

There are almost no sidewalks in the Negro neighborhoods. The red clay dirt is hard and the sun won't quit ... The poverty and sorrow of the neighborhoods doesn't leave you. I've been to hundreds of houses I could kick down with my feet and a small hammer. And I've seen the hands of these people, swollen and bruised, hard and calloused from years of work at practically no pay and whatever the pay was, it was always half what a white man would get for the same job. And I realized very suddenly and forcefully that these are my people and their sorrow is mine also. And since we are of this country our grief is collective whether the rest of the country admits it or not ...

*What had happened, in a very short time, was that the Negro's world had become the volunteer's world, while the white world — in most cases, their own — had become an alien, frightening and ugly place.*

Greenwood, July 11

I really cannot describe how sick I think this state is. I really cannot tell you how repulsed I am by this state, nor how fervently I think something has to be done down here. I cannot describe the fears, the tensions and the uncertainties of living here. When I walk, I am always looking at cars and people: if Negro, they are my friends; if white, I am frightened and walk faster. When driving and a car approaches, I am always asking: black? white?

Laurel

We feel safe here surrounded by the Negro community. The feeling of security evaporates when we go downtown ... They all look like Snopes family to me....

Meridian, Mid-summer

We live so completely within the Negro community that there is little confrontation of the white community. I noticed the other day that some white kids I passed looked to me as though they'd been washed too hard.

Batesville, July 26

Dear people,

Coming down from Crenshaw yesterday evening, I was in Reverend John's station wagon (with Jersey tags). We stopped in Batesville for gas at a white station, and two Negro workers collected the money from the car while the white proprietor (younger than I) who started cleaning the windshield kept giving me a beautifully friendly half-smile as he wiped the glass, a smile that seemed to be keeping a secret from the white proprietor. Every time he caught my eye, he smiled, and I was laughing back; it was wonderful communication. I said yes, please. As he bent under the hood to check the oil, I got out of the car and stood next to him as if mentioning something about the innards of the car. I asked him quietly (while the white man stood a ways away) if he smiled that way for all his white customers, or just for civil rights workers. We communicated in a stifled laugh for a minute, then he answered, "Just civil rights." It's getting harder and harder for me to listen with a straight face when a cracker tells me that "our niggers don't want you here."

Love,

Jim

*But this new identity wasn't always so simple ...*

I stay with tells with pride of how Mickey and Rina came to supper at their house, and police cars circled around the house all during the meal. But Mickey could make them feel glad to take the risk.

People talk less about James Chaney here, but feel more. The kids describe a boy who played with them — whom everyone respected but who never had to join in fights to maintain his respect — a quiet boy but very sharp and very understanding when he did speak. Mostly we know James through his sisters and especially his 12-year-old brother, Ben. Today Ben was in the Freedom School. At lunchtime the kids have a jazz band (piano, washtrub bass, cardboard boxes and bongos as drums) and tiny Ben was there leading it all even with his broken arm, with so much energy and rhythm that even Senator Eastland would have had to stop and listen if he's been walking by...

*And Andrew Goodman: he had been in Mississippi little more than twenty-four hours.*

*On August 7, James Chaney's funeral and memorial service took place in Meridian.*

Meridian, August 8

... The service was preceded by several silent marches beginning at churches throughout Meridian and converging on the First Union Baptist Church. I have been on a large number of walks, marches, vigils, pickets, etc., in my life, but I can't remember anything which was quite like this one. In the first place, it was completely silent (at least, the march I was on), even though it lasted over 50 minutes, and even though there were a fair number of children involved....

*Philadelphia, August Third*

Meridian, August 11

... In the line I was in, there were about 150 people — white and Negro — walking solemnly, quietly, and without incident for about a mile and a half through white and Negro neighborhoods (segregation is like a checkboard here). The police held up traffic at the stoplights, and of all the white people watching only one girl heckled. I dislike remembering the service — the photographers with their television cameras were omnipresent, it was really bad. And cameras when people are crying... and bright lights. Someone said it was on television later. I suppose it was.

Dave Dennis spoke — it was as if he was realizing his anger and feeling only as he spoke. As if the deepest emotion — the bitterness, then hatred — came as he expressed it, and could not have been planned or forethought ...

