

**Landmarks of American Democracy:
From Freedom Summer to the Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike**

TENTATIVE SYLLABUS

Works to be read prior to the workshop:

John Dittmer: *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi*.

Charles Payne: *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle*.

Michael Honey: *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers*.

Day 1: SUNDAY, July 25/August 1, 2004

9 am - 5 pm Arrive at Jackson State University; check in at W.E.B. DuBois Honors Dormitory

6 pm Welcome Reception hosted by The Hamer Institute and NEH Landmark Workshop Faculty

Musical Selection: "This Little Light of Mine"

Keynote Address: Dr. L.C. Dorsey: "Mississippi Delta as Place"

Born, raised, and shaped by the Delta, Dr. L.C. Dorsey is the Associate Director of the Delta Research and Cultural Institute located at Mississippi Valley State University. A scholar of the region, Dr. Dorsey will explore the importance of the Delta in the narrative of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi.

Day 2: MONDAY, July 26/August 2, 2004

"From Brown to McComb"

9 - 10 am Introductions and General Orientation—Hamer Institute Faculty,
Master Teachers, and Dr. Russell Wigginton
Musical Selection: "Keep Your Eyes on the Prize"

10 - 11:30 am An Introduction to Oral History Methodology—Dr. Alfredteen Harrison,
Director of the Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center

11:30 am - noon Organizing Groups

Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch on your own

1:30 - 3:30 pm Hamer Institute Faculty

We will begin our workshop by carefully examining the frequently overlooked era of protest that constitutes the first part of the 20th century and laid the foundation for Mississippi Freedom Summer. As we explore the organizing activities of Medgar Evers for the NAACP, the lynching of Emmett Till, *Brown v. Board of Education*, the early activities of community organizers in such grassroots groups as CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) and SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), we see the forces that prepared Mississippi for Freedom Summer.

Readings: Dittmer, chapters 1-8; Payne, chapters introduction, 1-4.

3:30 pm Small group discussion and primary document work

Day 3: TUESDAY, July 27/August 3, 2004

"Freedom Vote and the 1964 Summer Project"

9 - 10:30 am Musical Selection: "Wade in the Water"

Lecture: "The Freedom Vote"

Dr. John Dittmer, Depauw University, Department of History (July 27)

Dr. Charles Payne, Duke University, Department of History (August 3)

The 1963 Freedom Vote campaign helped to lay the foundation for the founding of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The Freedom Vote was conceived as a strategy to energize the Black vote in Mississippi and to demonstrate to the nation that if African Americans had the right to vote in Mississippi, they would welcome the opportunity to do so. The state-wide mock election was held in November of 1963 and nearly 90,000 African-Americans voted in the election. Aaron Henry ran for Governor and Rev. Edwin King ran for Lieutenant Governor on the freedom ballot. The Freedom Vote campaign was the pilot project that demonstrated that college students from across the country would come to Mississippi to aid the oppressed Black citizens of the state.

Readings: Dittmer, chapters 7-10; Payne, chapters 5-10.

Day 3: TUESDAY, July 27/August 3, 2004 continued

- 10:30 am - noon *Oral History Panel* moderated by Dr. Leslie Burl McLemore, The Hamer Institute
Civil rights movement activists will discuss their personal memories and recollections, providing specific illustrations of the morning lecture.
Panelists:
Dr. Bob Moses, on the establishment and organization of Freedom Summer
Mr. Hollis Watkins, on the significance of the Freedom Vote campaign and the role of youth
Mr. MacAuthur Cotton, on the establishment of the Freedom Democratic Party chapters in Mississippi
Ms. Jacquelyn Byrd Martin, on the impact of the McComb Project on the development of Freedom Summer
Mr. Charlie Cobb, on the establishment of Freedom Schools and how they were a significant part of Freedom Summer
- Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch on your own
- 1:30 - 4 pm Small group discussion and primary document work
- 6 pm Civil Rights Tour of Jackson, Mississippi
We will visit the major sites associated with Freedom Summer. Please see "Field Trip Details" for a full description. Buses will leave from the Liberal Arts Building parking lot.

