

THE SOUTHWEST GEORGIA PROJECT

FOR

COMMUNITY EDUCATION

615 SOUTH JEFFERSON STREET

ALBANY, GEORGIA

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Submitted by:

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I. Background

The history of the Black Community in America is a history of powerlessness and its debilitating effects. The struggle of blacks in the past ten years has opened the possibility of reversing that tide of history, although powerlessness has inflicted heavy damage which will not be easily repaired. While America was becoming an increasingly complex society, woven into an interlocking net of huge governmental, administrative, and economic institutions and organizations, the black man by virtue of his exclusion from power and participation, was deprived of the opportunity to acquire the knowledge, skills, and styles of operation necessary to success within these complex structures. Particularly in the rural South, this powerlessness and lack of opportunities for growth through participation left the black community in a state of underdevelopment.

In southwest Georgia, the massive organizing energies of the civil rights movement successfully aroused in large numbers of people the awareness that their plight was neither God-given nor irreversible. However, these energies fell short of their goal for two inter-related reasons. First, the organizing energies departed with the people who brought them, most of whom had no roots or permanent stake in the communities they were serving. Secondly, these energies stopped short of the transition point between movement and stable organization. These people who were exposed to the movement phase of social change remained only partially prepared for the difficulties of the organizational phase. It is this crucial transition from movement to organization which the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education proposes to nurture,

Laboring under a history of slavery, witnessing daily examples of the

white man's efforts to continue the oppression of the black people, the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education is working for change in the old social, educational, and economic patterns of the South. The aim of the Project is to create a unit capable of speaking and acting powerfully in the interests of black people. The methods are non-violent.

II. Goals

We believe:

- 1 That we live in a controlled society in southwest Georgia: controlled politically by the white monopoly and its manipulation of public offices; controlled economically by big business' hold on available jobs, income, working conditions, union activity, and the decision-making bodies of the social structures; controlled educationally by the school systems, which daily make a mockery of the 1954 United States Supreme Court ruling in the case of Brown v. Board of Education and the civil rights acts by persisting in maintaining separate and distinctly unequal school systems; and in every case, making the student subservient to teachers and curriculum; controlled religiously by the churches' almost unhesitating support of this oppressive social system; controlled culturally by a total denial of the beauty and integrity of the black experiences and its contemporary expression.
- 2 That black people are the victims of this control and in a state of powerlessness.
- 3 That the solution to this vast and complex sociological impasse lies in building the power of the black community to the point where it will be able to control its own destiny.
- 4 That the people can and must build this power themselves, and that our task is to labor with them in the development of local leadership and community power.

Our goals, then, are to build, maintain, and support representative organizations of the poor which can provide for their members the opportunity to control the choices which affect their lives—material, economic, political, educational, and cultural—and to identify, support, and train local leadership and staff which can best serve local organizations; to promote co-operation between all these local organizations so that they may pursue

and protect their mutual interests and meet their common needs.

On the other hand, if the effort is to be a lasting one, the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education must be self-sustaining. Various economic non-profit ventures must be promoted towards this end.

III. Historical Background

In 1961 Charles M. Sherrod was sent to Terrell County to start a voter registration project for the Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee. The direct action Albany Movement was developed instead. Later, activity began in Terrell County, then Lee County, followed by Worth, Sumter, Crisp, Baker, Randolph and Grady. Some twenty other counties in both the Second and Third Congressional Districts have been approached during some time of crisis or some election activities of a statewide or national nature.

Charles Jones, a seminary student from J.C. Smith, and Coruelli Regon, then a recent graduate of a Nashville high school, joined Sherrod in October of 1961. Together they built the foundation for what was to be known nationally as the Southwest Georgia Project of SNCC. There have been four directors of the Project since 1961: Charles Sherrod, Donald Harris of Rutgers, Roy Shields of Franconia, and Isaac Simpkins of Miles College. The staff has varied in size, but has always been composed of both black and white workers. The director has always been black.

