

Shaw, July 4
Dear Mom and Dad,

One day has passed in Shaw and the other America is opening itself before my naive, middle-class eyes. The cockroaches draw patterns across the floor and table and make a live patchwork on the bed. Sweat covers my skin and cakes brown in my joints — wrist, elbow, knee, neck. Mosquito bites, red specks on white background.

The four-year old grandson is standing by my side. I wonder how our presence now will affect him when he is a man?

I saw other children today who bore the marks of the Negro in rural Mississippi. One had a protruding navel the size of the stone he held in his hand. Several had distended stomachs.

Is America really the land that greets its visitor with "Send me your tired, your poor, your helpless masses to breathe free ...?"

There is no Golden Door in Shaw.

Every statistic stood now for things the volunteers had seen with their own eyes, for people they lived with, people who fed them and protected them.

Hartiesburg, July 4

Every time I talk to people, I hear about things which bring tears to my eyes. I have begun, finally, to feel deep inside me this horrible double existence Negroes have to lead in both North and South ... the strategies they must learn to survive without either going crazy or being physically maimed — or destroyed. Mr. Reese describes how a Negro must learn to walk through a crowd: weaving, slightly hunched — shuffling helps — in order to be as humbly inconspicuous as possible....Then I hear from men who served in Korea or

elsewhere, that they alone had no flag to fight for ... I talked with a fellow whose closest buddy [*in the Army*] had been a white man from Mississippi; when they were homeward bound on the train and they crossed the Mason-Dixon line, the white man left his seat beside the Negro to change seats with another Negro.

I could go on and on about all the people I've met ... Baby, it takes coming down here to grasp all this, no matter how many books we've read.

Ruleville, July

Most of us ... are from schools and families where sensitivity to pain is a very important virtue. I have made here the discovery that sensitivity is one of those virtues that depends upon the certainty of food and roof.... Here, one who is sensitive to pain will soon be reduced to a mass of wounds and hurts....

Meridian, June 30

Dear Stark,

... About the three missing men: there have been so many things like this that have never made any difference because no one has heard of them. Like the Negro [Herbert Leel] who was shot on the front lawn of the Liberty courthouse three years ago by a member of the state legislature. A Negro witness [Louis Allen] testified that it was self-defense, because of course he was scared. Then in January for some reason the sheriff or someone beat him up and broke his jaw. So he called up the FBI and told them he'd lied before, but the FBI wouldn't protect him and he was killed within 24 hours. Maybe you've heard this, most people haven't. But of course he was a Mississippi Negro....

Love,
Edna

segregated, and Greenville just can't afford to operate two school systems on an equal basis ...

Carthage, August 9

... I couldn't begin to describe the condition of their 25¢ school bus. Last year the bus had no heat and no windows. If children are picked up at 7:30 a.m. they often didn't make it to school until after 12:30 p.m. Several times when the bus broke down the children would have to walk to a farmhouse to warm up. Then when they get to school they are supposed to get an equal education.

Some of the Negro high schools weren't even dignified with the name, but called Attendance Centers. "And I gather that attendance is indeed the major content of the school day," wrote one volunteer.

Canton

Yesterday I decided to find out just how much they, (mostly 6th and 7th graders), knew about our federal government. When I got discouraged by the blank looks on their faces, I asked, "What is the capital of the United States?" "Jackson?" ... "How many states are there in the U.S.?" "... 82?" (82 counties in Miss.) Is this symbolic?

Hartiesburg

The students are taught nothing of their heritage. The only outstanding Negroes they are told about are Booker T. Washington and George Washington Carver. They learn nothing of the contributions Negroes have made to our culture or anything else which could give them any reason to disbelieve

the lies they are told about Negroes being unable to do anything worthwhile ...

Mound Bayou

The county superintendent of schools ordered that neither foreign languages nor civics shall be taught in any Negro schools, nor shall American history from 1860 to 1875 be taught ...

Hartiesburg, July 8

My students are from 13 to 17 years old, and not one of them had heard about the Supreme Court decision of 1954. I don't need to tell them that segregation is wrong, and that separate-but-equal is a myth; but they are surprised to hear that the law is on their side, because they hear only about the laws of Mississippi in their schools....

The Negro response to the opening of the Freedom Schools was dramatic: by midsummer, 41 schools with 2165 pupils had been established. In Hartiesburg, it wasn't a response but an onslaught.

Saturday, July 4

... all this week we have been working on curriculum, schedules, registration of students and assembling materials for the Freedom Schools at Hartiesburg. It became evident quite early that we were going to have many more than the expected 75 students. We called Jackson and got a promise of more teachers — at full strength we will have 23. This was when we expected 150 students. On registration day, however, we had a totally unexpected deluge: 600 students! They were expecting only 700 for the whole state. After a while, as they

Council. It is amazing that he was even fined. He probably would not have been one month ago. Still, it is no comfort to me. He is free, he is angry. He knows that he can get away with much worse. The FBI would not arrest him ... I have no local protection. I have no Federal protection ...

