

**benton  
county**

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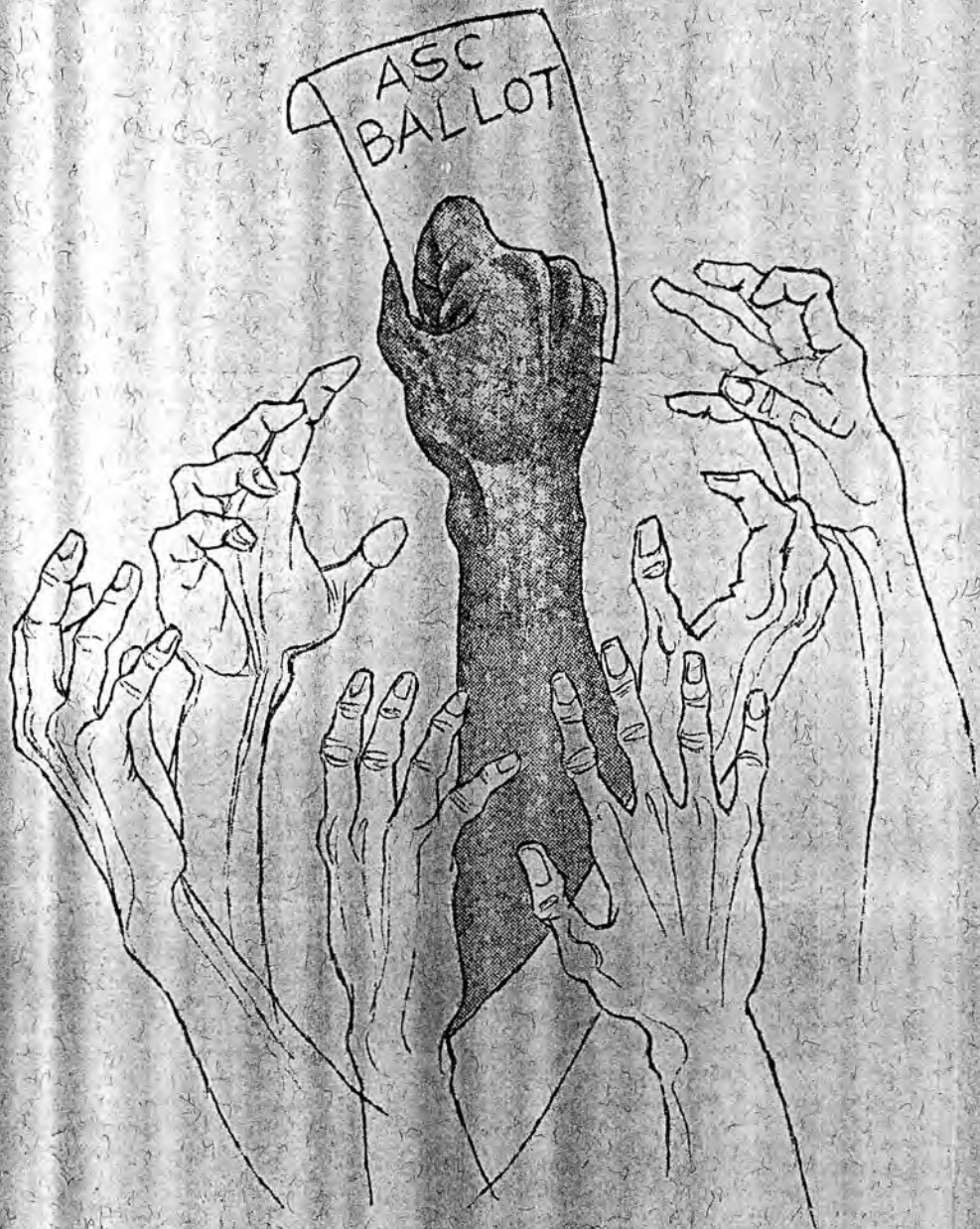


*"It's that Freedom Train a comin'; get on board, get on board."*

**VOLUME II, NUMBER 8**

Published by the citizens of  
Benton County, Mississippi

**NOVEMBER 29, 1964**  
Beulah Mae Ayers,  
Editor



**KEEP YOUR EYES ON THE PRIZE--HOLD ON!**

# U.S. Government to sue Mr. Mathis!

## ASC balloting may elect Negroes to office

### A.S.C. news

Balloting is now in progress for the ASC community elections, and the elections will continue until Thursday, midnight, when all ballots are due in the office.

Close to 300 ballots have been marked for the Citizens Club candidates in three communities, with more expected in the next few days.

PEOPLE CAN AND MUST CONTINUE TO GO TO THE OFFICE TO REQUEST BALLOTS IF THEY HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY IN THE MAIL.