There has been much suffering and hardship in this Project. Thousands of people have spent untold months in Georgia jails. Hundreds have lost jobs and homes, and many have been beaten and killed. Homes and churches have been shot at, bombed, and burned to the ground. People have been cheated out of their own land. Money has been and is scarce. The Project must still sell cucumbers, cotton, beans, and watermelons to help sustain itself. This has been our style of operation for eight years of protest and demonstration. But the style of operation required for breaking down the virtually immovable obstacles is not necessarily the one suited for building permanent structures capable of carrying out long-term change.

Perhaps the greatest accomplishment of the movement in Southwest Georgia was that it brought to the forefront a new group of leaders who, unlike the old, were committed to a democratic, non-authoritarian type of relationship with their constituents. In many communities those responsible and responsive leaders now sit at the head of embryonic grass roots organizations.

Despite their considerable experience and skill, their impact and effectiveness have been limited for several reasons. First, there is a severe shortage of financial resources without which effective organization cannot be built or maintained. Even where potential resources do exist in the poor community there is a lack of knowledge about how to mobilize them.

In addition, these leaders and their constituents are lacking in a wide variety of information, knowledge and technical skills which would vastly contribute to the strengthening of their organizations. In communities where the residents suffer acute economic deprivation, their attachment to an organization depends on that organization's ability to offer some answers to their immediate needs. Every individual who has received employment through a poverty program which the organization has succeeded in establishing, will obviously feel a greater awareness of what can be achieved through working together. A group's ability to achieve these small victories so necessary for the construction of organizations is a function of how well informed its leaders and members are and how skilled they are in techniques of producing and capitalizing on these victories.

Finally, there is a serious lack of trained leaders and organizers to carry out the strenuous work of organization building. Despite the great sacrifices which the present leaders have made, many of them are limited by age and energy, as well as by the necessity to devote most of their time to earning their own livelihoods. They are desperately in need of additional support from trained local workers who can devote their full time and energy to organization building. Those people who have the potential for carrying out this task are quickly being lost to the ghettos of the North, because of the lack of opportunities here to acquire meaningful training and a steady source of income.

The Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education has a program designed to overcome these three obstacles by making available resources needed to build effective community leadership, to support that leadership through this transitional period, and to help build programs that offer the kind of information and technical skills which they need to accomplish their objectives.

WHO WILL BE SERVED???

The Southwest Georgia Project will conduct a program designed to train

local leaders and community workers in nine target counties which have tentatively been selected by the Project's Board of Directors. They are: Terrell, Lee, Dougherty, Baker, Grady, Clay, Crisp, Worth, and Sumter. A second group of five counties has been selected for eventual inclusion in the Project.

This first priority list includes counties located within a fifty mile radius of Albany, Georgia, the largest urban area in southwest Georgia. These are the counties where the black population is the highest; economic, social, and political deprivation the worst; and the tradition of the civil rights movement the richest and most enduring. The target counties are located in the heart of the pecan, peanut, cotton, and corn plantation region, which through mechanization and severe acreage allotment reductions have forced thousands of families out of farm work.

A consideration of equal, if not greater, importance in the selection of these counties was the degree of grass roots organization present. Each of our nine counties holds a key grass roots organization big enough and stable enough to benefit significantly from the Southwest Georgia Project's training service.

IV. Plan of Action: Training Workshops for Local Leadership

If local leaders are to lead, they must be able to meet at least some of the immediate needs of their followers. Achieving this is not merely a question of marshalling material resources, but in the first instance, of recognizing in our organizations and ourselves the ability to solve concrete needs. It thus becomes crucial that the training process for leaders be focussed on the solution of a series of specific problems.

Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education, through its central training center in Albany and the county training centers, will conduct a number of workshops for local community leaders. It is anticipated that one major activity of the training workshop will be instruction in the establishment of local "complaint centers." The trainees will be instructed in the law as it relates to their constituents, particularly in economic areas such as welfare and social security statutes. The training, provided by a local black lawyer specializing in the area of civil rights, in co-operation with the Project, will involve instruction of local people in screening persons desiring legal aid; writing affidavits; familiarizing local people with their fundamental constitutional rights; workshop sessions will be held both at the Albany Training Center and in the field. These workshops will be conducted by the staff.

While certain general curriculum guidelines can be projected, a great deal of what is taught will depend on the developing needs of the local project area. The workshops in the Albany Training Center will cover the following topics: how to run a meeting; the nature of organizations and the role of leadership; local fund raising techniques; bookkeeping; organization management; municipal and county government; bargaining and negotiating techniques and group pressure politics.

