

PROSPECTUS FOR SUMMER FREEDOM SCHOOL PROGRAM IN MISSISSIPPI

The Proposal

It is, I think, just about universally recognized that Mississippi education, for black or white, is grossly inadequate in comparison with education around the country. Negro education in Mississippi is the most inadequate and inferior in the state. Mississippi's impoverished educational system is also burdened with virtually a complete absence of academic freedom, and students forced to live in an environment that is geared to squash intellectual curiosity, and different thinking. University of Mississippi Professor James Silver, in a recent speech, talked of "social paralysis...where nonconformity is forbidden, where the white man is not free, where he does not dare express a deviating opinion without looking over his shoulder." This "social paralysis" is not limited to the white community, however. There are Negro students who have been thrown out of classes for asking about voting, or the freedom rides. Negro teachers have been fired for saying the wrong thing. The State of Mississippi destroys "smart niggers" and its classrooms remain intellectual wastelands.

In our work, we have several concerns oriented around Mississippi Negro students:

1. The need to get into the schools around the state and organize the students, with the possibility of a statewide coordinated student movement developing.
2. A student force to work with us in our efforts around the state and
3. the responsibility to fill an intellectual and creative vacuum in the lives of young Negro Mississippians, and to get them to articulate their own desires, demands and questions. More students need to stand up in classrooms around the state, and ask their teachers a real question.

As the summer program for Mississippi now shapes up, it seems as if hundreds of students as well as professional educators from some of the best universities and colleges in the North will be coming to Mississippi to lend themselves to the movement. These are some of the best minds in the country, and their academic value ought to be recognized, and taken advantage of.

I would like to propose summer Freedom Schools during the months of July and August, for tenth and eleventh-grade high school students, in order to:

1. supplement what they aren't learning in high schools around the state,
2. give them a broad intellectual and academic experience during the summer to bring back to fellow students in classrooms in the state, and,
3. form the basis for statewide student action such as school boycotts, based on their increased awareness.

I emphasize tenth and eleventh-grade students, because of the need to be assured of having a working force that remains in the state high schools putting to use what it has learned.