

5  
Aug 22, 1964

Philadelphia, Miss.  
Nashaba County

Despite numerous bomb threats, a constant stream of white visitors in cars, many with guns, and pseudo-legal attempts to evict us, the Philadelphia project is now firmly established and functioning with a great deal of assistance from the community -- some of which arrives several times a day in the form of quantities of fried chicken, corn bread, peas, okra and other such essentials. A Week ago today, our first night here in the Evers Hotel, we were visited by three car loads full of armed whites. They gawaked for half an hour, brandished their weapons and made obscene gestures and left. Such calls increased each night until two days ago when the traffic outside the hotel decreased appreciably. During the ~~mid~~ middle of the week, the parade of cars outside the hotel seemed like a bad movie. A comedy of terrors. Wednesday was worst. A regular parade with local whites driving by followed by FBI cars checking license plates (local negroes had ~~sex~~ just brought us some watermelons) and keeping watch.

Sometimes the FBI cars were followed by Sheriff Rainey and Deputy Price both of whom are under constant scrutiny for possible (I think probable) involvement in the killing of the three boys. At one point Price, frustrated by the fact that we, along with about thirty local negroes, were all sitting outside watching the show and laughing, suddenly shot by with his siren screaming, raising billows of dust, hoping, I suppose, to scare us.

At night we keep guard posted to give ourselves time to make necessary phone calls and perhaps even prevent the bombings that we feel are inevitable. So far, the FBI has been co-operative keeping surveillance on the area at night and getting statements from us about the activities of the local police and other whites who are viewed as a threat to our presence in the county.

Meanwhile, we have gotten a slow but sure start on the Freedom School through our Bookmobile, a small panel truck which we load with books and drive through the community. At several points we stop, let children check out books, teach freedom songs, give short talks, organize games, and end each meeting with the singing of "We Shall Overcome."

It is difficult to get full participation. The people want to cooperate and do all they can to help us, but they are often afraid. Many ~~peek~~ peer nervously out the window as we speak to them, a few are too frightened to even respond. We are somewhat apprehensive too, especially about going out into the rural community. We now use walkie-talkies and other electronic equipment. Recently three negroes, including one negro woman were savagely beaten in this area. Then, of course there is the tragedy of the three workers. Only this week a very white looking negro was mistaken for one of us and brutally assaulted in broad day light on the main street of Philadelphia. Three churches have been burned to the ground in this county during the Summer.



6

Voter registration has just begun and already some local residents have agreed to be block captains and organize precincts for the FDP.

Since regular school begins next week, the Freedom School will not actually begin until we can see when the students will be able to meet. This presents a problem, as many pick cotton after their classes. Classes will probably be held in the evening. Meanwhile we have set up a library in one of the rooms of our "hotel" Many have checked books out already. There is a real thirst for information on the negro and his history.

There has been tremendous support from the community. Our so called hotel has at present no toilet, kitchen, running water, nor anything else save walls, roof and floor. Since our second day here when we stooped using the little restaurant because of a bomb threat the owner received, we have depended entirely on the community for our basic necessities. Soon we will install our own facilities. Homes have been readily open to us for showering and shaving, hot water is made available across the street, iron and boards, as well as volunteers to launder have been made available. Each day at lunch and supper some one always appears with fully cooked meals for us. Today at lunch ~~xxxx~~ there was some confusion and two different person each appeared with two separate full cooked luncheons. Besides this there is a great feeling here a kind of solidarity is emerging among the negroes, a sense of community. They know that our presence insures the presence of the FBI and thus the perpetual terror is for the time being mitigated.

I will write more later. A personal letter will follow.

G

COREtially,

*Walt*

walt

P.S. don't forget to show this to Mariam and the other people at CO RE.

Also your last letter was not clear is there a national CORE project in Bakersfield, if so explain.

Much love.