and Saviour.⁹³

Representative of the large, hostile, but non-violent middle, Percy Greene, editor of Jackson’s black weekly newspaper the *Jackson Advocate*, used more restrained language but conveyed a similar damning message. Greene approvingly quoted Ruleville mayor Charles Dorrough who said that he did not believe “they have accomplished anything, except to poison the minds of the younger Negroes. These young Negroes will have to be taught the democratic way of doing things. . . . [COFO has] helped the Communist cause.”⁹⁴ The shocking discovery of the bodies and the end to the mysterious disappearance was not the announcement that Greene awaited. He was far more interested in “welcom[ing] the announcement” that most of the summer workers would leave August 24. Greene’s paper had denounced COFO activities when commenting on Freedom Summer at all, and all summer had ignored the disappearance and resulting massive search. The summer workers, he now claimed, had accom-

plished nothing except "arousing the bitter memories of the carpetbaggers . . . and leading the Negroes of the state down the road into another post-civil war-type tragic era. It is going to require tremendous effort to overcome the harm they have done."⁹⁵ No poll exists to measure the breadth of this sentiment, but it almost certainly represented a large majority view among whites and would have found many black supporters, especially among financially better off blacks.⁹⁶

By contrast, Greenville's *Delta Democrat Times* editor Hodding Carter praised his city for its absence of violence and found progress in the summer. Not only were more blacks involved in voter registration, but also "some changes of attitude were effected in at least part of the Negro community which will not be altered now that the volunteer contingent is gone."⁹⁷ For Percy Greene, the burden of guilt was on COFO for having challenged the caste system, inviting the wrath of politicians and reactionaries; for Hodding Carter, the burden rested on the politicians and reactionaries themselves, alternately pining and bellowing about "our way of life." However differently the two editors assigned blame, their concerns over continuing harassment and violence proved correct; fifty incidents were reported in a "Running Summary" between October 8 and November 2, when COFO was conducting another Freedom Vote Campaign.⁹⁸

These three editors might be said to represent three alternative Mississippi responses to Freedom Summer—the bellicose and violent far right, the nonviolent but hostile right, and the sympathetic and moderate left. Not the least of Freedom's Summer's ironies is the likelihood that black editor Greene probably better represented the typical white view, and white editor Carter probably better represented the black view. Freedom Summer emerged as a kind of almost irresistible force confronting the nearly immovable object of Mississippi Jim Crow. The Summer Project would be the test of whether or not the civil rights movement could "crack" Mississippi, as SNCC Chairman John Lewis had famously phrased it. Cracks did begin to appear, and the immovable object moved just a little. Some 1,600 black Mississippians registered to vote; more importantly, 17,000 attempted to do so.⁹⁹ Attitudes in parts of Mississippi's white community inched toward change as well, epitomized by the conservative *Hattiesburg American's* mid-summer *mea culpa*: "It is time that Christians took sides for justice and the elimination of discriminatory laws and customs. Our silence does not become us as Christians, nor does it commend the faith we claim."¹⁰⁰

The "closed society" that "Ole Miss" professor James Silver boldly dissected in 1964 began to open. That his book, *Mississippi: The Closed Society*, was published the day after the disappearance which riveted the nation, is an ironic convergence of a narrative critique of the closed society and the historical event which, more than any other, precipitated its opening. In the wake of the murders, the book soon made *Time* magazine's and *The New York Times'* best-seller lists and made its author an enemy of state officials who sought to fire him.¹⁰¹ Silver's book, the murders of the CORE workers and the ensuing national attention, the civil rights act, the court orders prohibiting racial discrimination in voter registration, the failed but pivotal attempt to seat black delegates at the Democratic national convention in Atlantic City, and of course Freedom Summer itself all lend plausibility to the view that 1964 was a turning point for Mississippi, if only by a few crucial degrees. SNCC staffer Charlie Cobb noted that "after '64, Mississippi became part of America."¹⁰² Private segregationist acade-

mies and clubs would proliferate, the “never-never symphony” would still blare from editorials and influential voices, and the Klan would murder Vernon Dahmer in 1966 for his voter registration work.¹⁰³ But after 1964, despite all the resistance still to come, Mississippi was often dragged, and sometimes by itself groped, forward on a course for change.

