

TOUGALOO SUMMER ENRICHMENT PROGRAM: 1967

For seven weeks during the summer of 1967 more than two hundred high school students were together on the campus of Mary Holmes Junior College in West Point, Mississippi. All of these students were Mississippi Negroes who would be attending formerly all-white high schools in the fall. Thus, they were a very special group of young people, for each one had decided that he would accept a part in changing the structure of Mississippi society.

The Tougaloo Summer Enrichment Program was sponsored by Tougaloo College, in cooperation with Smith and Amherst Colleges in Massachusetts, in the hope that such an experience would ease the students' transition into the white schools, both academically and psychologically. It was financed by the United States Office of Economic Opportunity (research and demonstration division), with additional aid from the New World Foundation.

The basic structure of the program included classes in English, math, social studies, and science; tutoring sessions in which a college student met with six to eight high schoolers; counselling sessions, for which the students were divided according to the counties from which they came; special interest groups; and special evening and weekend activities.

Classes were held five mornings per week from 8:00 until 12:00, and were taught by six experienced public school teachers from Mississippi and Alabama. Each student attended each class for two one-hour sessions per week, so that most mornings he had two classes and two hours of small group work with his tutor. In addition, each student had two hours of science lab per week. Thus, one student's schedule might look like this:

	M	T	W	Th	F
8:00	Science	Lab	Math	English	Social Studies

	M	T	W	Th	F
9:00	tutorial	Lab	tutorial	tutorial	tutorial
10:00	English	free	Social Studies	Science	Math
11:00	tutorial	free	tutorial	tutorial	tutorial

English and math classes contained an average of fourteen students (two tutorial groups); science and social studies classes were twice that size.

Because of the size of the classes and the infrequency of class sessions, there was little opportunity there to discover individual students' problems. Thus, tutoring sessions were designed to provide an opportunity to work with each student individually and to meet him at his own level of understanding. Tutorials often followed up on the material presented in the class sessions; tutors found that the students were much more willing to ask questions and contribute ideas when they were in small group. But the tutorials were important beyond the academic material and skills that they covered: here students were given personal attention and were shown that they were all very important people, worthy of their tutor's time and praise.

A word should be said here about the tutors, for, beyond the high school kids themselves, they were the heart of the summer program. Statistically, they numbered twenty-nine: ten from Amherst College, eight from Smith, six from Tougaloo College, two from Stillman College in Alabama, one from Fisk, one from Tuskegee, and one Mississippi student who attends the University of Wisconsin. Seventeen were white, eleven Negro, one Byrmese. They ranged in age from eighteen to twenty-two, and represented all four years in college. Beyond the statistics, the tutors were, for the most part, mature young people who sincerely cared about the students in their charge, cared enough to often give sixteen hours and more per day to their job. Students and tutors lived in the same dorms, went to class together, ate together, played ball together, went on picnics, and spent hours studying and just plain talking.

Strong friendships developed between students and tutors, and the college

students gained at least as many insights from the high school kids as the kids did from them.

The tutorial sessions took many different forms. The morning sessions tended to stress material that had been presented in the preceding class; afternoon (2:00) tutorials were usually "free": they were spent on follow-up from the morning, on discussion of a program presented the night before, or on something that just happened to be on the students' (or the tutor's) minds that day. Sometimes a tutor would take his group shopping in town or on a trip to a college in a nearby town. Many tutors also set up individual meetings with their tutees, to work on academic areas with which the students were having particular problems.

Another important part of each student's experience at Mary Holmes (was) the "county meetings." These were conducted by the program's five counselors. Each student met with a counselor and the others from his county once a week to discuss the progress of school desegregation in the county and problems encountered by Negro students who attended the desegregated schools. During the course of the summer the counselors traveled to many of the counties and visited in the students' homes, in the hope of organizing parents' groups which could lend support to the students during the school year. Many of these visits were encouraging; not only did most parents support their children's decision, but in some cases parents had been instrumental in urging the students to change schools. Much follow-up work is still needed in this area.