The ASCS office and local landowners have been very uncooperative with Negro voters. The ASCS office gave some people living in Community C ballots for Community D, where there are no Citizens Club candidates on the ballots.

In addition, the office, at one point, claimed to have run out of envelopes when people came in to request ballots. Envelopes have since been found.

Some landlords have taken their sharecroppers' ballots and will not give them to them. In such a case, the sharecropper can go to the ASCS office, report that he never received his ballot, and get a new one, as long as he returns it within a few hours, so that the office will know which of the two ballots it sent out should be accepted.

The Spring Hill area has been especially tense. Bob Smith, COFO worker, was told by Mr. Wyatt Thomas, who picked up two empty bottles, to get off his land. Bob left but not without the ballots he came for. He refused to turn them over to Mr. Thomas.

It is believed that many whites who are not eligible have been put on the voters list--from as far away as Memphis. Therefore, we will need all the votes we can get.

Remember, these aren't just any elections: these elections will have an important effect on how much cotton acreage Negroes get next year. It will decide whether or not you will get your cotton plowed up again. We have our chance now. If we lose this election, we have no one to blame but ourselves!

### Mr. Mathis

Mr. Lawson J. Mathis, registrar of Ashland, will be in courthouse on Tuesday, December 1. But this time, it will not be the Ashland courthouse--it will be the U.S. Federal Courthouse in Oxford, Mississippi. And Mr. Mathis will not be giving voter registration test and failing all Negroes who come to take the test--he will be on trial for discriminating against Negroes of Benton County who have tried to register to vote.

At 9 AM that Tuesday morning, the United States Government will bring to trial Mr. Mathis on grounds of voter registration discrimination. The public is invited, and it is hoped that as many Benton County people as possible will be at the courthouse to show the judge how interested we are in the problem of voter discrimination.

Witnesses from Benton County will be called upon to testify--both Negroes, who haven't been able to pass the test, as well as whites who are registered voters but cannot read and write.

If the U.S. Government wins its case against Mr. Mathis, it may mean that a Negro in Benton county will not have to interpret the constitution of Mississippi in order to pass the test. In panola county where the government won such a case, one thousand Negroes have passed the registration test, whereas before, there was only one registered voter in the whole county.

Mr. Nicholas Flannery, of the U.S. Justice Department, told meetings of the Citizens Club that the government was able to bring Mr. Mathis to trial only through the cooperation of its Negro citizens who have gone back again and again to the courthouse to take the test, even though they knew they wouldn't pass. By failing the test, they proved that Mr. Mathis discriminates against Negro citizens.

REMINDER: ALL-COUNTY MEETING OF THE BENTON COUNTY CITIZENS CLUB TUESDAY, DECEMBER 1, 7:30 PM, AT SAMUELS CHAPEL. Hear a report on the first day of the trial!



What Color Are You?

by Dr. Juanita Strawn

The Crises of our time are worrying me--  
Color me chicken;  
The world is changing much too fast--  
Color me scared;  
Things that secured me once before,  
Must be eliminated by the score,  
What used to be just ain't no more--  
Color me confused!

Changes are made before my eyes--  
Color me blind;  
Opportunity keeps knocking at my door--  
Color me deaf;  
Lessons I've learned yesterday  
Must pay off, I've heard them say;  
I will not change, I'll have my way,  
Color me static.

I have a degree, I know it all--  
Color me ignorant;  
I know I'm right, all others wrong--  
Color me intolerant;  
If my way they cannot see  
Lord, have mercy on them, not me,  
They're hopeless in face of prosperity--  
Color me bigoted.

I am strong and mighty in the face of change--  
Color me confident;  
I can face the future, whatever it brings--  
Color me flexible;  
What I've learned each day in school,  
Provides the background and the tool,  
Help me practice the Golden Rule--  
Color me educated!

I've learned tolerance for those who differ--  
Color me true;  
I will carry my share without the laurels--  
Color me Responsible;  
If some falter because of quirks,  
Though they say I'm just a jerk--  
Color me loyal.

My head is high, my voice is sure--  
Color me independent;  
When I don't have I'll just make do--  
Color me creative;  
A man without knowledge, I have read,  
May well be compared to one that is dead, it bursts apart.  
You can count on me, I'm unafraid--  
Color me alive!

DEMOCRACY

by Langston Hughes

Democracy will not come  
Today, this year  
Nor ever  
Through compromise and fear.

I have as much right  
As the other fellow has  
To stand  
On my own two feet  
And own the land.

I tire so of hearing people  
Say:  
Let things take their course  
Tomorrow is another day.  
I don't need my freedom  
When I'm dead.  
I cannot live on  
Tomorrow's bread.

Freedom  
Is a strong seed  
Planted  
In a great need.  
I live here, too.  
I want freedom  
Just as you.