Hartiesburg, July 12

Coming from lunch the other day to the COFO office we noticed a hush unusual for that place. A boy in a bloody shirt was reporting a brutal beating via phone to the FBI ... The FBI will "investigate" and no more.

Where is the USA? It is a violation of FEDERAL LAW to harass voter registration workers. Where are the Federal Marshalls to protect these people? How do the Negroes defending "democracy" in Viet Nam feel about the defense that democracy gets in Mississippi?

On July 10, J. Edgar Hoover arrived in Jackson at President Johnson's request to open the first statewide F.B.I. center since 1946. He announced that there were now 153 agents in the state; he also announced that they weren't there to protect civil rights workers.

The F.B.I. had the power to arrest when a violation of constitutional rights was taking place. They used that power once in Mississippi on June 26, when three voter registration workers were threatened at Ita Bena. They used their arrest power once again, under the Civil Rights Act, in Greenwood.

Jackson, July 13

The FBI is acting a little more quickly — but only because of your pressure on the federal government. And they aren't much help because they're really not on our side. To investigate the bombing in Ruleville, they went around asking intimidating questions of the local Negroes....

Ruleville, July 18
Dear friends,

At around ten p.m. 14 F.B.I. agents came to interview us [a group of volunteers and staff workers jailed for "unlawful distribution of literature"]. The two staff workers were not enthused about talking with them ... In the past they have sometimes turned statements over to the local officials, thus giving away the defendant's hand. This fear was confirmed the next day. One of the guys overheard the chief of police ask the FBI for our statements and the FBI man said, "Well, we'll talk about that later." I tried to get them to promise them not to give my testimony to the police. They were evasive ...

The next morning the F.B.I. came back to interview us. They were pretty square with me, but asked some of the others irrelevant questions about their past political activities ...

Love,
Mike

A whole world had come crashing down; terms like "law and order" or "responsible Negro leadership" became meaningless. When, on July 16, Barry Goldwater was nominated at the Republican Convention in San Francisco and the first of the Northern city riots broke out in Harlem three days later, the volunteers had little patience with all the talk about white backlash. The Mississippi newspapers were exultant about both events.

Bolivar County, July 28
Dear everybody,

... The Harlem riots have really been spread all over the newspapers down here. After living in a Negro community for a while it is a lot easier to see why riots occur ... Nobody has to "agitate" Negroes to make them dissatisfied. All it takes is something to trigger it off ...

them, and ever since they have been begging to go picketing again. It suddenly became clear to us that what we should do was to have special tutoring in anything the students desired.

Now we have something the students want, and over a third of the high school students — about 35 — are coming here in the afternoon. Not only are they having special workshops in leadership and non-violence, but we are sneaking in all kinds of citizenship education, and they are enjoying it. We even have several who are interested in straight Negro history, and not too few who want academics, the normal type. So to this more limited, but under the circumstances healthier extent, we are underway as a Freedom School, the last in the state to do so.

Classes in voter registration work and political play-acting were a success everywhere. With innate sophistication about their own plight, the kids pretended to be a Congressional Committee discussing the pros and cons of a bill to raise Negro wages, and the "cons" would discover neat parliamentary tricks for tabling it. Or they'd act out Senator Stennis and his wife having cocktails with Senator and Mrs. Eastland, all talking about their "nappy niggers." Sometimes they played white cops at the courthouse, clobbering applicants with rolled-up newspapers....

Hattiesburg, July 24

We had a marvelous time at school today with a mock demonstration as a role-playing device designed to illustrate what Negroes have done to fight for their rights. A Volkswagen bus served as a "white only" restaurant complete with sign. The younger children, carrying and wearing signs, picketed in an orderly and very professional way, first in silence and then singing, according to the directions of their leader. They even held firm when at one point "a segregationist" poured water on them as they went by from a jug held over their

heads. Along with some of the older girls, who played members of the Citizens Council, the white teachers played segregationists. This was a sort of rest for both children and teachers: it took courage for us to assume this role and know the children might become frightened and more unsure than they are already of our feelings, and it took courage for the children to accept our position as temporary. It appeared that we all passed. The police, played with a vengeance by some of the older boys, came and hauled the pickets off to jail when they refused to disperse. The whole thing went off beautifully, with enthusiasm and spontaneous creativity displayed on all sides. Tomorrow we will hold a trial (something for which I am well prepared)....

