SECURING THE BALLOT: SNCC, MFDP, POLITICAL POWER, AND THE MEANING OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE IN FREEDOM SUMMER

A Syllabus by the SNCC Legacy Project

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> "The way Gloster Current talked about the people from Mississippi and the people from Alabama … who were the heart and soul of the Movement, it gave one the sense that the people that he was referring to were much more trouble than they were worth. Mr. Current viewed the people from Mississippi and Alabama as disruptive of the kind of relationship that he wanted to establish with those who were in political and economic power…The meeting gave us a sense that — because there was not much disagreement with him — those who were in the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement in many respects wanted to cut out the heart and soul of the Movement. When Gloster Current said, cut away the underbrush, he was trying to make the Movement a much more respectable, a Movement that could fit much more into the status quo…In that meeting, the leadership of the Civil Rights Movement showed itself to be the most accommodating to the forces that were antithetical to its own interests."
> - Courtland Cox

Course Description

As early as 1868, political organizers realized the power of Black electoral politics and its potential impact to determine political outcomes in the United States. For almost one hundred years, that realization led to large-scale attempts to suppress the Black vote. To forestall that suppression, activists in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) alongside local communities in Mississippi and Alabama and several other states waged a successful battle to force the federal government to protect Black people's voting rights—formally enshrined in the Fifteenth Amendment. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was the result of grassroots efforts and organizing on the ground that not only exposed the evils of voter suppression but imagined strategic

ways to utilize the ballot to achieve some semblance of political power. This was crystallized in the strategy of Freedom Summer. In 1964, the momentum of organizing for voting rights eventuated in a summer where students and organizers traveled to Mississippi to demonstrate what real democracy would look like in a state where Black people were excluded from that practice. The challenge and peril of that moment are what made federal legislation possible. And this was an opening that made possible the rise of Black elected officials and encouraged Black participation in formal politics and grassroots political organizing on a national scale. Groups such as the National Black Political Assembly became vehicles designed to deepen the political power achieved by the ballot. Together with direct action organizing and the struggle for Black Power, the work of activists in Mississippi are critical to understanding SNCC's historic impact on life in the United States and in the world.

Primary Sources

- www.sncclegacyproject.org - The SNCC Legacy Project's Digital Movement Platform, created in 2022.
- www.crmvet.org - the website of the Civil Rights Movement Archive, Inc.
- www.snccdigital.org - The SNCC Digital Gateway, produced in partnership with Duke University's Center for Documentary Studies and Duke University Libraries.

Books

- James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries* (University of Washington, Press, 1997)
- Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (University of California Press, 1995)
- John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (University of Illinois Press, 1994)

Format

We have tailored this course to be delivered in multiple ways. Firstly, the modality can be either virtual or in-person. Secondly, and perhaps most significantly, it can be delivered in both the traditional lecture format and the seminar discussion format, as well as in non-traditional, flipped classroom formats. The teaching notes provide suggestions and recommendations tailored to the course material covered that week. In addition, we have added suggested media and other resources that can be folded into the course delivery. We believe that each course leader should use the methods

that are most appropriate to the students engaged in these courses. This method should enable students to reach a clear understanding and appreciation of the "SNCC Way"--not only its approach to organizing, but its approach to pedagogy. This too is movement-building.

Notes on Our Approach

This course employs the SNCC archive as the primary pedagogical tool for understanding the history of the movement. Individual facilitators however are free to enlarge upon that foundation by bringing in more historical figures, archives, and/or secondary sources that may not be available within the SNCC collection. In addition, the facilitator should feel free to connect the historical content to stories within and beyond the movement that might be relevant to the unique regional, institutional, and political contexts for the class. If there are stories that can be fruitfully added to the discussion, the facilitator might improvise upon what we have offered here. We encourage and expect facilitators to incorporate those elements into their delivery of the course.

Woman Delegate, MFDP, Hinds County, MS

Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction: Assessing the Meaning of the Vote in Black Life

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What are the philosophical foundations of Western democracy? How were these applied to the American context? What are their connections to race? How was Black life influenced and/or determined by the nature of American democracy? How did members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee begin to realize and address these concerns?