In addition to counselling sessions and "free tutorials," afternoons were devoted to special interest groups. The content of these ranged from guitar lessons to Russian language study to a newspaper staff, and included a drama group that presented a play for everyone at the end of the summer. The interest groups were conducted by the tutors, and thus were structured around their talents as well as the students' interests. Many students participated

in several different groups, and all were encouraged to be a part of at least two. Foreign language groups (French, Russian, Spanish) concentrated on giving students a "feel" for the language and emphasized the culture from which the language comes and its basic sounds rather than stressing grammar and translation. An art class experimented with different media, and kids in the Newspaper group produced three issues of the West Point Free Press. One of the most popular interest groups was a class in Negro history, taught by one of the male counselors. Here students could learn important aspects of their own past which they had never been taught even in Negro schools. From this class and other experiences of the summer, the kids discovered that they as Blacks did have an identity and that it was one they could be proud of. And that is an important fact for every person to learn.

Evenings at Mary Holmes were spent in a variety of ways. Some were free for studying in the library or relaxing in the campus student center. On most Sunday and Thursday nights movies were shown: "A Raisin in the Sun," "Shane," "Nothing but a Man," and "Years of Lightning, Day of Drums," the film about the life of John F. Kennedy. Often the films would be subjects of discussion and essay writing in tutorials the following day. Other movies were shown strictly for entertainment.

On some evenings, speakers were featured. For many students these were highlights of the summer, particularly when the guests stayed for informal discussions the next day. Undoubtedly the best loved guest of the summer was Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer from Ruleville. In all of her contact with the students she stressed that they were the heroes of Mississippi today and that she was proud of their decision to participate in school desegregation. They knew her reputation for courage and so her words were especially meaningful. But there were others who praised the students for their heroism and reminded them

of their responsibility: a teacher from a "white" school in Jackson; Miss Marian Wright, the civil rights attorney; Mr. James Meredith; and visiting professors from Amherst and Smith Colleges. John Sumrall spoke to the students about his refusal to be drafted into military service, and John Buffington described his work with civil rights in West Point. On Friday Evenings there were usually picnics and games, sometimes followed by folksinging and freedom songs. On the final evening of the summer, the kids put on a talent show, which they organized and staged with little help from tutors or staff.

That, then, was the content of the Tougaloo Summer Enrichment Program, 1967. There was more, of course: the trip made by the whole group to New Orleans, which for many was a high point in the summer; a trip to Memphis; trips by small groups to see plays at Ole Miss; intramural basketball, in which students challenged tutors (and usually won). But even when all this is said, one really knows very little of the program's value. For the important thing in assessing the importance of the summer is not simply knowing the activities that the students participated in or the facts and ideas they were exposed to. The crucial thing is whether or not all of this made any difference in these kids' lives, and whether it will have a positive effect in their communities and in changing the structure of their society. Much of this cannot be known, of course, at least for a while. Intensive follow-up work is needed (and provided for in the structure of the program). But some important changes can be seen even at this point in time. Let us examine some of these.

Possibly the most important achievement of the summer was the feeling of support that the black students gained. Part of this was from continually being told by speakers and staff, "We're behind you." But a greater part of this feeling was probably gained simply from each student's knowledge that there were at least two hundred others who would be facing a similar experience in the fall. Many of the kids would be in schools with fewer than five Negro

students per grade, and would find it difficult not to feel persecuted and alone. Perhaps the knowledge that thier summer friends were facing similar situations would help to lessen their louniness and frustration.

This feeling of support extended beyond the students themselves to their parents and local communities. Students brought their tutors home for weekend visits, and counselors came to talk with the groups of parents. Enthusiastic reports of friendships and new experiences found their way back to communities across the state,

Any realistic report of the Mary Holmes summer must include the conflicts which arose, conflicts which often split the staff along racial lines. These centered around disagreements between black tutors and white tutors concerning what each thought was "best for the kids." Blacks accused whites of not understanding the kids and the culture from which they came. Whites replied that they were concerned with the kids' best interests. Many people on both sides questioned the value of an intergrated staff, and felt that all administrators and tutors should be black. Others thought that some whites should be present to give the students experience in relating with white people in a constructive way, but that whites should not be a majority of the staff, as they were this summer. The administrative staff should definitely be black. Everyone agreed that the emphasis should always be, as it was this summer, that being black is something to be proud of and something to emphasize; that white schools are not better because there are white people there, but simply because the state puts more money into them.