Laurel, August 11

Dear Folks,

... The memorial service began around 7:30 with over 120 people filling the small, wooden-pew lined church. David Dennis of CORE, the Assistant Director for the Mississippi Summer Project, spoke for COFO. he talked to the Negro people of Meridian — it was a speech to move people, to end the lethargy, to make people stand up. It went something like this:

"I am not here to memorialize James Chaney, I am not here to pay tribute — I am too sick and tired. Do YOU hear me, I am S-I-C-K and T-I-R-E-D. I have attended too many memorials, too many funerals. This has got to stop. Mack Parker, Medgar Evers, Herbert Lee, Lewis Allen, Emmert Till, four little girls in Birmingham, a 13-year old boy in Birmingham, and the list goes on and on. I have attended

these funerals and memorials and I am SICK and Tired. But the trouble is that YOU are NOT sick and tired and for that reason YOU, yes YOU, are to blame. Everyone of your damn souls. And if you are going to let this continue now then you are to blame, yes YOU. Just as much as the monsters of hate who pulled the trigger or brought down the club; just as much to blame as the sheriff and the chief of police, as the governor in Jackson who said that he 'did not have time' for Mrs. Schwerner when she went to see him, and just as much to blame as the President and Attorney General in Washington who wouldn't provide protection for Chaney, Goodman and Schwerner when we told them that protection was necessary in Neshoba County ... Yes, I am angry, I AM. And it's high time that you got angry too, angry enough to go up to the courthouse Monday and register — everyone of you. Angry enough to take five and ten other people with you. Then and only then can these brutal killings be stopped. Remember it is your sons and your daughters who have been killed all these years and you have done nothing about it, and if you don't do nothing NOW baby, I say God Damn Your Souls....

Milston, August 9

Dear Blake,

... Dave finally broke down and couldn't finish and the Chaney family was moaning and much of the audience and I was also crying. It's such an impossible thing to describe but suddenly again, as I'd first realized when I heard the three men were missing when we were still training up at Oxford, I felt the sacrifice the Negroes have been making for so long. How the Negro people are able to accept all the abuses of the whites — and the insults and injustices which make me ashamed to be white — and then turn around and say they want to love us, is beyond me. There are Negroes who want to

kill whites and many Negroes have much bitterness but still the majority seem to have the quality of being able to look for a future in which whites will love the Negroes. Our kids talk very critically of all the whites around here and still they have a dream of freedom in which both races understand and accept each other. There is such an overpowering task ahead of these kids that sometimes I can't do anything but cry for them. I hope they are up to the task, I'm not sure I would be if I were a Mississippi Negro. As a white northerner I can get involved whenever I feel like it and run home whenever I get bored or frustrated or scared. I hate the attitude and position of the Northern whites and despise myself when I think that way.

Lately I've been feeling homesick and longing for pleasant old Westport and sailing and swimming and my friends. I don't quite know what to do because I can't ignore my desire to go home and yet I feel I am a much weaker person than I like to think I am because I do have these emotions. I've always tried to avoid situations which aren't so nice, like arguments and dirty houses and now maybe Mississippi. I asked my father if I could stay down here for a whole year and I was almost glad when he said "no" that we couldn't afford it because it would mean supporting me this year in addition to three more years of college. I have a desire to go home and to read a lot and go to Quaker meetings and be by myself so I can think about all this rather than being in the middle of it all the time. But I know if my emotions run like they have in the past, that I can only take that pacific sort of life for a little while and then I get the desire to be active again and get involved with knowing other people.

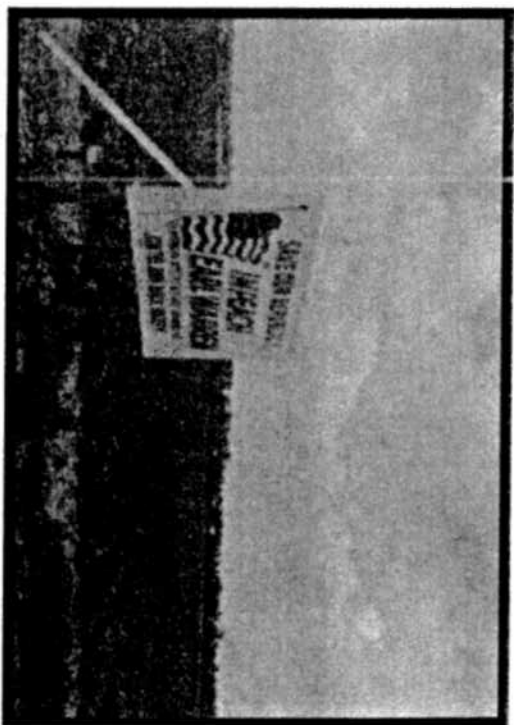
I guess this all sounds crazy and I seem to always think out my problems as I write to you. I am angry because I have a choice as to whether or not to work in the Movement and I am playing upon that choice and leaving here. I wish I could talk with you 'cause I'd like to know if you ever felt this way about anything. I mean have you ever despised yourself for

your weak conviction or something. And what is making it worse is that all those damn northerners are thinking of me as a brave hero....