Readings and Resources:

- Fannie Lou Hamer, Testimony to the Credentials Commission, Democratic National Committee, August 1964, SNCC Digital Movement Platform.
- Fannie Lou Hamer, "I'm Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired, 1964" Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet," in *Malcolm X Speaks*, ed. George Breitman (Grove Press, 1965), 23-44.
- Malcolm X, "With Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer," in *Malcolm X Speaks*, ed. George Breitman (Grove Press, 1965), 105-14.

Other Resources:

- Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2005)
- Eddie Glaude, *Democracy in Black: How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul* (Crown, 2016)

Teaching Notes:

- For this week, a lecture might focus on the interplay between Malcolm X and Fannie Lou Hamer concerning the meaning of voting in Black life. A lecture could begin by focusing on the philosophical and moral arguments that frame Hamer's arguments, before moving through the same with Malcolm X. Exploring the connections between the two, it might end by examining the implications for practical political change that their words inspired.

- The seminar model might focus on the many possibilities for political movements that these philosophies of change articulate. Seminar leaders might focus on how the speeches imagined revolutionary change and modeled prophetic utterance and what it means for these orators to use this form to levy a deep critique.

- Utilizing the flipped format, learners and leaders might engage the various digital tools available for exploring these resources—video recordings, audio files, and/or reenactments. Taking these resources and reimagining them, presenters might draw upon these speeches to inspire new ways of viewing and/or demonstrating this material in ways that resonate for new audiences.

Week 2 – The Mississippi Plan: Reconstruction and the Suppression of Black Rights

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What are the historical roots of Black voter participation in Mississippi? How have these concerns been structured by Black political struggle and the requirements of labor and capital? What was the Mississippi Plan? What did it mean for the possibilities for Reconstruction in the state? How did it lead to the moments that characterized the 1960s evolution of Black political struggle?

Readings and Resources:

- Bob Moses, "We The People: Constitutional People & Personal Responsibility for the Message of the Preamble," in "Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964: Memory, Legacy & the Way Forward," Library of Congress Civil Rights History Project.
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Free Press, 2000), 431-51.

Other Resources:

- John R. Lynch, *The Facts of Reconstruction* (New York: Neale Publishing, 1913)

Teaching Notes:

- A facilitator may choose to lecture on the historical evolution of Reconstruction in Mississippi and the long shadow that it cast on Black political possibility throughout the twentieth century. Utilizing the work of Du Bois, they might

engage the meaning of the Mississippi Plan in relation to the political philosophy of American life.

- Seminar participants might each take upon central themes of Reconstruction and explore their manifestation in Mississippi in relation to other parts of the South. Those themes might include education, healthcare, and labor conditions. The seminar could delve into the political battles over these areas in Mississippi and their impact throughout the twentieth century.

- Within the flipped classroom format, the participants might utilize Reconstruction era laws to compare and contrast them with contemporary restrictions on Black voting behaviors, as well as other contemporary issues such as healthcare and cultural issues. Presentations might focus on the changes and consistencies between then and now.

Week 3 – SNCC and the Rationale for Voter Registration

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How did SNCC first engage the question of organizing around voter registration? How did the origins of the debate continue earlier dilemmas? What was new about the 1960s iteration of the debate? What were the connections between SNCC's earlier movements around direct action and voter registration? How did the Freedom Riders engage this question? What were the contexts in Mississippi driving the decision to turn toward questions of the vote? How was this influenced by national concerns? What was the Voter Education Project and its role in the SNCC decision-making apparatus?

Readings and Resources:

- Bob Parris Moses, Interview by Anne Romaine, Highlander Center, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Julian Bond, "SNCC: What We Did," SNCC Digital Movement Platform.
- Hollis Watkins, Interview by Eyes on the Prize, 1985, Blackside, Inc., Washington University.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 262-69.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 103-31.

Other Resources:

- Evan Faulkenberry, *Poll Power: The Voter Education Project and the Movement for the Ballot in the American South* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2019)

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture could center the origins of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It might develop a narrative on the evolution of the organization's work in Mississippi, showing how local conditions there led to fertile ground for organizing work.

- Seminar participants might be drawn to the question of direct action versus voter registration. Learners should focus on accurately defining these concepts. Discussion leaders would lean on the first-person narratives to assess how much this binary affected the organization and whether or not it has been overwrought in movement histories.