NOTES

¹ “Council of Federated Organizations,” 1964, Allard Lowenstein Papers, box 32, file 369, Southern Historical Collection, the Wilson Library at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill (hereafter cited as Lowenstein Papers).

² Robert Moses, interview with Anne Romaine, c. 1967, transcript, Anne Romaine Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

³ Dave Dennis to Jim McCain, 19 October 1963, Congress of Racial Equality Papers, box 86, file 392, Martin Luther King Library and Archives of the Martin Luther King Center, Atlanta (hereafter cited as CORE Papers). Dennis’s remark alludes to the generational and methodological differences between the more established NAACP and SCLC and the more youthful and more aggressive SNCC and CORE. Still, Dennis and Moses had enormous respect for particular Mississippi NAACP leaders like Aaron Henry and Amzie Moore. From the SCLC perspective, Septima Clark noted in a 1976 interview that there was some hostility within SCLC toward SNCC, though not from its head, Martin Luther King. Clark’s own ambivalence toward SNCC is suggested by contrasting her 8 May 1963 letter to Mary Struck with her 1976 interview comments with Jacqueline Hall. In the former she asserts that “SNNC [sic] students are true disciples of Christ. They do not ask for salaries nor a place to lie down” (Southern Christian Leadership Conference Papers, box 154, file 5, Martin Luther King Library and Archives of the Martin Luther King Center, Atlanta [hereafter cited as SCLC Papers]). But in the interview, she observes that “I felt that they were young people who didn’t get the facts and just went right off the top of their hats” (Southern Historical Collection, The Wilson Library of the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill). For a history of SNCC see Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981); for CORE, see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York Press, 1973).

⁴ Paul B. Johnson campaign brochure, [1963], Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee Papers, (microfilm) reel 38, frame 643 (hereafter cited as SNCC Papers).

⁵ “Planned Invasion of Mississippi,” (McComb) *Enterprise-Journal*, 25 May 1964.

⁶ “Paul Blasts Church Aid to Project,” 4 July 1964, (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*; mayor’s comment and minister’s quote cited in Elizabeth Sutherland, *Letters from Mississippi* (New York, 1965), 46.

⁷ Erle Johnston to Paul B. Johnson, 7 April 1964, Paul B. Johnson Papers, box 135, file 8, McCain Library, The University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg (hereafter cited as Johnson Papers) (“hatemongers”); Tom Scarborough report, 3 April 1964, Leflore County, Johnson Papers, 135:8 (“goon squads”); Tom Scarborough & Virgil Downing, 29-30 Jan. 1964, Supplemental Report, Johnson Papers, 135:5 (“flea bitten”). Erle Johnston was the Director of the Sovereignty Commission from 1963 to 1968; Scarborough and Downing were two of its investigators. Ironically, from the beginning SNCC encouraged a “clean-cut” look to discourage such charges. One participant said that the male volunteers got haircuts and generally the “students gleamed as if they had been polished” (Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, New York: Viking Press, 1965, 21). Another student started wearing a tie when he discovered that some locals mistook him for an FBI agent. Aside from Schwerner’s goatee, photographs from the period confirm the clean-cut look.

⁸ “We Are Not on the Welcome Committee” (editorial), *Jackson Advocate*, 18 July 1964. Erle Johnston, Sovereignty Commission Director (1963-1968), pointed out in his 1990 book that Percy Greene’s paper’s “very existence” depended on white merchants since there were not enough black merchants to support the paper. But Greene surprised even his supporters (including the Sovereignty Commission, which financially supported him) when he editorialized that “The greatest need for the Negro in Jackson, in Mississippi, and the rest of the South is more Uncle Toms” (Erle Johnston, *Mississippi’s Defiant Years, 1953-1973* (Forest, Mississippi, 1990), 232.

⁹ For the Emmett Till case, see Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 39-40 and following; see also *Free at Last: A History of the Civil Rights Movement and Those Who Died in the Struggle* (Montgomery: Civil Rights Education Project, Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.). 40-41; Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 45.

¹⁰ "Two Incidents of Arrest and Imprisonment in Mississippi," c. 16 May 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:2.

¹¹ *The Klan Ledger*, Autumn [1964], Sovereignty Commission Papers, Classification 6, folder 37, volume 0, document 5, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson (hereafter cited as Sovereignty Papers). After considering destroying the Sovereignty files, the state legislature in 1977 ordered them sealed until 2027. They were made public by court order on March 17, 1998. The classification system is that of the Department of Archives.

