HAIL TO THE CHIEF!

An Exhibit on Presidents and Mississippi in Presidential Elections

Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. *A Primer for Delegates to the Democratic National Convention Who Haven't Heard about the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.* [1964].

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18 August 2008 - 18 August 2009

A PRIMER FOR DELEGATES TO THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

WHO HAVEN'T HEARD ABOUT

THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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Who is YOUR sheriff? What does he believe about law and order? Does he think that the "law of the land" should be enforced? Will he beat you and jail you if you try to exercise the basic rights guaranteed you by the Constitution of the United States? Will he protect you against anyone who threatens your life and property?

The sheriff is a part of government which is represented by either the Republican or the Democratic Party.

In Mississippi, he may be a Democrat, and a Dixiecrat, and a member of the Citizens Council or the Ku Klux Klan. But no matter what group he belongs to, and how much that group opposes citizenship rights for all people, HIS delegates sit side by side at national conventions with other delegates who believe that the Constitution of the United States is the basic document by which all of us should be governed.

We think that his representatives do not deserve their seats, and that the Democratic Party should tell them so. And we have come here to challenge him, and those like him who endorse state party platforms which call

for separation of the races in public places, the impeachment of Supreme Justices, who publicly and privately support inferior schools, substandard housing and negligible economic opportunities for black people who happen to be Americans.

And who are we?

We are FREEDOM Democrats!

Our state party is integrated, and some of our members have lost their jobs, been beaten, spent days in jail, been shot at and had their homes fire-bombed and dynamited, all because we want to participate as voters in the democratic process.

It is up to you to decide which group should be seated. But before you make up your minds about which of us belong. with you, we would like you to know something about us, AND SOMETHING ABOUT THEM!

Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer is 46. She is married and has two children. She has lived all of her life in Mississippi. It is not unusual, among those Negroes for whom she is a representative, that she has only eight years of schooling. Her husband is a cotton gin worker. He formerly worked on a plantation, but when Mrs. Hamer tried to register to vote they were put off the land where they had lived for 16 years. As if that didn't make the point clearly enough, somebody fired 16 shots into the house

where she was staying.

In Ruleville, where Fannie Lou Hamer lives, people crowd around her house. That's because she is a leader even though her house doesn't look like much.

She is an ample woman.

Ample means BIG.

She is big in girth, and big in spirit. And when she sings she can make a church tremble.

She is big in love, too, and when she smiles, her smile embraces you in warmth. As if by a miracle, she hasn't as yet learned to hate, and that makes her strong and vital.

She is also innocent.

Her soul is free and she thinks her mind and body should be free, too. Free from wondering why white neighbors don't think freedom is for everybody.

She tried to vote because she thought she ought to have a say in the way she was being treated. She had been told that Democracy meant she had the right to do that.

She was blackjacked in jail in Wimona, Mississippi after she told people there about voting. And she finally got reg-

istered and ran for the U.S. Congress against Jamie Whitten. Whitten is noted for having killed a program to train tractor drivers because it included Negroes.

Jamie Whitten won.

Not enough of Mrs. Hamer's friends could vote for her. Many of them had tried and for their concern were beaten, shot at, jailed, and run off the land. Some were murdered. Herbert Lee was killed, but most of you don't know anything about that. And Lewis Allen was killed, and Medgar Evers, too. And Michael Schwerner was killed, and Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney who was from Meridian, Mississippi. They, perhaps like you, were interested in seeing that everybody got a chance to vote.

Well, that is how Mississippi congressmen get elected.

It's how sheriffs are elected.

And presidents, too.

Mrs. Hamer doesn't think it is right.

Now Mrs. Hamer is a Democrat who believes in democracy. And because she does, she thinks that she ought to have a seat in the convention.

The white delegates have come here before and have not supported the man the Democratic Party decided to run for office. They don't believe in the platform that the party runs on.

In the last election the white delegates from Mississippi voted for Senator Harry Flood Byrd, who wasn't even running for anything.

Mrs. Hamer thinks she ought to be able to do something about that.

She and the members of her delegation are Democrats. They are loyal to the Democratic Party and what it stands for. The white Mississippi delegates are not and they have proven it.

The Mississippi delegates believe in segregated schools, even though the Constitution of the United States says that all men are born free and equal; in spite of the fact that the Supreme Court of the United States says that black children have a right to go to the same school attended by any other American.

Some of the white delegates believe that the chief justice of our highest court should be impeached because the court decided that the Constitution included everybody.

Aaron Henry is a delegate, and a presidential elector. He is a Democrat, and he would cast his vote for the man that the party said it wanted for president. Mr. Henry is from Clarksdale, where Negroes are banned from the streets after midnight.

He is 46 years old, he has one child, and he lives in a home that is nicer than most Negroes' homes. But men guard his home with guns because "Doc" Henry believes that everybody should have the right to vote.