JIM CROW CAR

BY Langston Hughes

Get out the lunch-box  
of your dreams  
And bite into the sandwich  
of your heart,  
And ride the Jim Crow car  
until it screams  
And like an atom bomb,  
it bursts apart.

DON'T BE AFRAID, NEGROES

by Margie Williams

No American would purposely do  
anything to hurt or hinder his  
country. But many of us fail to  
perform the least tasks which  
would help it. Lazy citizens are  
not necessarily poor citizens, but  
they are not good citizens either.

People offer many excuses of  
their lack of participation. Some  
say its too confusing, or "I am  
too busy." But yet when our friends  
get back, we want to know what went  
on, what did they talk about. Why  
do you want to know that if you're  
not interested?

Listen, Negroes, there is too  
much play and not enough work. We  
want our rights, so let us prove  
it.. Don't stay in the dark all  
of your life, for God don't want  
no coward soldiers in his land.  
So stand up and be counted. You  
know prayer is the key and faith  
will unlock the door.

All we have to do is keep on  
fighting for our rights and we  
shall overcome someday. Victory  
shall be yours. The reason I know  
is because victory is mine. So,  
people, start thinking! Don't be  
left out!

## THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

Suppose that you had been born a slave, and you had been sold away from your mother and father. They too had been separated from each other, so that you were in one place, your mother in another, and your father in still another place.

When you had become "grown", your master decided that it was time for you to marry. He selected some other slave for you to marry. When children came he let you rear them until they were old enough to work, perhaps he then sold them to some other plantation miles away from you. Your love for them, or the great need they had of your care and protection was, in many cases of no concern to the master.

Could you ever be happy under such a system? Small wonder then that thousands of slaves attempted to run away from the horrors of slavery, and to gain freedom in the North or in Canada.

Canada was a safer place than the North. This was because Canada was not affected by our laws, and, consequently, a slave who arrived there could not be brought back to his master. But in the North it was different. Laws were passed which gave slave owners the right to go into northern states and seize any escaped slaves, and return with them to their plantations.

Out of such conditions developed the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was not a railway system--there were no steel tracks, locomotives, or day coaches. The railroad was made up of men and women. These were called the Abolitionists. They were so thoroughly opposed to slavery that they gladly gave of their means, their energies, and even their lives to help runaway slaves.

The system was known as the "Underground" because it became necessary to carry out all of its movements in secret. It became very dangerous to help a slave. Heavy fines, long terms of prison, beatings, and even lynchings were the results of discovery in any attempt to aid a slave.

Nevertheless, in spite of the difficulties encountered, over 20,000 slaves achieved freedom in the North or in Canada as a result of the Underground Railroad. Its methods were very much like a railway system. It had its officers, conductors, train dispatchers, freight handlers, and even stations and hotels. But always under cover.

Suppose you were a slave in Virginia, near Richmond. You knew that if you could get to Philadelphia you could free yourself of the awful shackles which bound you to serfdom. Here is the way you might have gained your freedom: First of all you would find out whether there was any representative of the Underground Railroad in your neighborhood. Very likely there would be. Once you had found him, you would tell him that you wanted to get to Philadelphia.

The representative of the Underground would get in touch with one of the conductors, who, in turn, would communicate with another representative in a center like Richmond. This representative would communicate with a center further north. Thus the plan would be relayed from point to point until the chain was completed up to Philadelphia.

Then you would make ready for the trip. Perhaps it would begin under cover of darkness, some time far into the night. You reached Richmond, and there you remained hidden until a favorable opportunity to leave arrived. Then you would be conducted to your next stopping point.

All kinds of transportation facilities were employed, such as lumber wagons, carriages, ferry boats and steamboats, large sailing vessels, or the real railways. Perhaps you would have to disguise as a sailor, or as a white person's maid or attendant. All manner of costumes and devices were resorted to in order to prevent detection. At each stopping point someone would be present to receive you. There you would be fed and sheltered until it was time to move further to the north.

Finally you arrived in Philadelphia where you could heave a great sigh of relief, for the chances of being captured there were very slender, since Philadelphia was a free city.

(to be continued next week)

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VOLUME II, NUMBER 10

DECEMBER 13, 1964

Published by the Citizens of  
Benton County, Mississippi.

Boulah Mae Ayers,  
Editor

WHO'S THAT YONDER  
WITH SKIN OF BLACK;  
IT'S L. B. PAIGE  
AND HE WON'T TURN BACK.





# NEGROES WON ENTIRE COMMUNITY!

For the first time since Reconstruction, Negroes were elected to public office in Benton County last Monday, as Mr. L. B. Paige, Mr. Clabon Jackson, and Mrs. Sarah Robinson won the top three positions on the ASC community B committee.