In assessing the results of the summer at least one additional observation should be made: if the Mississippi high school kids went home from the summer "enriched," so too did the college kids, black and white. Some plan to visit the students during the year; many hope to return next summer, either Mary Holmes or another part of the South.

Between now and the time they and others return next summer, it is hoped that follow-up tutorials can be organized in many of the communities from which the students came.

The need has been shown. Two hundred students were recruited within less than a two-week period at the beginning of the 1967 summer, and many more were on a waiting list. If Mississippi is ever to change, much more than one program for two hundred students is needed. A way must be found to reach a larger number of the state's young people, and those desegregating schools in other southern states. But at least the 1967 summer at Mary Holmes Junior College was a strong beginning.

APPENDIX A: STUDENTS

TOTAL - 202

SEX:

Male - 83

13 - 18

Female - 119

14 - 48

15 - 52

GRADE IN SCHOOL (Fall, 1967)

16 - 55

9th - 59

17 - 17

10th - 69

18 - 10

11th - 54

19 - 2

12th - 20

Entering desegregated schools for the first time - 99

Already attended desegregated schools - 103

COUNTIES

Bolivar - 7

Holmes - 12

Pike - 15

Carroll - 9

Humphries - 2

Quitman - 7

Clay - 4

Issaquena - 11

Rankin - 18

Clarke - 3

Jones - 12

Sharkey - 5

Forrest - 7

Lafayette - 15

Simpson - 2

Grenada - 11

Leake - 6

Sunflower - 7

Greene - 19

Leflore - 2

Washington - 4

Hinds - 15

Lowndes - 2

Winston - 4

Madison - 3

APPENDIX B: TUTORS

1. Aung Thwin, John	Amherst College
1. Baron, Fred	Amherst College
2. Bartlett, Joel	Amherst College
3. Bradley, Lawrence	University of Wisconsin
4. Burns, Elizabeth	Smith College
5. Chapman, Sally	Smith College
6. Crary, James	Amherst College
7. Dilg, Larry	Amherst College
8. Draine, Quida	Tougaloo College
9. Fascell, Sandy	Smith College
10. Hailey, Jack	Amherst College
11. Hambrick, Diane	Fisk University
12. Hester, Nellie	Stillman College
13. Johnson, Mathaniel	Tougaloo College
14. Jones, C. J.	Tuskegee Institute
15. Lawson, Ruby	Stillman College
16. Magee, Johnny	Tougaloo College
17. McCray, Melanie	Smith College
18. Michelmore, Dave	Amherst College
19. Murray, Patricia	Tougaloo College
20. Nagorski, Andy	Amherst College
21. Patterson, Pat	Tougaloo College
22. Pestalozzi, Alexandra	Smith College
23. Simmons, Claudette	Tougaloo College
24. Smith, Debby	Smith College
25. Stevens, Judy	Smith College
26. Ward, Steve	Amherst College
27. Wiener, Linda	Smith College

29.  
28.

MMXXMM  
Wilde, Hal -

APPENDIX C    STAFF

Director - Willie T. Allen, Grenada, Mississippi

Assistant Director - Edwin King, Tougaloo College, Mississippi

Chief Counselor - Dr. Neil Friedman, Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama

Secretary - Miss Catherine Petersen, Miles College, Birmingham, Alabama

Teachers

English - James F. Brown, Birmingham, Alabama

Mrs. Willie T. Allen, Grenada, Mississippi

Mathematics - Miss Willie B. Walker, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

William Bayliss, Starkville, Mississippi

Social Studies - Floyd Boclair, Grenada, Mississippi

Science - John Powell, Jackson, Mississippi

Counselors

Mrs. Jeannette King, Tougaloo College, Mississippi

Miss Lois Chaffee, Bank Street School of Education, Ney York, New York

Mrs. Jane Stovall, Tuskegee, Alabama

Cleveland Donald, Jackson, Mississippi