His people call him "Doc" because to them anyone who dispenses medicine is a doctor. It doesn't matter that he doesn't have an M.D. He sells the right kinds of medicine to people who can't afford a doctor and who come and stand at his counter and tell him what is wrong --- with them, or with their children.

"Doc" is a pharmacist, and he sees a lot of people.

When the country was young, people like "Doc" used to get elected to office. When you see a lot of people, and you talk a lot, and they get to know that you believe in things that are right and good for everybody, then you ought to have the chance to get elected to office.

But where "Doc" lives, black people aren't free to vote because they'd vote for him

and he'd fight to change some things that aren't right. When one man if free to go on the streets at night or day.. any time he pleases, while another man is arrested for stepping into the fresh air after the stroke of twelve, something isn't right.

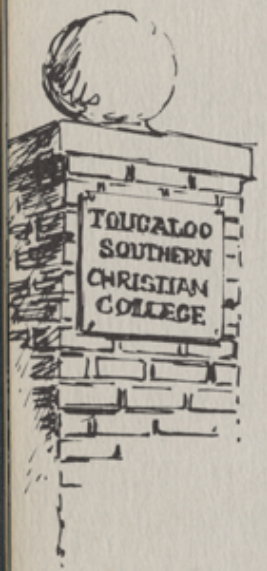
"Doc" is also state president of the NAACP. And he is president of the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), the group that sponsored the Mississippi Summer Project.

"Doc" has served on a chain gang. He was with a group of people who picketed some churches in a community to remind the Christians that they weren't doing their duty by fellow Americans and fellow human beings.

In Mississippi they put you on a chain gang for doing things like that. You aren't supposed to remind people about doing what is right.

People believe in him, because he believes in something good.

They elected him a delegate so that he could come to the convention and get himself a chair, and sit there and listen to what the other delegates believe. They wanted him to come because they understand that the Democratic Party believes in something that is good.



They know "Doc" Henry does, and they wanted him to be with you.

They know that he will vote for the president that all of you agree is the best man to run the country. He said he would, and the people who have been to his drug store trust him. His word has always been good.

A.D. Beittel is a real doctor. He has a Ph.D., and he is president of Tougaloo Southern Christian College. Anybody can go to school there: white or black.

He is secretary of the Mississippi Advisory Committee of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. That is the long name for a group that is supposed to see that ALL Americans are treated alike. The group must do that because some white people in places like Mississippi don't believe Americans are the same. No matter what the Constitution says.

He is a member of the Mississippi Council on Human Relations.

Somebody has to belong to groups like because human relations aren't good these days. Dr. Beittel is the kind of man that people think will help make things better for everybody.

He thinks the ballot is a precious thing.

People in Mississippi threaten him on the phone because of his belief.

The State of Mississippi wants to revoke the charter of the college he heads because anybody who wants to can get an education there if he passes the entrance tests. It doesn't matter what color he is.

People who live around him think that he should be a delegate because the Democratic Party supports integration, and stands for those things that are good for everybody. He stands for integration, too. His college was integrated before Ole Miss. And nobody had to call out the Army.

Mrs. Victoria Gray is from Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

She is married and has three children.

She was one of the first Negroes registered in Forrest County. That doesn't mean that she is an old woman. It just means that they haven't been letting Negroes get registered there for long. Mrs. Gray is just 37.

Her husband was fired from his job because Mrs. Gray tried to get other people registered. She is a coordinator of the voter registration drive in her home town, and she is a supervisor of citizenship education classes for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

She ran for the United States Senate against Senator Stennis.

She told people that she believed that "unemployment, automation, inadequate housing, health care, education, and rural development are the real issues in Mississippi, and not state's rights or Federal encroachment."

Most Democrats believe that.

That is why the people sent her here to represent them.

She is a Democrat!

Hartman Turnbow is from Tchula, Mississippi.

He only has six years of school.

At the courthouse where he went to register to vote, his way was blocked with a gun. He hasn't stopped going back.

After the first time, somebody tried to burn his house down.

He was accused of setting it afire himself.

Mr. Turnbow has four children and he would like them to be free.

When he talks about the things that have happened to him, he is not bitter.

He has lived in Mississippi for 44 years. And things aren't much better now than they were when he came.

He is a Democrat, too.

All of our delegates are people like these.

They believe in the same things that you do.

They think they have a right to be here.

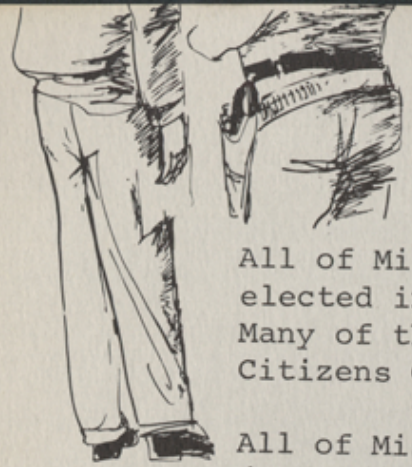
It is hard for them to understand why you let people <u>who don't believe what you believe</u> sit down with you and call themselves members of the Democratic Party.