Hattiesburg, August 1

We have an 11-year old girl named Rita Mae who is the equal of the best of us. At one role-playing session, when I took the part of a Negro unwilling to register, I found myself unable to hold up the argument in the face of Rita Mae's logic, common sense, and determination. I could find no good reason why I should not register, and was ashamed to admit that I was scared, so I tried a dirty trick: I promised to go down, but said I needed a ride to the courthouse. This Rita Mae said she would provide; but when she came around with a friend in a car, I had skipped out and couldn't be found. Rita Mae ruefully admitted that the dramatization had a most realistic ending ...

Hattiesburg, August 7

Today I went to Palmer's Crossing — a rural community outside Hattiesburg. There is a community center there and 2 Freedom schools. The student we talked to was a slim pretty

girl who looked as if she'd just stepped out of the library at Williamette University where she'd graduated. Now she's living in a house where 4 families share a pump and an outhouse. She's a music major but her specialty here is literacy. She reaches individually at night and also has passed on to 6 high school students the literacy technics [the Laubach "Each one teach one" method] she learned at Oxford. Some of her students are over 75.

The Center was decorated from a teenage dance the night before for 135 youngsters. They called it "Swinging into Freedom" and had decorated with black and white hands of welcome on the front door. The two Freedom Schools were having a debate on the church lawn.

Resolved: that violence is necessary to obtain civil rights. The points are outlined below. (The debaters were 12-16 years old.)

Affirmative:

1. It's too late for non-violence. (NV can only work if it can reach the conscience (e.g. Gandhi and the British). The white conscience is dead. The Jews practiced NV against the Nazis and were exterminated.

2. Violence has been successful in Africa — we must show the white man we aren't afraid. Haiti got freedom by violence — Joseph Saint led slaves to freedom after a revolt.

3. Violence shows people you aren't happy even if you don't win.

Negative:

1. Negroes should not stoop as low as whites.
2. We're out-numbered — life is a very precious thing — we can save lives by NV.
3. Love creates community between brother and sister.
4. Negroes have come a long way through NV. (e.g. the Civil Rights Bill.)

Rebuttal Negative: White man's conscience isn't dead — I don't believe it and neither do you. Frederick Douglass may have fought but he fought harder with words. U.S. isn't 100% against us or how would Civil Rights Bill have passed?

Rebuttal Affirmative: People are afraid to use Civil Rights Bill — if you really believed it, you'd all enroll at Hattiesburg High (white). (This caused shouts of laughter.) People pick on you if you're NV — what good did it do Medgar Evers?

I regret to say the Affirmative won. The debaters were older and spoke better. Then there was the most spine-tingling singing of Freedom songs, led by a 15-year old girl who had been in jail several times. Every time a car with a white face passed, the children sang louder and waved. The cars slowed down but all summer no one has ever waved back. "Maybe someday they will," the children say ...

Interaction between the classroom and life, education and politics came to a climax at the Freedom School Convention in Meridian on August 7-9.

Biloxi, August 16

Dear Mom, Dad, and kids ...

The purpose of the convention was to formulate a youth platform for the Freedom Democratic Party, and the kids did a fantastic job of it. Each school sent three student representatives — about 120 in all — and a coordinator. There were eight different committees, each concerning a different area of legislation: jobs, schools, federal aid, foreign affairs, voting, housing, public accommodations, health. Sometimes the committee discussions were long and even bitter, particularly on foreign aid where a demand to boycott Cuba and all countries that trade with Cuba was adopted but then finally voted out in the general session. Resolutions in favor of

by asking the volunteer to write out the ticket himself since "I don't spell too good." The police could always pick up a person for "investigation," hold him up to 72 hours — which is legal in Mississippi unless a writ of habeas corpus is obtained — and eventually confront the person with an offense.

Jackson

Three local high school students and myself were passing our hand bills about Martin Luther King's visit the next day. As we often would because of the hot sun, we stopped at a small cafe for a soda. It was about four in the afternoon. Two huge cops, noticing my car, came in. They fooled around for about five minutes and then asked my three friends for identification. Then they told the three to go with them. Up to then they hadn't said a word to me. I asked if the three were under arrest. They said "yes." I asked on what charge. I was then told to shut up or I'd be taken in also. The cops then said the three were under arrest for "investigation."

After I had called the office to report the incident, I started back. As soon as I turned into the highway, a waiting police car came in behind me. I was arrested for improper tags (I had Wash. State tags), taken to the station, charged \$29, and put into jail because I didn't have it. The bail soon came and I was out. But the other three, it turned out, had been charged with being drunk. The jailer would not let the lawyer see them. The cops refused to give them a drunk test. Finally, I bailed them out at \$15 apiece.