Another vital and much-needed function of the workshops will be to conduct special training programs in resource development. The goal of this program is to provide local groups and leadership with the skills, knowhow, and information necessary for independent self-help program development.

The ultimate goal of the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education is the creation of a trained body of leaders and community workers, equipped not only to meet the immediate needs of the poor in local areas, but also to transfer training and skills to other counties so that they may be able to develop the capability to solve their own problems without being dependent on the limited and often inaccessible skills of others.

The trainee's activities will be directed toward the major goal of strengthening organizational structures through which the poor may initiate social change. His major efforts towards this end will be assisting local organizations through their leadership to generate self - help, self - administered social and economic programs and to influence programs in this direction which are contemplated or should be developed. His activities might include training people to set up community-owned and operated businesses, credit unions, community centers, health clinics, the broad range of federally financed programs for the poor, community parent associations, farm cooperatives or tenant unions. To do this, he may draw from the set of specialized skills he has obtained from his early training or, from his knowledge of the availability of resources and technical assistance.

This emphasis is based on the view that organizations sustain themselves most effectively when their leaders and constituents are trained to develop and administer indigenous programs. More specifically:

1 People learn through experience with concrete problems; their learning requires their participation.

2 Organizations attract supporters in part by providing them with incentives.

3 The question of poverty involves both low income and social and political dependency. The enforced dependency of the poor can be overcome only by broadening the effective decision making power they have over areas critically affecting their lives as well as improving their income. Training around program development addresses both facts of the poverty problem.

4 To train people for leadership without providing them with meaningful opportunities for leadership may be more damaging than were things left unchanged.

5 Removing the barriers to opportunity has given way to achieving the fact of equality. This has shifted the emphasis away from security of civil rights towards insuring social and economic progress.

6 By training people to build organizations around programs instead of, say, ideologies, one has a far greater likelihood of uniting the frequently divided elements of the community in a common endeavor. This does not deny the importance of organizing around issues of glaring and dramatic injustice, e.g., a brutal murder, false arrest, employer mistreatment; but the advantage of the program orientation is that it generally provides people with more significant and lasting skills. Most important, it offers visible proof of the constructiveness and resourcefulness of the poor in generating from their own resources a real enterprise for social and economic improvement in the community; demonstrates their own ability to operate a type of venture which they had previously known only as objects and not initiators; and thereby bestows upon them a new legitimacy, destroying the old claim that the poor are long on demands and short on initiative. They can begin to attract new attention, if not respect, from a persistently hostile world.

7 Though the creation of a reservoir of program skills for grass roots organizations, such groups are able to move towards viable control of their own lives.

Training around programs is essentially a group approach to group needs. There are, however, innumerable problems of the poor which can be solved on an individual basis simply by supplying the people with proper information. Frequently, the problems of the poor arise not out of their unwillingness to act, but their inability to obtain proper information. A son may spend weeks in jail merely because his father does not understand that he can be released on a property bond instead of a cash bond. A mother, whose daughter is killed in an automobile accident, may settle for one or two hundred dollars on a \$10,000 insurance policy just because she doesn't know the pro-

cedures of claim filing and feels herself totally at the mercy of the insurance company, anyway. A sharecropper may never receive a share of acreage division payments to the cotton plantation where he farms, because he doesn't realize that he is entitled to it. It should be emphasized that these examples are in no way extraordinary or exceptional, but are part of the fabric of the everyday life of the poor in this state.

The informational needs of the poor will be met by the community worker who will be based in the county workshop center. The Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education will encourage and help local organizations to develop the capacity to support and operate these centers. The community worker in training will be located at the centers to coordinate meetings, carry on research, receive complaints, disperse information, counsel local citizens, and prepare workshop materials, while others rove the county learning to establish contacts, feed the center with aggrieved local residents, attend meetings, and so on. Trainees will rotate, some being trained in the field, while others are being taught administrative skills at the training center in Albany.