¹² Tom Scarborough, untitled report, 22 April 1963, Sovereignty Papers, 1-71-0-3.

¹³ "Words make news in Mississippi" (editorial), *Life*, Johnson Paper, 135:6. Johnson's inaugural speech, however, was remarkably conciliatory, sufficiently so that it received praise from *Life* and *The New York Times*.

¹⁴ Larry Rubin, interview with author, 1995, transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

¹⁵ *The Klan Ledger*, Special Neshoba County Fair Edition [August, 1964], Sovereignty Papers, 6-37-0-4. The probable author of *The Klan Ledger* was Sam Bowers, founder and Imperial Wizard of the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan. He was well placed to know that the murders were neither a hoax as previously claimed nor the work of communists: in 1967 he was sentenced in federal court to ten years for violating the civil rights of the three men. According to *The Tennessean*, 22 Feb. 1966, Investigator Donald Appell of the House Un-American Activities Committee stated that the bearded Schwerner was known as "Goatee" to the White Knights and that they had a "Project Four" murder contract on him (Sovereignty Papers, 6-53-0-29).

¹⁶ "Communists Try to Use Negroes" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 27 April 1964; Charlie Cobb, interview with author, 1996, transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

¹⁷ "Officials Say Charges of Beating Ridiculous," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 10 June 1964; "City Officials Offer Evidence of Communist Activities Here," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 24 July 1964. In an untitled, anonymous document from the Sovereignty Papers, the evidence included SNCC's alleged \$2,500 per month WATS line, copies of the "Crusader"—published by a "negro Communist" who fled North Carolina for Cuba—confiscated in the June traffic arrest, and a lawyer for COFO from the National Lawyers Guild, a leftist group thought by some to be a communist front organization. The statement was from the mayor and two commissioners in Greenwood and followed an Eastland speech in the Senate about communist influence in the civil rights movement (Sovereignty Papers, 2-150-1-1).

¹⁸ "Anti-Red Probe Launched in State," *Clarksdale Press Register*, 1 August 1964; "Leader Denies Reds in CR Movement," (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 23 July 1964.

¹⁹ Septima Clark, "Letter to Answer Questions of Communist Infiltration," [1964], SCLC Papers, 154: 2; unnamed ACLU lawyer, cited in Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 103. Clark lost her teaching position in South Carolina due to her membership in the NAACP, at which time she went to Highlander. When Highlander was shut down by the state of Tennessee, she moved to SCLC, with Myles Horton's blessing, taking with her the Citizenship Schools program which she and Esau Jenkins of South Carolina had started.

²⁰ Cobb, interview with author, 1996.

²¹ Lowenstein, addendum to letter from E. Bundy to brother, 30 April 1964, Lowenstein Papers, 32:352. Lowenstein contributed to Freedom Summer by proposing to Bob Moses a "Freedom Vote" for the fall of 1963, designed to conduct a mock voter registration and voting campaign in which Aaron Henry ran against the official candidates in the fall, 1963 governor's election. Lowenstein then recruited a number of mostly northern white students who came to Mississippi to help with the mock campaign. Despite harassment, approximately 75,000 blacks and "registered" and "voted," proving that they would do so if allowed. Moses resurrected the idea of large numbers of college students coming to Mississippi for the Summer Project.

²² Report of Operator 79, 9 May 1964, Johnson Papers, 135:8; Erle Johnston to Paul B. Johnson, 5 May 1964, Sovereignty Papers, 1-84-0-7. Infiltrators did not sign their reports to the Sovereignty Commission, but were known by numbers or letters. They collected information on COFO activities, upcoming events, re-

cruits, and license plate numbers, and provided much COFO literature to the Sovereignty Commission, some of which was passed on to the Governor.

²³ Hollis Watkins, interview with author, 1996, transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg. Watkins' first jail term was for thirty-four days in 1961 for trying to de-segregate the McComb Woolworth's lunch counter with Curtis Hayes. In the fall 1963 debates over the large infusion of white students for Freedom Summer, Watkins argued that a dependence on numerous outsiders would jeopardize the development of local leadership in the black community.

²⁴ Eric R. Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them: Robert Parris Moses and Civil Rights in Mississippi* (New York, 1994), 195.