Next day we had a long trial. The three who were charged, myself, and the boy who works in the cafe testified that all four of us were drinking orange soda and had not had any alcohol that day. Our lawyer made the cops look like fools in the courtroom. When asked by the judge if they could identify the three as the ones arrested, one said, with a wave of arm, "Yeah, I think that's them three niggeresses over there." The other cop said he was sure of one, but not of the others. Finally, at the end,

we were amazed at the verdict. The judge could never reflect on the good character of the officers, but dropped the charges because the cops didn't make a positive identification of the three ...

Law enforcement in Mississippi could become even more amazing if you were being attacked by local whites and called the police for help.

About a week after the Rabbi was beaten in Hattiesburg, a young volunteer in that town went to buy some poster board with two fellow workers ...

Hattiesburg, July 21

There were three of us — Bill, a Negro, Peter, white, and I [a white girl]. Realizing the risk of being in an integrated group, we first decided to split up, with Peter and me following Bill; but it was so awkward being unable to talk together, and so obvious that we were all together anyway, that we decided to abandon the arrangement.... We were walking three abreast, Peter closest to the curb, I in the middle. Bill entered the drugstore.... Suddenly a man jumped Peter from behind. I was so astonished, I hardly grasped what was happening. Peter was knocked down and curled into the non-violent protective position against the building — the man was kicking him in a fury, but almost methodically and without a word.

All I could do, in accordance with "the rules" was try to get help, and should the beating go on too long, shield Peter's body with mine. I yelled "help — police," loudly and clearly, over and over. Finally a policeman arrived and pulled the man off. (It seems he had been at the corner directing traffic and could have made it more quickly.) Another policeman quickly joined the first, who led the man away, and detained us when we started to follow — as if to let the two get out of sight so the man could quietly be released. We hurried after them anyway.

At the station house, Peter heard for the first time that he

was under arrest, along with his assailant, for assault and battery. We all acted indignantly and vociferously, demanding how that could be. The policeman said that whenever there was "fighting" in the street, both parties were arrested. We said that there had hardly been a fight ...

Every brush with the police contained a reminder that the missing three had last been seen alive on their way to jail. There were ugly stories about what could happen to a man in the privacy of prison, in the hands of the law. But more commonly jail was just a nuisance for the volunteer.

Gulfport, July 8

We were booked and taken to a cell block on the second floor with about 8 white prisoners already in it. Standard procedure is to bribe some prisoners with cigarettes to beat up civil rights workers. However we soon made friends and in ten minutes we were removed to an empty cell block on the third floor with women, juveniles, and condemned murderers. We sang freedom songs, beat rhythm on the bars and metal table, played kazoo's of tissue and combs and raised hell.

The Harrison County jail is very modern, but you sweat, for Mississippi is a hot place. Jails are so damn stupid, though. Once you're in, and the lethargy and the apathy stick, you're stuck. The theory is deterring, but who is deterred? The theory is reform, but who reforms? You just sit, or sleep, or stare, or think about something, or dwell on nothing. Jail apathy very quickly becomes life to the inmate. But this apathy permeates everything only while you are in jail. When you are set free, it explodes in one big binge of rebellion....

Kenneth Keating (R-NY) called through an aide about a half hour after our 9:00 breakfast the next day — Barry and Dave are his constituents. The sheriff came up personally to give us hell for not eating his food. We turned it down in protest

against segregated jails, arrest under an unconstitutional law, and because we got better facilities outside — a dig at the sheriff. He cannot comprehend why we live with Negroes. It is so foreign and strange an idea that his mind just stops. We finally got out on \$500 apiece property bond.

Unlike workers in the early days of the Movement, the volunteers usually didn't remain in jail more than overnight. But once in a while ...

Panola County Jail

Dear Family, Batesville, Friday ca. 1:30 p.m.

I am writing this letter as I begin my second day in jail, but bond is set at \$700 and the trial for tomorrow at 10:00 a.m., and I have read the *Sat. Eve. Post*, *Life*, *Mad*, most of a Baptist publication called *Gospel Light*, 12 pages of a pulp western, odd bits of newspaper, and parts of *Car Life*, all very thoroughly, and am now at the end of my resources. Not stir-crazy — just restless. I'm well and alone in a large bunch of cells, tolerably clean and unmolested. I just had an amiable conversation with the sheriff. But I do wish someone would get me out of here. An attorney and a law student are in town, but they don't seem to have secured bail money yet. I'm in on two charges: failure to answer questions of the D.A. and resisting arrest ...

Sunday, Round about Midnight

I tore these pages out of the back of a Bible. But I'm furious — and anxious to communicate the fact. Who the hell do they think they are? At my trial, the Sheriff and a State Highway Patrolman, who was in mufti when I was arrested, testified that (1) the sheriff had told me I was under arrest (2) when grabbed by the arm by the Deputy, I had raised my arm to ward him off (3) I had held back after being grabbed. All of which are untrue. The point is, they never did make a proper arrest; the others