Because information alone is not enough, the community worker-trainee also will be instructed to take advantage of his own skills, or seek out other technical assistance resources to alleviate the pressing problems of the project area. In the area of welfare, for example, the community worker-trainee would learn both an advocacy role for individuals, and a bargaining role for groups. A mother who qualified for but did not receive ADC support, would receive more than mere referral and counselling services from the complaint working center. In some instances, the community worker would accompany the mother to the welfare office to act as an advocate in the case, defending and clarifying his client's rights to the county social workers. In other instances, the community aggrieved would be taught to act as a bargaining agent (with the welfare office) for a group of persons with similar welfare problems, applying appropriate pressure tactics where they proved to be necessary. This idea of people acting for themselves would be applied to other problems as well: receiving fair yield measurements from the ASCS Committee; placing blacks in industry; or making certain that blacks are fairly dealt with by local "instant loan" outfits.

V. Training Responsibility of the Staff

1 Office of the Project Director

A. The Project Director will be responsible for the overall administra-

tion of the Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education, including the recruitment of staff, the financial responsibility for project funds, and maintenance of the program's standards. He will be directly responsible to the Project's Board of Directors, and serve as the principle liaison between the Board and organizations sponsoring the Project. He will be selected by the Board of Directors.

B. Staff

Financial Officer

Secretary

2 Office of Director of Training

A Director of Training-- the individual who will hold this position will be responsible to the project director and will be selected by the Project's Board of Directors. He will be directly responsible for all aspects of training.

B Field supervisors (9) will have the day-to-day responsibility of training and supervising community workers and local leaders. They will be selected by the Board of Directors, in consultation with the Project Director and the Director of Training.

C Community worker-trainees (18) will receive training for a full year.

3 Center Director for Research Training and Industrial Development-- Director and Trainees.

A Curriculum Development -- the person who will hold this position will develop projected curriculum needs for the training sections; the projected curriculum will be based on an analysis of the survey material obtained during the initial training period.

B Develop an extensive resource library for use in training the community workers, local leaders, and staff in such areas as economic development, federal aid programs, leadership and community training, black culture and history, history of the South, group politics, current events, and so on.

C In conjunction with the three trainees, the staff personnel will prepare a semi-annual training progress report for submission to the Board of Directors, indicating recommendations for program revision.

D Train the community worker-trainee in research techniques and the use of the library in satisfying the informational needs of the poor.

4 Information

One of the greatest necessities for strong organization is a wide access to information. A large bulk of organizational failures are rooted in inadequate or inaccurate information. Technical knowledge about federal programs, economic and political problems in local communities and the state, knowledge of funding sources and technical advice are a vital support to individuals and groups in the field. Beyond this, effective organization is frequently stifled by a second set of problems: the weaknesses of grass roots organizational leadership in knowing how and where to look for various types of information both from written sources and from the environment and in communicating this acquired information to others.

To overcome these difficulties, a number of projects will be sponsored:

1 Information about the work of the Project, through brochures and other materials.

2 Publication of a newsletter to a mailing list of five to ten thousand in this state and across the country.

3 The development of the community organizer's handbook and other training material, both written and visual.

4 Training in how to establish effective local information and communication networks in the target counties.

5 Meeting the informational needs of the counties by preparing instructional materials for distribution in the field.

6 The creation of special resource development materials.

The Southwest Georgia Project for Community Education's Board of Directors will hold direct responsibility for the fiscal and general operations of the Project.

The Board will:

1 Hire all central and field staff with the exceptions and qualifications already noted.

2 Supervise the staff.

3 Develop guidelines for the operation of the program.

4 Decide on future areas of operation.

5 Approve all contracts.

6 Develop necessary proposals for future Project operations.

7 Promote joint activities and communications to strengthen participant

organizations in the target counties.

The Southwest Georgia Project's financial officer will make a public financial statement each month.

The Southwest Georgia Project will undergo a complete re-evaluation periodically.

V. Financing

Our hope is that 2/3rds of our budget for this year will be in the form of grants, with the remaining sum to be raised locally through the economic ventures of the project and public solicitation. The ultimate goal is complete economic self-sufficiency within three years.

