

From Myrlie Evers-Williams and Manning Marable, eds., *The Autobiography of Medgar Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed Through His Writings, Letters, and Speeches* (New York: Basic Books, 2005).

75 Monthly Report: "School Desegregation," "Investigation," "Registration and Voting," and "Labor"

MARCH 6, 1963

SCHOOL DESEGREGATION

A suit was filed Monday, March 4, 1963 by the Legal Defense and Educational Fund of NAACP, representing ten Negro children, and seven parents who are asking a Federal Court to order the first public school integration in Mississippi, on the Elementary and High School level. This was the first such suit filed by Negro residents of Mississippi.

Mississippi's Attorney General, Joe Patterson, has already pledged the "entire resources" of his office to the city of Jackson and its attorneys, in defense of the suit.

The plaintiffs in this suit are: The Field Secretary and his wife, Mrs. Myrlie B. Evers, Mr. Samuel Bailey, Mrs. A.M.E. Logan, Mrs. Kathryn Thomas, Mrs. Edna Marie Singleton and Mrs. Elizabeth White, all members and officers of the Jackson Branch of NAACP.

Federal Judge Harold Cox was asked by Attorney Jack H. Young to set April 12 as the date for a hearing. Attorney Young is the local counsel in the case.

Leake County (Carthage) and Biloxi, Mississippi are two other areas where litigation for public school desegregation is relatively imminent. In both communities, our local NAACP Branches will be bringing the action to desegregate the public schools.

INVESTIGATION

The Field Secretary investigated the shooting of a Negro Voter Registration worker, Jimmy Travis, in Greenwood, Mississippi, February 28.

According to reports, Travis and two other Negro Civil Rights workers were traveling in a car near Greenwood, when another car containing three white men pulled alongside them and fired a number of shots (believed to have been from a sub-machine gun).

Two white men and a minor have been charged with felonious assault in connection with the shooting. They are: William H. Greenlee and Wesley Kersey.

The sheriff announced Monday that the car which was apparently involved in the shooting was found, abandoned, on a country road in Carroll County.

Immediately after the shooting the Field Secretary contacted our Washington Bureau of NAACP, which in turn requested action from the Justice Department. FBI agents, as well as attorneys from the Department of Justice descended on the Greenwood area and began an intensive investigation which ultimately led to the arrest of the two men and youth.

REGISTRATION AND VOTING

While in the Greenwood area, Monday and Tuesday, March 4-5, the Field Secretary noticed a great amount of interest on the part of the Negro community, in the Voter Registration Campaign which is now being carried on in the area.

Involved in this intensified concentration of effort are: the NAACP, SNCC, SCLC, and CORE. The NAACP was represented in the area by the Field Secretary, and the President of the Mississippi State Conference of NAACP, Aaron E. Henry, and President of the Cleveland, Mississippi NAACP Branch, Mr. Amzie Moore. CORE has in the area Dave Dennis; SCLC is represented by James Bevels, Mississippi Field Secretary and a Miss Ponder, who is connected with the school at Dorchester, Georgia, and a Rev. Andrew Young.

On Tuesday, March 5, the Field Secretary took five persons down to the Circuit Clerk's Office, to register, none of whom passed, at that particular time.

Thursday, March 7, Mr. W. C. Patton, Director of Registration and Voting for NAACP and the Field Secretary for Mississippi will be in the Greenwood area, to work with the Voter Registration project.

The Jackson Branch of NAACP in coordination with Mr. W. C. Patton, has launched a 3 month Voter Registration drive in Jackson, Mississippi beginning March 4. Through this effort, and with the presence of Justice Department officials checking the records of the Circuit Clerk during this period, it is expected that the registration of Negroes in Jackson and Hinds County will take a sharp curve upwards. This is particularly significant in that under the re-appointment plan, recently put into effect in Mississippi, Hinds County (Jackson) is entitled to 9 Representatives, with 7 Representatives being elected from the city of Jackson proper. This could mean, with a sharp increase in Negro Voters, a great amount of influence from Negro electors on the Representatives from Hinds County to the State Legislature.

In the meantime, weekly meetings and direct door-to-door contact is being made over the city, also general plans for a massive city

wide Door-Knock-for-Freedom-At-the-Ballot-Box Campaign is under way.

LABOR

As a further crack down on Federal Government spending in Mississippi, which in effect supports segregation, the Field Secretary forwarded a telegram to the Secretary of Labor, Mr. Willard Wirtz, complaining of the discrimination which exists under the Man Power Re-development Act of 1962, as administered in Mississippi.

As a follow through, the Washington Bureau of NAACP sent a letter to the Secretary of Labor, relative to the expenditure of Federal Funds in Mississippi on a segregated and unequal basis. As far as we know, presently, the program is still in effect and positively no change, as to the practice of segregation is in evidence. We shall continue to insist that equal opportunity be made available to all, under this and similar Federal programs.

Federal Judge Harold Cox—Appointed to the Federal bench by John F. Kennedy, Cox was a close friend of Mississippi Senator and segregationist James Oliver Eastland, and his appointment brought complaints to the president by CORE and Eleanor Roosevelt. Cox once referred to African Americans as "chimpanzees." See Meier and Rudwick, 180; and Katagiri, 230.

David Dennis (?)—CORE Mississippi field secretary. Head of the state's voting rights efforts for CORE, Dennis supported the decision to recruit hundreds of middle-class white college students to Mississippi for the Freedom Summer project of 1964. He is currently working with Moses for The Algebra Project. See Meier and Rudwick, 178-80, 259-260, 289-271; and Howell Raines, *My Soul Is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: Penguin, 1977), 273-278.

W. C. Patton (1913-1997)—As Alabama's NAACP President, Patton played a critical role in the state's voter registration program. After the state illegalized the organization in 1957, he became the NAACP national director of voter education, the post he held for 22 years. See Jimmie L. Franklin, *Back to Birmingham: Richard Arrington, Jr. and His Times* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1989), 68, 72, 76; and The University of Alabama Center for Public TV & Radio, "I Shall Not Be Moved: The Legacy of W. C. Patton," an episode in "Alabama Experience" series, produced by Dwight Cameron. <http://www.cptr.ua.edu/alex/studyguides/patton.htm>.