Mr. Paige received 183 votes and became chairman of the committee, Mr. Jackson received 181 votes and became vice-chairman of the committee, and Mrs. Robinson received 170 votes and became regular member. Running behind the top three candidates were Mr. Wayne Akins with 165 votes and Mr. Kenneth Leake with 150 votes. Both men are alternates on the committee, which means they can only attend meetings if any of the top three members are sick.

Negro candidates in communities A and C lost. In community C, the Negro candidates received 91 and 89 votes, as compared with over 200 votes received by the top five white candidates. It was concluded that there are more whites than Negroes in this community, since only 5 eligible Negroes did not vote.

In community A, on the other hand, about 40 eligible Negroes did not vote, chiefly because they did not receive ballots and were too fearful to go to the ASCS office and ask for one. In this community, the three Negro candidates received 93, 94, and 94 votes, as compared with 150, 149, 145, 143, and 136 votes received by the five white candidates. Since many ineligible whites are thought to have voted, it must be concluded that if the elections had been conducted fairly, with every eligible Negro voting, Negro candidates would probably have won in Community A.

Eight other counties in Mississippi ran Negro candidates in the

ASC elections, but none did as well as Benton, even though all had a higher percentage of Negroes in them. Madison did second best, electing one man to the chairmanship of a community. The other counties decided at a meeting in Batesville last Tuesday to demand that the elections be held again because they were not conducted fairly.

Benton County's candidates were also present at the meeting, but they decided not to demand a re-election, even though Benton county's election was not conducted fairly. They decided to keep what they had won and next year try to win Community A.

Now that the election is over, the Citizens Club plans to make an investigation of extra acreage allotted to Negro farmers by the ASCS and send its report to the Agriculture Department in Washington, D.C.

## Chairman's statement:

by L. B. Paige

I am grateful that I was elected to the committee of the ASCS, and am even more grateful that I was elected chairman of the committee. I do thank the people of Benton County for their cooperation and for their votes which enabled me to be placed on the committee. I will do my utmost to be a good committeeman.

## Committee statement:

We, the community committee of community B of Benton county, feel grateful toward the people of this community. We feel that it is an honor as well as an opportunity to be elected as your committeemen.

We assure you that we will do our very best to serve you as a good, true, and honest committee.

## FDP to challenge seating of Mississippi Congressmen

Do you remember the Freedom Vote held last October 30-November 2? In that election, more people in Benton County voted for Lyndon Johnson and Fannie Lou Hamer than the number of people who voted for Barry Goldwater and Jamie Whitten in the regular election.

But it didn't count. On January 4, the Freedom Democratic Party is going to Washington, as they went to Atlantic City in August, in order to make this Freedom Vote count. On that date, Congressmen who were elected in November are supposed to take their seats in the United States Congress. But the Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) feels that the Mississippi Congressmen do not have a right to be seated in Congress since they were not elected by ALL the people of Mississippi but only by the white citizens and 5% of the Negro citizens of the state.

So on January 4, 1,000 Negroes from Mississippi will go to Washington to protest the seating of Mississippi's congressmen, while FDP lawyers will present their case before the public.

This Thursday, December 17, at 7:30, a special meeting will be held at Samuels Chapel to inform Benton county citizens of the details of the challenge and to elect about ten people to go to Washington in January. Everyone in the county is urged to attend this meeting.

Meanwhile, all citizens are urged to write letters to Mrs. Hamer who is in Washington, telling her what we feel is wrong with Mississippi and how we would like to see it changed. Her address is:

Freedom Democratic Party  
1353 U Street  
Washington, D. C.

FIND OUT MORE ON THURSDAY NIGHT!

## Report on ASC vote-counting

by Beulah Mae Aye

We went to Ashland on December 7 to observe the counting of the ASCS votes.

My friends picked me up at 8:30 and we went to the courthouse. We sat in front--of course, we were looked at hard. We couldn't hear the names being called because the man who was reading the ballots seemed to choke whenever he had to call out all-Negro ballots.

Aviva asked Mr. Stone to call the names a little louder. He agreed but didn't seem too satisfied about it. But he really got nervous when Aviva challenged two of the white ballots belonging to Nicky and David Akins who are both under 21. Both ballots were disqualified.

Mr. Tony Farese, our ever-present county attorney, welcomed us by playing camera man. He took our picture, telling us, "Smile, you're on candid camera."

## NO VOTERS IN BENTON COUNTY

THERE ARE NO REGISTERED VOTERS IN BENTON COUNTY! Yes, it's true, neither black nor white citizens of the county can vote. In addition, the registrar's office is closed and no one can take the voters test.

This is the latest development in the U.S. government's suit against Mr. Mathis. Mr. Mathis has thrown away all the old books, and nobody can vote.

What remains to be done is to establish new rules for registering to vote--rules that will be administered equally to black and white.

All this was told to the citizens club last Tuesday night by Mr. Nicholas Flannery of the Justice Department. He will keep us posted of all further developments.