²⁵ "The Mississippi Legislature 1964," SNCC Papers, 39:368-394; "Senate Votes to Enlarge Patrol," 14 May 1964, *Laurel Leader Call*. Hazel Brannon Smith of *The Lexington Advertiser*, one of the two most liberal editorial voices in the state, listed some of the current and new laws that could be used against the Project and urged her readers to "give some thought to whether or not we are living in a police state" ("Through Hazel's Eyes," editor's column, 23 April 1964). Alluding to the federal civil rights bill, which its opponents portrayed as the death knell of freedom, Smith observed, "But it is not the Federal government or Congress that has taken them [our freedoms] away from us—but the Mississippi State Legislature" ("Civil Rights of Mississippians," editorial, 23 April 1964).

²⁶ "Doors of Tougaloo Open for Inspection," 18 Feb. 1964, *Hattiesburg American*, ("hangout"); "Offer Bill to Revoke Charter of Tougaloo," 20 Feb. 1964, *Hattiesburg American* ("so called"); Erle Johnston to Paul B. Johnson, 5 May 1964, Sovereignty Papers, 1-84-0-7. Johnston notes in his memoir that "the bill to revoke the charter, I was proud to learn, was killed in committee" (*Mississippi Defiant Years*, 302).

²⁷ John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, 1994), 235-36.

²⁸ *Laws of the State of Mississippi, Appropriations[,] General Legislative and Concurrent Resolutions*, 1964, Chapter 324, House Bill 564, p. 438; Chapter 343, House Bill 546, p. 478; Chapter 336, House Bill 777, p. 470; Chapter 344, Senate Bill 1545, p. 478.

²⁹ "Civil Rights Workers File Suit In Effort to Void State Law," 31 July 1964 (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*; "[Stennis] Tries Again," 23 June 1964, *Greenwood Commonwealth*.

³⁰ *Laws*, Chapter 323, Senate Bill 2027, p. 437; "KKK Gathering for Big Rally," 13 May 1964, *Laurel Leader Call*; "KKK Leader Plans Rally," 1 June 1964, *Laurel Leader Call*.

³¹ Erle Johnston to Norman Johnson, 28 April 1964, Johnson Papers, 135:8. The Sovereignty Commission Files (some of which Director Johnston passed on to Governor Johnson) contain numerous examples of reports on COFO people and activities from identified investigators and unidentified planted informants. The Commission also collected some Klan materials, but restricted its investigative and spying efforts to what it perceived as threats from the left. Though Director Johnston was not above using intimidation, there is no archival evidence that the Commission participated in or sanctioned violence according to a Mississippi Department of Archives and History archivist who has examined the entire 132,000 page Sovereignty Commission collection. In fact, Commission Investigator A. L. Hopkins noted in his report on the disappearance of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman that Sheriff Rainey was a suspect in the Mt. Zion church burning, that he had allegedly been involved in beatings of several blacks, and, prophetically, that he, Deputy Price, and Policeman Willis "are the prime suspects in this case" (Sovereignty Papers, 1-8-0-18). On the Citizens' Councils, see Dittmer, *Local People*, Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, and various numbers of *Aspect*, the Jackson Citizens' Council newsletter which the Jackson group began sending to the Sovereignty Commission in July, 1964 (Sovereignty Papers, 99-30, several documents).

³² Erle Johnston to Paul B. Johnson, 1 Sept. 1964, Johnson Papers, 136:4. In his 1990 memoir, Sovereignty Commission Director Johnston offers a unique account from the state's perspective, and specifically the perspective of a man who accepted the system and saw his job as defending it. Calling himself a "pragmatic segregationist" in that period of his life (a period in which no elected official could advocate desegregation and stay in office), Johnston gave a speech in 1962 at his high school alma mater that criticized what he perceived as the radicals of the NAACP, but also "a group [the Citizens' Council] which believes in threats and intimidation." Infuriated, the Councils' leadership called his speech "surrender," demanded his firing as publicist of the Commission, and opposed his elevation to the Director's position in 1963. The speech received attention in several Southern newspapers. Johnston saw his role largely as peacemaker and problem solver, disarming the voices of troublemakers and agitators. In that sense his rebuttal to his Citizens' Council critics was perfectly in character: "The Citizens' Councils have degenerated into a handful of leaders who depend for their very existence on the friction, emotionalism, and tension they can create"

(*Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 140). For similar reasons, he had no kind words for SNCC, CORE, or COFO in either 1964 or 1990, though by 1990 he did for King of SCLC and for the NAACP. In that regard he made no distinction between the Moses-inspired voter registration and education-oriented SNCC and CORE of Freedom Summer, and the more militant, all black, "black power" orientation of SNCC and CORE after 1964.