Martha

Laurel, August 11

... As I was riding on the bus back to Laurel from Meridian after the service, all this kept running through my brain, along with the fact of knowing that nobody has ever been brought to justice in Mississippi for all those murders, that the Federal Government just bought some property with Beckwith for \$27,000.00 (almost like Barnett's handshake after the first mistrial). No, the FBI is only an investigative body ... The Justice Department can do nothing ... Welcome to Mississippi, the Magnolia State ... Help Save Your Country, IMPEACH EARL WARREN ... Six months sentence, suspended to take care of tobacco crop ... It isn't nice to have a stall-in ... two more churches bombed ... it isn't nice to picket the President ... wouldn't have happened if they stayed in their part of the country ... it isn't nice to block a door ... white grand jury refused to indict ... It isn't nice ... kill 'em, burn 'em, kill the bastards ... it isn't ... Not Guilty ...



*On the road between Laurel and Meridian*

*But these were rare exceptions.*

*The total number of people registered in the FDP—60,000—was not as high by the time of the national convention as Project workers had hoped. A number of volunteers made quick trips home to press for support of the FDP by their local Democratic leaders. The challenge began to look serious: by mid-August the Democratic committees of ten important states had adopted pro-FDP resolutions of varying strength. There seemed to be enough support at least to get a minority report urging recognition from the Credentials Committee — and a floor fight.*

Laurel, August 18

*I'm looking forward to the convention. I'm not sure what our chances for success are, but we seem to have the Mississippi delegation worried. They have a court injunction against the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and have been serving injunctions on all the local leaders to keep them from participating. It seems they've found an old law which would prohibit our using the word "Democratic" ...*

*But neither the injunction nor the jailing of the chairman of the FDP's Executive Committee, Lawrence Guyot, stopped them. They came: sixty-eight determined Mississippians plus many volunteers and staff people. The modest, almost shabby Gem Hotel was their headquarters; many of the staff slept on the floor of a church.*

*What happened then, between August 23 and 26, went beyond the greatest expectations of all those young people who had trudged the backroads with their registration forms, worrying about quotas. It justified all the dreams of developing indigenous leadership in black Mississippi. There, by the sea, across from a huge billboard with a picture of Barry Goldwater and the inscription "In your heart you know he's right" (later someone wrote in underneath, "Yes — extreme right"), a band of people from nowhere brought the*

*machinery of a powerful national party to a halt for four days. They told their stories of oppression and terror — Mrs. Hamer, fired the day she registered, later beaten unconscious for voter registration work — while the Credentials Committee listened and the Mississippi regulars made feeble replies. The nation watched it all on television: the FDP had become the only issue at the convention.*

*They watched in Mississippi too.*

Batesville, August 25

Dear people,

Black Batesville is perhaps the most politically conscious community in the country today ... Every house glows with its little, blue-gray television light. Not just to see Mr. Miles or C. J. Williams or Mrs. Lloyd or Reverend Middleton on the convention floor, but to watch the entire fight. Bull Connor is hissed when he talks Birmingham-tough and the Michigan delegation is cheered when it announces that it will support the Green compromise — unless something better is offered. People who still pronounce "registration" as "restoration" use with understanding terms like "credentials committee" and "eight states needed for a floor fight ..."

Jim

*The complex story of what happened behind the scenes at Atlantic City belongs to another book. For this record, the Credentials Committee adopted a "compromise" which provided for the seating of the regulars; the recognition of Dr. Aaron Henry and Rev. King as delegates at large from the FDP and all others as honored guests; a promise that the Democratic National Committee would obligate states to select delegates for 1968 in a non-discriminatory way and that it would establish a special committee to aid states in meeting this standard.*

*The Mississippians rejected the compromise, in the face of arguments voiced by such national figures as Bayard Rustin and*