If you want to talk with them, they are at the Gem Hotel, 505 Pacific Avenue. If you want to find out what they believe, and whether or not they will vote for the man you think should be president, just come by and talk to them at the Gem Hotel.

Then you can ask the Regular Democrats what they believe, and who they will vote for, and see who deserves to be here.

If you are a thoughtful Democrat you will do that.

AND A LESSON FOR DELEGATES WHO DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE REGULAR MISSISSIPPI DEMOCRATIC DELEGATION



All of Mississippi's 82 sheriffs are elected in Democratic Party primaries. Many of them are members of white Citizens Councils.

All of Mississippi's Circuit Clerks (who are also voter registrars) are elected in Democratic Party primaries. Many of them are members of the White Citizens Councils, and it is their task to make it difficult, if not impossible, for Negroes to register and vote.

Sheriffs and Circuit Clerks keep the Mississippi Democratic Party lily-white. When Democratic sheriffs intimidate and harass prospective Negro registrants, and when Democratic circuit clerks impose impossible conditions on Negroes who want to register, they are following the wishes of the white Citizens Councils and ignoring the policy of President Johnson and the National Democratic Party.

<u>The white Citizens Councils have more influence over the Democratic officials of Mississippi than the leaders of the National Democratic Party</u>.

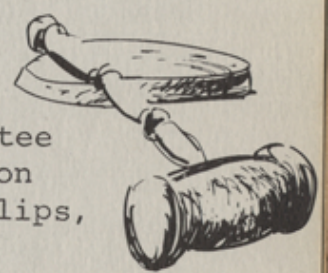
The white delegation which the Mississippi Democratic Party has sent to this national convention is a creature of the white Citizens Councils. The delegates were selected in a state convention pre-

sided over by Lt. Governor Carroll Gartin. He has been an active supporter of the white Citizens Councils since they were first formed in 1955.

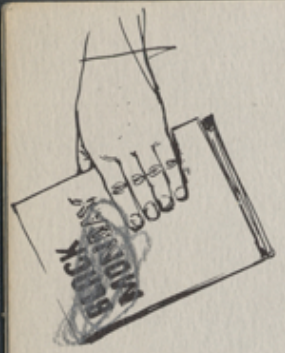
The delegates were actually chosen by a nominating committee of the state convention of the Mississippi Democratic Party. The chairman of this nominating committee was State Representative Wilburn Hooker, who is director of the statewide Association of Citizens Councils.

> Just this year, in the Mississippi House, Wilburn Hooker voted for a bill which would have imposed involuntary sterilization upon the parents of illegitimate children. When the bill was being debated on the floor of the Mississippi House, one member said: "When the cutting starts, they'll (Negroes) head for Chicago.

Hooker's son, E. Wilburn Hooker, is an officer of the Holmes County white Citizens Council.



Other members of the nominating Committee which selected the lily-white delegation are State Representative J. Alton Phillips, who voted for the Sterilization Bill; State Representative C.B. Newman, a member of the white Citizens Councils; Tom Riddell, from Canton, Mississippi, who



is on the Steering Committee of the Madison County white Citizens Council; and Harvey E. West, owner of a trucking company in Hattiesburg, who holds white Citizens Council meetings in his home.

These delegates elected for their vice-chairman Mississippi Supreme Court Justice Tom P. Brady. He was one of the founding fathers of the white Citizens Councils, and serves on the board of directors of the statewide Association of Citizens Councils. In 1955 he wrote the book Black Monday, which has since become the white Citizens Councils' bible of opposition to the school desegregation decision of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Another of the most prominent members of the delegation in State Senator Herman B. DeCell, of Yazoo City. He is a member of the white Citizens Council and an officer of the Mississippi Sovereignty Commission, which is an official state agency whose sole purpose it is to maintain white supremecy in Mississipi. The State Sovereignty Commission was the source of most of the money spent by the Coordinating Committee for Fundamental American Freedoms, in its lobbying against the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

State Senator E.K. Collins from Laurel is another member of the delegation who has been prominent in white Citizens Council activities since 1956. Collins has said "We must win this fight regardless of the cost in time, effort, money, and human lives." The "fight" he meant was against the entry of James Meredith to the University of Mississippi. The attempt cost two lives.

This is your problem, your dilemma. We hope that you are concerned enough to investigate it further. We are available for discussion and you are most cordially invited to meet members of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at: The Gem Hotel, 505 Pacific Avenue, Atlantic City, New Jersey. Phone: 344-7129.