³³ "Mississippi Invasion," (Jackson) *Clarion Ledger*, 30 July 1964, "Stand Tall with Paul" [campaign brochure], 1963, SNCC Papers, 38:643.

³⁴ Rims Barber, interview with author, 1995, transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

³⁵ Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*, 253, n. 42.

³⁶ "Justice Dept. Asked to Check on Arrests of Agitators Here," *Hattiesburg American*, 15 Jan. 1964, For a chronological and place name listing of incidents, see "Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents," 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:312-332.

³⁷ Rubin, interview with author, 1995.

³⁸ Watkins, interview with author, 1996; Erle Johnston to Paul B. Johnson, Johnson Papers, 136:4.

³⁹ Batesville incident cited in Sutherland, *Letters from Mississippi*, 128.

⁴⁰ One need not rely exclusively on SNCC documents for accounts of such incidents, however; several Mississippi newspapers covered the more salient incidents, especially those involving violence.

⁴¹ Robert Moses, letter to "friends" (New York Encampment for Citizenship), 22 August 1964, Lowenstein Papers, 32:352.

⁴² Moses' announcement and incidents all cited in Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents, SNCC Papers, 39:319-332.

⁴³ "Negro Terrorist Attacks Spur Plans for More Police," *Hattiesburg American*, 2 June 1964; "President Should Halt Our 'Long, Hot Summer,'" *Laurel Leader Call*, 26 June 1964; "C[itizens] C[ouncil] Urges Resistance to C[ivil] R[ights] Bill," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 10 July 1964; "Suggests Sending Righters to N.Y.," 4 August, 1964, (McComb) *Enterprise-Journal*, 4 August 1964 (McComb mayor).

⁴⁴ "Real Causes of NY Violence" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American* 3 June 1964 ("their leaders"); "Right Leadership" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 17 Jan. 1964 ("road of folly"); "Election Effects" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 20 July 1964 ("CORE creeps"); "Force Laws" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 14 May 1964; "Where Are We Headed?" (editorial), 11 Feb. 1964, *Hattiesburg American*, 11 Feb. 1964 ("sweep away"); "The Civil Rights Bill" (editorial), (Jackson) *Clarion Ledger*, 7 March 1964. The *Hattiesburg American* re-ran the *Clarion Ledger's* 7 March editorial on 12 March.

⁴⁵ Pat Watters, *Encounter with the Future* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1965) 3 (cited in Carson, *In Struggle*, 322, n. 32).

⁴⁶ Security Handbook, n.d., SNCC Papers, 39:694.

⁴⁷ "NAACP Asks Investigation," *Laurel Leader Call*, 14 May 1964 ("wave"); Dittmer, *Local People*, 237-38 ("Klan-type").

⁴⁸ "Jail treatment of white student in Jackson Mississippi," 1964, SNCC Papers, 64:318 (Jackson incident); "Three Men Claim Ambush Beating in Pike County," (McComb) *Enterprise-Journal*, 9 June 1964 (McComb incident); "Mississippi freedom schools," 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:88-89 ("stronghold"). Clayborne Carson cites 17 bombings in McComb from June through September, *In Struggle* 122, 322 n. 32.

⁴⁹ "Mississippi Klan: A Study in Violence" 8 January 1968, Sovereignty Papers, 6-53-0-44. Project One indicated threatening phone calls and visits; Two indicated burning crosses; Three meant beating, flogging, burning property, and night shooting into property. According to Edward C. Smith, FBI agent in Laurel in the mid-sixties, Sam Bowers of Laurel formed the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan "because the more widely known Klan, the United Klans of America, led by Robert Shelton, was not 'aggressive' enough in resisting the civil rights movement. The White Knights looked on the United Klans as 'sissies'" (Smith, letter to editor, *Time*, 8 June 1998, n.p.).

⁵⁰ Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 53. Belfrage was a volunteer participant, and her book is probably the best published memoir of the summer.