- Within a flipped format, the course could stage a debate between those who advocated a voter registration strategy in Mississippi and those who issued caution. The debate might clarify the real stakes involved in the decisions that SNCC organizers actually made.

Week 4 – Local Stories and Local Peoples: Bolivar County and Amzie Moore

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

Who were the central local figures in Bolivar County, Mississippi? How did they relate to SNCC activists involved in voter registration efforts? How did this inform organizing strategies and tactics? How did the organizing efforts in Bolivar shape inter-organizational politics between SNCC and other movement organizations? What were the conditions facing Bolivar County residents with respect to their abilities to access voting rights?

Readings and Resources:

- "Amzie Moore," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Amzie Moore, "Farewell to the N-Double-A," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 29-66.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 116-42.
- Bolivar County, Canvas Form, 1963, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

Other Resources:

- Robert Moses, Interview with Clayborne Carson, March 29, 1982, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

Teaching Notes:

- A facilitator might develop a lecture that profiles Amzie Moore, a member of the generation of SNCC "adults" who were longtime activists and helped shape the movement.

- A seminar model might include debates and discussions on the timing of movement work in these counties. They could also focus on the implications of pre-existing local organizations and their shifting and remaking with the arrival of SNCC. This seminar might also focus on the issue of ordinary people who did not belong to any organization formally (and never would). It should consider their role in the challenges and successes of movement activity in Bolivar County and beyond.

- Utilizing the above-mentioned voter registration canvas form, a flipped format might include course participants re-enacting conversations among the canvassers and local people of Bolivar County.

Week 5 – Local Stories and Local Peoples: Pike County and C.C. Bryant

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What were the contexts driving the decision to move voter registration efforts into Pike County, Mississippi? How did activists understand the strategic importance of this county? Who were the major actors in local organizing efforts? How did Robert Moses and C.C. Bryant begin to collaborate? What was the significance of local youth in McComb? How did the debates around direct action work themselves out in this setting?

Readings and Resources:

- Robert Moses, Interview by Clayborne Carson, March 29, 1982, pp. 18-26, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

- Comments of Robert Moses and C.C. Bryant, Mississippi Voices of the Civil Rights Movement Conference, McComb Mississippi, July 9, 1983, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 103-31.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 90-115.

Other Resources:

- Brenda Travis, *Mississippi's Exiled Daughter: How My Civil Rights Baptism Under Fire Shaped My life* (Montgomery, AL: NewSouth Books, 2018)
- Hollis Watkins, *Brother Hollis: The Sankofa of a Movement Man* (Sankofa Southern Publishing, 2015)

Teaching Notes:

- The facilitator could highlight the importance of "local people" in the organizing theater of Pike County, focusing on the efforts of individuals like C.C. Bryant, Brenda Travis, and Hollis Watkins as freedom fighters in the county.

- A seminar might focus on Robert "Bob" Moses as an organizer, examining and highlighting the unique approaches to organizing that were necessary to work out while in McComb. It could focus on the questions of "failures" and lessons learned during this specific moment in the evolution of organizing Mississippi.

- Within the flipped classroom format, participants, working in groups, could each take on one of the significant "local people" of McComb, exploring their life circumstances. Each biographical presentation would offer pieces toward a holistic perspective of Black life in Pike County.

Week 6 – Local Stories and Local Peoples: Sunflower and Leflore County, Sam Block and Fannie Lou Hamer

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How might we understand the unique conditions facing Black people in the Mississippi Delta? What are the historical contexts driving those conditions? What were the vehicles that Black folk created in order to address them? How did SNCC begin to penetrate the Delta and tap into this ongoing work? What were the implications for achieving success in the Delta? What were some of the organizational tensions here? How were they resolved?

Readings and Resources:

- "Sam Block," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, Oral History, 1966, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 294-307.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 132-79.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 116-42.

Other Resources:

- "Moving on Mississippi," Panel, SNCC 50th Anniversary.
- Sam Block, Interview by Joe Sinsheimer, November 19, 1998, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Charlie Cobb to James Eastland, August 14, 1963, Sally Befrage Collection, Wisconsin Historical Society

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture could focus on the life of Sam Block, fusing his evolution with the evolution of voter registration efforts in the Delta. This lecture could demonstrate the closing gap between "local people" and SNCC's brand of organizing.