THE BUDGET OF THE SOUTHWEST GEORGIA PROJECT

1969-1970

TRANSPORTATION (based on a ten-car fleet)

A. Operation Expenses

1. Gasoline, at 6¢ per mile for 10 cars travelling 100 miles per day average	\$21,600.00
2. Oil, figuring 3,000 miles / mo. / car, 1 qt. / 500 mi. @ 50¢ / qt.	360.00

B. Maintenance

1. Tires, \$150 per car for 1½ sets / yr. @ \$100 / set of 4.	1,500.00
2. Change oil and lube, \$4 / car / 2,000 mi.	600.00
3. Tuneup @ \$20 / car / 5,000 mi.	1,200.00
4. Oil filter @ \$4 per car per 4,000 mi.	300.00
5. Comprehensive insurance, @ \$110 / car / yr.	1,100.00
6. License plates, \$10 / car	100.00
7. Inspection stickers, \$3 / car	30.00
8. Miscellaneous repairs, \$30 / car / mo.	3,600.00

C. Needs

4 school busses (used) at \$1,000 ea.	4,000.00
2 economy cars @ \$2000 ea.	4,000.00
2 suburban van trucks @ \$2,500 ea.	<u>5,000.00</u>

TOTAL: \$43,390.00

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

A. Materials

10 bookshelves, \$62.15 ea.	621.50
Books	10,000.00
2 movie projectors and screens	1,000.00
2 slide projectors	200.00
4 tape recorders: 2 portable, @ \$200 ea., 2 stan- dard @ \$300 ea.	1,000.00
10 blackboards	50.00
Film purchases	2,000.00
Film rentals	<u>1,000.00</u>

B. Photography

1. Still photography	\$15,871.50
2 cameras, 35mm., @ \$75 ea.	150.00
4 lenses, 35mm., 50 mm., 135mm.	400.00
Film: b & w, 4 rolls / wk. @ 50¢ ea.	100.00
Photographic paper, 100 sheets / mo.	125.00
Darkroom chemicals	50.00
Miscellaneous darkroom equipment	<u>50.00</u>
	\$875.00
2. Motion pictures	
Super-Eight movie camera	400.00
Super-Eight Projector	289.00
Special tape recorder	300.00
Used 16mm. camera	500.00
Film and processing	2,800.00
Processing a 20 min. film of the Project	<u>450.00</u>
	\$4,739.00

C. Seminar consultants @ 12 seminars /yr. (2 consultants each @ \$200)	<u>4,800.00</u>
D. Total research and education expenses	\$26,285.50

STAFF SALARIES

Project Director	10,000.00
Executive Director	8,000.00
Director of Research	8,000.00
Financial Officer	10,000.00
Secretary	8,000.00
Field Supervisors (9 @ \$5,000 ea.)	45,000.00
Community Workers-Trainees (21 @ \$3,120 ea.)	65,000.00
Summer work-study scholarships for black college students, @ \$1,000 ea.	<u>10,000.00</u>
	<u>\$164,520.00</u>

HOUSING (for seminars and conferences)

20 beds and mattresses @ \$20/ unit (unless we have the use of the Gillespie-Selden Institute)	400.00
20 sheet sets and blankets @ \$5 per unit	100.00
5 tables @ \$8 each made by staff	40.00
30 chairs @ \$4 ea.	120.00
Refrigerator (used), \$75 + used deep freeze @ \$100	175.00
Stove (used)	75.00
Kitchen utensils	50.00

OFFICES

Offices leased in 10 counties @ \$250/ mo.	3,000.00
Utilities @ \$40/ mo. for combined offices	4,800.00
2 filing cabinets @ \$90 ea.	180.00
6 standard typewriters	540.00
1 electric mimeograph	300.00
1 photocopier, 3m model 209	500.00
Telephone, \$200 / mo.	2,400.00
Printing press, newspaper	5,200.00
Paper @ \$2.50 / ream / wk.	260.00
Stencils @ 10¢ ea. + 5 stencils / wk.	26.00
Ink and duplicator fluid	84.00
Stamps, \$15 / wk.	180.00
Staplers and staples	50.00
Miscellaneous materials and supplies	<u>100.00</u>

TOTAL: \$17,620.00

TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET:

Transportation	43,390.00
Education and Research	26,285.00
Staff	156,520.00
Housing	960.00
Offices	<u>17,620.00</u>

TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET.....\$244,775.50