⁵¹ The Evers murder and subsequent trials are covered in a number of sources, including Myrlie Evers, *For Us, the Living* (Jackson: Banner Books, 1996, originally published by University Press of Mississippi, 1967), 351-373; Dittmer, *Local People*, 165-166; and Payne, *I've Seen the Light of Freedom*, 287-290. The *Hattiesburg American* ranked the topic as the biggest Mississippi news story of 1963.

⁵² For a detailed account of the murder of the CORE workers, see Seth, Cagin and Philip Dray, *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign in Mississippi* (New York, 1988).

⁵³ "Partial list of racial murders in the South in the last two years," 1965 CORE Papers, 86:635; "Headless Bodies Still Baffling Law Officers," (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 14 July 1964; "Justice Must Prevail" (editorial), (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 9 August 1964. Percy Greene, black editor of the conservative *Jackson Advocate* and recipient of financial support from the Sovereignty Commission (over \$3,000 in 1958 [untitled document, 16 March 1959, Sovereignty Papers, 9-1-1-24]), editorialized in the 18 July 1964 issue that "the two young men would not have been thrown into the river in the first place had they not been subjected to months of false, misleading, and frustrating propaganda regarding the white people of the state . . ." ("The Cause and the Cure"). In the case of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman, the massive search for the three, according to Schwerner's wife Rita, was due to the fact that " . . . my husband and Andrew Goodman are white. If only Chaney was involved, nothing would have been done" (cited in Len Holt, *The Summer That Didn't End* [New York, 1965], 30), the bearded and Jewish Schwerner was known as "Goatee" to the Klan and was specifically targeted by the Klan according to House Un-American Activities Committee Investigator Donald Appell who was quoted in *The Tennessee*, 22 Feb. 1966 ("Wizard Order: Death—No Malice," Sovereignty Papers, 6-53-0-29).

⁵⁴ "Another Negro Church Fire in MS.," *Hattiesburg American*, 25 June 1964; "List of Negro Churches and Church Buildings Burned in Mississippi," n.d., Sovereignty Papers, 2-166-1-36.

⁵⁵ Headnote to *The Klan Ledger*, Sovereignty Papers, 6-37-0-5.

⁵⁶ Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 41; Rubin, interview with the author, 1995.

⁵⁷ Cited in Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*, 41.

⁵⁸ "A Puzzler" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 28 January, 1964.

⁵⁹ Lawrence Guyot, interview with author, 1996, transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

⁶⁰ Rubin, interview with author, 1995; Annie Devine, interview with Anne Romaine, 1966, transcript, Anne Romaine collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

⁶¹ Rubin, interview with author, 1995.

⁶² Clarksdale Weekly Report, June 29-July 5, 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:487.

⁶³ Roger Barnhill, interview with author, 1995 transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

⁶⁴ Winson Hudson, interview with author, 1995 transcript, Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage, University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg.

⁶⁵ "Meddling" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 13 Feb. 1964.

⁶⁶ *The Klan Ledger*, Dec. 1965-June 1966, Sovereignty Papers, 6-53-0-24. Extant issues of *The Klan Ledger* are replete with references to God and Christianity. The headnote beneath the title states that the organization is "dedicated to the preservation of Christian civilization," and the autumn 1964 "edition" begins with a long prayer. A sub-text of these editions is that the Klan worldview and Protestant Christianity are not only compatible but are fused into a single truth.

⁶⁷ "No Place for Ministers" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 25 January 1964.

⁶⁸ "Negro Church Near Ita Bena 17th to Burn," *Jackson Advocate*, 29 August 1964; "Mississippi Summer Project Running Summary of Incidents," 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:319-332; Burner, *And Gently He Shall Lead Them*; Pat Watters, *Encounter With the Future* (Atlanta: Southern Regional Council, 1965), 3 (cited in Carson, *In Struggle*, 322 n. 32); "List of Negro Churches and Church Buildings Burned in Mississippi," n.d., Sovereignty Papers, 2-166-1-36.

⁶⁹ Watters, *Encounter With the Future*, 3 (cited in Carson, *In Struggle*, 322 n. 32).

⁷⁰ *The Klan Ledger*, Early Autumn Edition [1964], Sovereignty Papers, 6-37-0-5.

⁷¹ "Klan Offers Reward for Church Burners," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 27 July 1964.

⁷² "Arson in the House of God" (editorial), (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 2 August 1964.

⁷³ John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York: Knopf, 1995), 563.