- A seminar might focus on the oral history of Fannie Lou Hamer, thinking through the various ways she critiques not only the United States and Mississippi, but the old guard of Black politics.

- Within a flipped classroom format, students might present on the geographical and topographical characteristics of the Delta. These presentations might focus on the connections between these and the political and organizational challenges facing Black people in the region.

Week 7 – The Emergence of the Council of Federated Organizations and the Freedom Vote of 1963

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What are the origins of the Council of Federated Organizations? How did SNCC's organizing develop in tandem with and in struggle with other organizations during this

period? What advantages did SNCC accrue vis-à-vis other civil rights movement formations in Mississippi? What were the contexts driving the development of the Freedom Vote of 1963? How was it organized? What were its goals?

Readings and Resources:

- "Council of Federated Organizations," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- "Over 70,000 Cast Freedom Ballots," *The Student Voice*, November 11, 1963.
- Freedom Vote, Fact Sheet, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Freedom Vote, Fact Ballot, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Application to Work on the Freedom Vote, undated, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 354-71.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 291-98.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 170-207.

Other Resources:

- Aaron Henry, Interview by Jack Bass, Southern Oral History Program, UNC.
- Aaron Henry, *The Fire Ever Burning* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2000).

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture could detail the historical evolution of the Freedom Vote in 1963 and how the build-up to that moment presented SNCC activists with opportunities to deepen their work in Mississippi.

- The seminar format could focus on inter-organizational dynamics within the members of the Council of Federated Organizations. Course participants might focus on how each organization brought both ideological and strategic differences to the Council and how they worked to overcome and/or resolve them.

- The flipped classroom format could have participants explore the primary source documents concerning the Freedom Vote. Participants might examine these documents as effective organizational tools or present on how these documents help provide deeper understanding of some of the challenges of organizing the Freedom Vote.

Week 8 – Freedom Summer: Toward an Idea and Concept

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How did the idea of Freedom Summer emerge? What were the principal debates concerning the efficacy of the idea? How were they resolved? What were its initial goals and objectives? How did the organizers imagine the tactics and strategies that might lead to success? How did they understand the dangers? Develop ways to mitigate them?

Readings and Resources:

- "The Situation" and "The Dilemma" in Civil Rights Movement History, Mississippi Freedom Summer Events, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Minutes from Staff Meeting to Discuss Freedom Summer, January 24, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "SNCC Debates Freedom Summer," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 371-86.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 215-241.

Other Resources:

- Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988)

Teaching Notes:

- A lecturer might focus on the events leading up to the decision to launch the summer project. The storytelling would explore the internal discussions and pivots around which major breakthroughs were made.

- A seminar could focus on the ways that SNCC organizers developed an understanding of the importance of using volunteers from outside the state and largely from the white community. Participants might home in on the dynamics of launching the summer project and the dilemmas it presented.

- Deploying the flipped classroom format, course participants might re-stage the debates leading up to the decision to launch the summer project. Utilizing the meeting minutes, presenters could portray the issue from both sides, while also imagining the other dynamics that might have come into play with the decision to pursue the summer project.

Week 9 – Freedom Summer: Ella Baker, The Organizing Tradition, and the Freedom Schools

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

Who was Ella Baker and how did she influence the organizing approaches taken by SNCC in general and during Freedom Summer in particular? How did the idea of Freedom Schools emerge and what was its significance to the overall success of the summer project? What did SNCC activists learn from the organizing tradition as it was applied in Mississippi? What are the organizing lessons that might be generated from these histories today?

Readings and Resources:

- "Ella Baker: More than a Hamburger," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- "Organizing Tradition," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Charlie Cobb, "Some Notes on Education," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- *The Student Voice*, July 15, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Abstracts from Mark Levy's Notes on Freedom School Teaching Oxford, OH – Orientation – June 1964.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 215-23.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 236-64.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 252-65.

