



Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee

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*This is a copy of
a letter sent to
Presbyterian VPDs*

Cordele, Georgia, is one of the most progressive towns, in terms of race relations, in the Deep South. With a population of 10,609, it has yet to see any form of racial turmoil. There is, as I understand it, no bi-racial committee; nonetheless, the government of Cordele has repeatedly met with its local interested citizens to resolve the problems that affect the general citizenry. There are several citizens that are affectionately referred to by the local citizenry as the "Black Fathers of Cordele"; they are admired, respected, and quite representative of the populace of Cordele. I sincerely feel that these men have contributed greatly to Cordele's racial harmony and prosperity and have in fact made this dream of government of the people for the people a living reality.

Cordele is unique, although it too had problems that are seemingly inherent in most Southern towns.

For all practical purposes, the town is effectively isolated; the local newspaper is considered "liberal" by the townfolk (by Northern standards it would be considered conservative), and yet its citizens are ill-informed and therefore show little or no interest in national, or international, news, or world politics.

The Crisp County and the Cordele city school systems are poor and can, at best, afford its students only the minimal educational opportunity required by the state laws of Georgia.

Crisp is a rural county devoted almost exclusively to the agricultural needs of its farmers. During the winter months jobs are almost non-existent.

"One Man, One Vote"

The county's young people are very much aware of the economic problems that have faced them everyday, and almost invariably say, as their parents have said before them, "I don't want my children to come the same old hard road of life I did"; and the reaction to the problem gives rise to the mass exodus from southern rural county to southern village to the metropolitan areas of the North and to the ghettos of Harlem and the South Side of Chicago.

If you, sir, will allow us, (under the direction of Rev. Charles Sherrod) the opportunity to conduct a residential Freedom School in Cordele's Gillespie Selden Institute, then we will be in a position to bring North and South closer together, to break down the isolation, and to show the southern kids that their problems are in fact the same problems that face the Negro in the North. Hopefully this forum, the residential Freedom School, will provide an atmosphere that is conducive to broadening the nonviolent civil rights movement.

Sir, if there are questions regarding this program, and I am sure there are, would you please contact Rev. Sherrod, or Miss Richardson. Their addresses are as follows:

Rev. Charles Sherrod
c/o Union Theological Seminary
100 5th Avenue
New York, N.Y.

Miss Judy Richardson
8 $\frac{1}{2}$ Raymond St. NW
Atlanta, Georgia 30314

Yours in our quest for human dignity,

Roy Shields
Roy Shields, Jr.
Project Director
SNCC in SWGa.