⁷⁴ Hazel Smith to Stephen Burks, 28 July 1963, Lowenstein Papers, 32:352 ("this fight"); "Our Own Freedom is in Jeopardy" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 16 April 1964 ("terrorist, extremist"); "Our Ultimate Destruction" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 16 July 1964 ("rabble vigilante"); "Church Burnings Must Be Stopped" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 6 August 1964 ("Where is"); "Through

Hazel Eyes" (editor's column), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 2 July 1964 ("Much is said"); "Time is Running Out for Mississippi" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 2 July 1964 ("If law enforcement").

⁷⁵ "Stennis' Timely Appeal" (editorial), *The Clarksdale Press Register*, 25 June 1964; "Stand Back," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 3 July 1964. Forcing the federal government to confront the Mississippi leadership was indeed a goal of SNCC; see Carson, *In Struggle*, 122-124.

⁷⁶ Sandy Leigh, interview with Anne Romaine, 1967, transcript, Anne Romaine Collection, Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson.

⁷⁷ Devine, interview with Anne Romaine, 1966.

⁷⁸ Mark Newman, "The Mississippi Baptist Convention and Desegregation, 1945-1980," *The Journal of Mississippi History*, 59, 16 n. 51.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

⁸⁰ "Smoke Over Mississippi" (editorial), (Mississippi) *Baptist Record*, 6 August 1964.

⁸¹ "Inter-faith Group Set to Help Negroes," (Mississippi) *Baptist Record*, 17 September 1964. Despite these cautious steps, the *Baptist Record* had quickly rejected any alliance with the activist National Council of Churches, unequivocally asserting that it would "have no part in any programs which give emphasis to theological liberalism, ecumenism, and the social gospel" ("Southern Baptists and the National Council of Churches," 25 June 1964).

⁸² "The Travail of Mississippi Methodism" (editorial), *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, 8 April 1964.

⁸³ "Editing a Church Paper" (editorial), *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, 29 April 1964 ("In these"); "The Episcopal Address," *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, 6 May 1964 ("this General").

⁸⁴ "Legal Segregation is Dying" (editorial), *The Mississippi Register*, 13 March 1964. Editor Law probably felt that such an appeal might have a better chance with Gov. Johnson than his predecessor Gov. Barnett. Johnson illustrated Law's point about potentially moderate politicians being locked into the trap of seeing who could be the most segregationist. Despite some racist campaign rhetoric, Johnson offered calming words at his inauguration, as a *Life* magazine editorial noted ("Words Make News in Mississippi," 7 February 1964). However, Johnson did not take Law's advice concerning the proposed Commission and was a firm opponent of school desegregation. In July, when the Governor advised against compliance with the newly passed civil rights bill until the Supreme Court ruled on its constitutionality, the (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times* editorialized that "[t]he Governor should be preparing for that probability, rather than playing out the last, futile notes of the old never-never symphony" ("Why Not Talk?" 8 July 1964).

⁸⁵ "Race Question Appears Heading Toward a Showdown Within MS Churches," *The Mississippi Register*, 17 April 1964; "That Rose Garden Speech" (editorial), *The Mississippi Register*, 3 April 1964. Regarding President Johnson's appeal to the Baptists, the *Baptist Record* took a neutral stand: "Each Southern Baptist will make his own decision in the matter as a Christian citizen" ("The President and the Baptists," 2 April 1964).

⁸⁶ "Smoke Over Mississippi" (editorial), *Baptist Record*, 6 August 1964; "Dry Summer in Mississippi Continued" (editorial), *Mississippi Methodist Advocate*, 1 July 1964; "For a Short, Cool Summer" (editorial), *The Mississippi Register*, 26 June 1964.

⁸⁷ Newman, "Mississippi Baptist Convention," 16, n. 49.

⁸⁸ Donald Cunnigen, "Men and Women of Goodwill: Mississippi's White Liberals" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1987), 574-580; Duncan Gray, telephone conversation with author, 1997.

⁸⁹ "Autopsy Shows 3 CR Workers Shot to Death," *Greenwood Commonwealth*, 5 August 1964; United States v. Price et al., 1965, *U.S. Reporter*, vol. 383, pp. 787-820; Erle Johnston, *Mississippi's Defiant Years*, 281-283. Three years later, in October of 1967, eighteen men, including White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Wizard Sam Bowers, Neshoba Sheriff Lawrence Rainey, and Deputy Sheriff Cecil Price, were tried in federal court for conspiracy to deprive the three victims of their civil rights under the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. Seven were found guilty, including Bowers who received a ten year sentence and Price who got six. Rainey, reputed to have earlier killed at least two others, was found not guilty.