Other Resources:

- "Ella Baker," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- The Importance of SNCC: A Discussion, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

Teaching Notes:

- For the lecture, a facilitator might home in on the life of Ella Baker and her influence on the founding of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. It would focus on her organizing philosophy as foundational to the decisions made in the lead-up to summer project, drawing upon Baker's insights to develop a unique frame for remembering the lessons of 1964.

- A seminar might find participants discussing the approaches of the freedom schools as it relates to foundational questions regarding the educational system.

The seminar queries might revolve around the nature of the school system and its relationship to subjugation and then offer freedom schools as the development of an alternative that is not only related to earlier iterations of Black self-education but to more recent models including the Black Studies movement.

- A flipped classroom could allow participants in the course to develop mock freedom schools lessons plans based on the principles contained in the primary source documents for this week.

Week 10 – Freedom Summer, Local Stories: Hattiesburg and the Roots of Black Self-Activity

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What was the significance of Freedom Day in Hattiesburg and the evolution of the summer project? How might we understand this in light of the long history of local organizing in the town and in Palmers Crossing? Who were the central elders involved in this work and how did they influence SNCC activists? How did these foundations contribute to the organizing work throughout the summer project?

Readings and Resources:

- "Freedom Day in Hattiesburg," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- "Give Them a Future in Hattiesburg," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "I Just Had a Fire: An Interview with Dorie Ann Ladner," *Southern Quarterly* (Fall 2014), Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- SNCC WATS Report, July 4, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Victoria Gray Adams, "They Don't Know the Power of Women," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts By Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (University of Illinois Press, 2011), 230-39.
- Howard Zinn, *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* (Beacon Press, 1965), 102-22.

Other Resources:

- Joyce Ladner, "Standing Up For Our Beliefs," in *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts By Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod

Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (University of Illinois Press, 2011), 217-23.

- William Sturkey, *Hattiesburg: An American City in Black and White* (Harvard University Press, 2019).

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture model might discuss the early roots of Black organizing in Palmers Crossing, MS, sharpening the trajectory that led to the Freedom Day of Hattiesburg. Utilizing the accounts from the meetings in the wake of that moment, the facilitator might home in on the connections between this organizing and the eventual decision to launch the summer project.

- Seminar participants might discuss eldership in movement-building. Whether it was the Ladner sisters, Hollis Watkins, or others, Hattiesburg's local elders were consistently highlighted as influences on the movement. The seminar might focus on the implications of these connections.

- Utilizing the primary source documents from this week's readings, the flipped classroom format could allow participants to present on the tactical significance of movement literature in inspiring and spreading the word about major organizing actions.

Week 11 – Freedom Summer, Local Stories: Laurel and the Question of Leadership

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How might we understand the dynamics of indigenous leadership in Laurel? How did Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons come to be the director of the Laurel project? What challenges were unique to her leadership? What are the WATS reports and how did they convey the challenges of organizing in Laurel? How did the violence at the sit-ins and the arrest of Lester McKinnie impact the work of the organizers in Laurel during and in the aftermath of the summer project?

Readings and Resources:

- Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, "From Little Memphis Girl to Mississippi Amazon," *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts By Women in SNCC*, eds. Faith S. Holsaert, Martha Prescod Norman Noonan, Judy Richardson, Betty

Garman Robinson, Jean Smith Young, and Dorothy M. Zellner (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 23-32.

- "SNCC WATS Report, July 5, 1964," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "SNCC WATS Report, July 7, 1964," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- SNCC WATS Report, July 7-9, 1964," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Charles Hartfield, Report on Movement Repression in Laurel, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- James Forman, SNCC WATS Line Instructions, June 24, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

Other Resources:

- Gwendolyn Zoharah Simmons, Oral History, by Joseph Mosnier, Library of Congress, 2011.
- Dan Berger, *Stayed on Freedom: The Long History of Black Power Through One Family's Journey* (New York: Basic Books, 2023).

Teaching Notes:

- The lecture format could focus on the conditions of Black life in Laurel, a site for movement work that was dominated by racial violence and the presence of the Ku Klux Klan. The lecture could demonstrate the ways Black self-determination persisted in face of these challenges and informed the tactics utilized in the summer project.

- For the seminar, course participants could discuss the Laurel project's lessons for movement women and the question of leadership.

- Utilizing the WATS reports, flipped classroom sessions could dramatize the events of the summer project. Possible ideas could include reenactments, role playing, and other forms of engaging the materials.

Week 12 – Freedom Summer, Local Stories: Organizing Jackson and the Founding of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What was the role of Jackson-based movements in the development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party? How did the local political scene and movement elders use the city as a base for organizing during the summer project? Who were the central

figures involved in this work? What was the role of historically Black colleges in the city? What advantages and disadvantages did the Jackson movement work present?

Readings and Resources:

- "Medgar's Funeral and the End of the Jackson Movement," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "Program for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Ella Baker, "Keynote Speech before the State Convention of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," August 6, 1964," in *Freedom Summer: A Brief History with Documents*, eds. John Dittmer, Jeri Kolnick, and Leslie-Burl McLemore (New York: Bedford St. Martin's, 2017), 126-28.
- Joanne Grant, "Mississippi Politics: A Day in the Life of Ella J. Baker," in *The Black Woman*, ed. Toni Cade (New York: Mentor, 1970), 65-73.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 284-316.

Other Resources:

- "The Mississippi Movement & the MFDP: A Discussion, April, May, June, July 2004," Civil Rights Movement Archive.

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture format could include a deep dive on the Jackson movement and its relationship to later organizing efforts throughout the summer of 1964. Focus can be drawn toward the role of Black organizations and institutions.

- Seminar participants could address the nature of city-urban dynamics with respect to Jackson and the more rural outposts of Mississippi organizing work.
- The flipped format could include participants engaged in re-presenting aspects of the Ella Baker keynote address at the founding convention of the MFDP, applying these lessons to contemporary concerns.

Week 13 – Violence and the Meaning of Self-Defense in Mississippi's Freedom Summer

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How did the Black community and SNCC activists understand the significance of the murders of Herbert Lee, Medgar Evers, and Louis Allen? How did the local conditions contribute to the philosophies of self-defense within and among Black Mississippi communities? How did this relate to SNCC activists and the idea of nonviolence? What was the national significance of the "Mississippi Burning" case and the disappearance of the civil rights workers—Andrew Goodman, Michael Schwerner, and James Chaney? How did Black communities react to the burnings of churches and other Black physical spaces?

Readings and Resources:

- "Terror Reigns in Mississippi, "*The Student Voice*, May 19, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- *The Student Voice*, June 30, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- *The Student Voice*, July 22, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- SNCC WATS report, Church Burnings, Freedom Summer, July 11, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Jack Minnis, "Mississippi: Chronology of Violence and Intimidation in Mississippi Since 1961," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 277-91.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 242-52.

Other Resources:

- Charles Cobb, *This Nonviolent Stuff'll Get You Killed: How Guns Made the Civil Rights Movement Possible* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).
- Akinyele Umoja, *We Will Shoot Back: Armed Resistance in the Mississippi Freedom Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2015).

Teaching Notes:

- A lecturer could focus on the historical incidents of violence facing the participants of the summer project. Establishing a sense of the terroristic contexts could help underscore sacrifice activists made to undertake transformational change. The lecturer might also focus on how such acts defined the recalcitrance of the white supremacist order. Yet, in the end these racist incidents did not stop the movement. Therefore, any lecture should stop short of merely recounting violent acts and focus on the creative ways activists responded and continued to struggle, including self-defense.

- Seminar participants might debate the changing relationships to the philosophies of nonviolence—was it a strategy or a way of life? These positions would have naturally been put to test during the summer project.

- A flipped class session might map the contours of racist incidents during the summer project. Utilizing the WATS reports and the published chronologies, the session might create maps that establish patterns which might help us understand the nature of the violent incidents and how they affected the summer project.

Week 14 – On The Promises and Disappointments of Atlantic City Challenge

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

What was the strategy of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party in the run-up to the Democratic National Convention? How did these strategies play out in the context of the convention in Atlantic City? What was the response of the Democratic Party establishment? How did it relate to the old guard of the civil rights movement? How did SNCC and the MFDP challenge that leadership? What were the outcomes of that challenge? How did it relate to the larger traditions of Black self-activity and self-determination?