⁹⁰ *The Klan Ledger*, Special Neshoba County Fair Edition [August, 1964], Sovereignty Papers, 6-37-0-4; "FBI Agent Thinks of Killers," (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 6 August 1964.

⁹¹ "Problem Places" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 12 August 1964 ("regrettable"); "Neshoba Citizens Show Little Reaction," *Hattiesburg American*, 5 August 1964 ("sorry to hear" and "if they had").

⁹² "Three CR Workers Murdered" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 13 August 1964 ("We can only hope"); "Jackson C[hamber] of C[ommerce] Recommend C[ivil]-R[ights] Compliance" (editorial), *The Lexington Advertiser*, 9 July 1964 ("haters, bombers"). In the August 6 edition of *The Lexington Advertiser*,

Smith prophetically commented, "The double announcement of two bulletins at a time—of two U.S. destroyers being fired upon [in the Gulf of Tonkin] by Communist PT boats and the finding of three bodies in a shallow grave in Neshoba County—was almost too much to take. Big wars from little incidents growing — and the same can be said of great crimes of violence" ("Thru Hazel's Eyes").

⁹³ *The Klan Ledger*, Early Autumn Edition [1964], Sovereignty Papers, 6-37-0-5.

⁹⁴ "Summer Project Workers are Arrested in Cleveland Miss," *Jackson Advocate*, 15 August 1964.

⁹⁵ "Summer Project Workers to Leave Mississippi August 24th," *Jackson Advocate*, 15 August 1964.

⁹⁶ The interplay of economics and political viewpoint is suggestive for both whites and blacks. Klan members were, as a group, less well off economically but more politically radicalized and prone to violence than the Citizens Councils, though the differences are of degree rather than kind. For blacks, the rural poor were SNCC's and CORE's constituency, though they too were often fearful of "that mess" (i.e., civil rights activism) and thus outwardly conservative. SNCC and CORE rarely bothered trying to recruit middle-class blacks like teachers and principals who were dependent for their jobs on whites. Though the NAACP and SCLC joined SNCC and CORE to form COFO, the two former organizations were older, comparatively more conservative, somewhat skeptical of SNCC and CORE, and more allied with the black middle-class than SNCC or CORE. That black middle-class was also the primary constituency of the *Jackson Advocate*.

⁹⁷ "The Long, Hot Summer" (editorial), (Greenville) *Delta Democrat Times*, 2 September 1964.

⁹⁸ "Running Summary of Incidents During the Freedom Vote Campaign, October 8-November 2, 1964," 1964, SNCC Papers, 39:885-889.

⁹⁹ J. Atwater, "If We Can Crack Mississippi," *Saturday Evening Post*, 25 July 1964, 15-19; Douglas McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York 1988), 81.

¹⁰⁰ "On Taking Sides" (editorial), *Hattiesburg American*, 2 July 1964.

¹⁰¹ James W. Silver, *Running Scared: Silver in Mississippi* (Jackson, Mississippi 1984), 101.

¹⁰² Cobb, interview with author, 1996.

¹⁰³ For example, the *Aspect*, the bulletin of the Jackson Citizens' Council, set up at least one private "Council School" through the "Council School Foundation." The bulletin long and loudly urged resistance to the new civil rights bill beginning the month it was passed. But a note of doubt and inevitability began to creep in. In February of 1965, it condemned "The white renegades and scalawags who urge voluntary compliance," saying they "deserve the condemnation and ostracism of all decent white citizens." Acknowledging "the temptation to give up the fight for segregation," the bulletin fretted that "If we quit resisting, we will be committing cultural, and probably racial suicide." In the Dahmer murder, thirteen men were arrested, and four were convicted in 1968, becoming the first Mississippi Klansmen to be convicted of murdering a black man. White Knights Wizard Sam Bowers, amid charges of jury tampering, would escape conviction for ordering the Dahmer murder by votes of 11-1 and 10-2 for conviction in 1968 and 1969. However, he was re-arrested in May 1998 and was convicted of murder on August 21 and sentenced to life imprisonment.