Readings and Resources:

- "Miss. Demos Face Party Challenge," "*The Student Voice*, May 19, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "Demo Convention Faces Showdown," *The Student Voice*, August 19, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "A Primer for Delegates to the Democratic National Convention Who Haven't Heard About the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "Mississippi Faces Challenge," Flyer, 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- MFDP Challenge to the Democratic Convention, Atlantic City - 1964, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- "MFDP Challenge at Democratic National Convention," SNCC Digital Gateway.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 386-406.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 272-302.

Other Resources:

- Lisa Anderson Todd, *For a Voice and the Vote, My Journey With the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014).

Teaching Notes:

- A lecture could utilize issues of *The Student Voice* to tell the story of the challenge at Atlantic City. It might focus on the reporting and journalistic strategies of SNCC's writers in conveying the urgency and poignancy of the challenge, focusing on the ways they told the story of what the organization sought to accomplish.

- A seminar-style session might focus on the dilemmas of working alongside the Democratic Party machine as well as the old guard of the civil rights movement. The seminar should examine the ways similar dilemmas may or may not militate against self-determination in today's political scene.

- The flipped classroom format might have participants create profiles of the proposed delegates from Mississippi, addressing the question of what it meant to "represent" the state of Mississippi within the Democratic Party.

Week 15 – Conclusion: Lessons from Mississippi

Discussion Questions and Dilemmas:

How do we make sense of the lessons learned by SNCC activists from the summer of 1964? What were the implications for its future work? How did it shape the legacies of the movement and society at large? How were the people involved on the ground—what Courtland Cox called "the heart and soul' of the movement—shaped by these outcomes? What came next for them? How is this all related to our contemporary moment?

Readings and Resources:

- Bob Moses, "We the People: Freedom and the Mississippi Theater of the Civil Rights Movement: 1960-1964," Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Hollis Watkins, "In the Middle of the Iceberg: Remembrance of Hollis Watkins" Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Lawrence Guyot, Interview, 2004, Civil Rights Movement Archive.

- Courtland Cox, Interview, Eyes on the Prize, 1979, Civil Rights Movement Archive.
- Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, 411-32.
- Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 391-405.
- Dittmer, *Local People*, 315-62.

Other Resources:

- Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, SNCC 50th Anniversary Conference, SNCC Digital Movement Platform.
- The Historic Importance of the Mississippi Freedom Summer, 1964, 50th Anniversary of Freedom Summer.
- Mississippi Civil Rights Veterans

Teaching Notes:

- A lecturer could establish a present this week's content through a focus on the lessons from Mississippi distilled from the interviews of SNCC veterans over the course of the last fifty years.

- Seminar participants might compare the ways that SNCC veterans focus on the summer project with the ways that historians and scholars have debated its meanings.

- A flipped session could offer presentations around the ways that the memory of the summer project has been archived by SNCC veterans within the many anniversaries, digital resources, and books that have been developed. The participants might focus on how their own knowledge of this movement was transformed from the beginning of the course until now.

Victoria Gray Adams

Appendix: Reading List

Belfrage, Sally. *Freedom Summer*. New York: The Viking Press, 1965.

Branch, Taylor *Pillar of Fire, America in the King Years 1963-1965* New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988.

Carson, Clayborne. *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995.

Greenberg, Cheryl ed., *A Circle of Trust: Remembering SNCC*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1998.

Hartford, Bruce. *Freedom Summer, 1964.* Oakland: Bay Area Veterans of the Civil Rights Movement, 2014. https://www.crmvet.org/tim/msfs64.pdf.

Hartford, Bruce., *Troublemaker: Memories of the Freedom Movement* (San Francisco: Westwind Writers, 2019).

Hogan, Wesley. *Many Minds, One Heart: SNCC's Dream for America*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007.

Martinez, Elizabeth. *Letters from Mississippi*. Brookline, MA: Zephyr Press, 2002.

Moses, Robert and Charles E. Cobb. *Radical Equations: Civil Rights from Mississippi to the Algebra Project.* New York: Penguin Random House, 2002

Visser-Maessen, Laura. *Robert Parris Moses: A Life in Civil Rights and Leadership at the Grassroots* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Watson, Bruce. *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy*. New York: Penguin Group, 2010.

Zinn, Howard. *SNCC: The New Abolitionists.* Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2013.

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