Day 4: WEDNESDAY, July 28/August 4, 2004

**"Freedom Summer and the Mississippi
Freedom Democratic Party"**

- 9 - 10:30 am Musical Selection: "We're Marching On to Freedom Land"
Lecture: "Organizing Freedom Summer, Creating Freedom Schools"
Dr. John Dittmer, Depauw University, Department of History (July 28)
Dr. Charles Payne, Duke University, Department of History (August 4)
The decision to begin Freedom Summer was preceded by great debate and followed by many challenges. The idea of bringing in hundreds of white supporters from the north into Mississippi for one intensive summer campaign of voter registration made many veteran civil rights activist apprehensive. On the one hand, Freedom Summer would certainly add much needed notoriety to the Mississippi movement, but it might also lead to problems. Who would pick up the pieces for the changes wrought by the program after the volunteers left? How would white volunteers be trained to work in a black led movement? What would happen when people started dying? After much heated debate, the project was begun. One key aspect of the Freedom Summer experience analyzed in this session will be the establishment, staffing, and curriculum of the Freedom Schools. These schools were designed to provide the skills necessary to register to vote and promote citizenship while introducing students to the history of the African American experience.
- 10:30 am - noon *Lecture: "The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party"*
Dr. Leslie Burl McLemore, Jackson State University, Department of Political Science
The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) was the political component of the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project (Freedom Summer). The MFDP, organized in April of 1964, provided the citizens of Mississippi its first open political party since Reconstruction. The MFDP was a parallel political party to the regular segregated white Democratic Party in Mississippi. The Freedom Democrats made remarkable gains by encouraging African Americans to become more actively involved in the state's political system. The MFDP helped to make the practice of citizenship a reality in Mississippi. The work of the MFDP is surely one of the major landmarks in the twenty-first century. The structure where the MFDP was established and the building that housed the MFDP still stands in Jackson, Mississippi.
Readings: Dittmer, chapters 11-15; Payne, chapters 11-13.
- Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch on your own
- 1:30 - 4 pm Small group discussion and primary document work

Day 5: THURSDAY, July 29/August 5, 2004

- 7:00 am Musical Selection: "What Side Are You On?"
Field Trip to Memphis, Tennessee via the Delta
Buses depart from the Liberal Arts Building parking lot. In transit to Memphis we will visit Greenwood, Clarksdale, and Ruleville, Miss. See "Field Trip Details" for more information.
Readings: Dittmer, chapters 16-18; Payne, chapters 14-epilogue

Day 6: FRIDAY, July 30/August 6, 2004

- 9 - 10:30 am Musical Selection: "Ain't Gonna Let Nobody Turn Me Around"
Lecture: "Memphis, Tennessee and the Confluence of Labor and Civil Rights: The Sanitation Workers' Strike"
Dr. Michael Honey, Harry Bridges Chair of Labor Studies, University of Washington, Tacoma
Dr. Honey will examine the confluence of labor and black Civil Rights and how these twin elements of the modern-day social movement led to the successful sanitation workers strike.
- 10:30 am - noon *Lecture: "Toward a Theology of Radical Involvement: The Theological Legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr."*
Dr. Luther Ivory, Department of Religious Studies, Rhodes College
This presentation will examine the theoretical basis of Dr. King's involvement in the Civil Rights Movement and how he was able to use his theological background and training to advance the cause of the sanitation workers. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the moral dilemma of the sanitation workers as they dealt with the administration of Mayor Henry Loeb.
Readings: Honey, chapters 1-5
- Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch on your own
- 1:30 - 3:00 pm *National Civil Rights Museum; Oral History Panel*
"The Memphis Sanitation Workers' Strike and the National Civil Rights Movement"
Dr. Vasco Smith, long-time activist who helped desegregate public libraries and public schools
Mrs. Maxine Smith, 2003 NCRM freedom award recipient, exec. secretary of local NAACP
Rev. Ben Hooks, 15-year exec. director of the NAACP, prominent attorney and clergyman
Rev. Billy Kyles, eyewitness to Dr. King's assassination, founding board member
OPERATION PUSH
- 3:00 pm Tour of the National Civil Rights Museum

Day 6: SATURDAY, July 31/August 7, 2004

- 9:00 - 10:30 am Musical Selection: "We Shall Overcome"
Lecture: "African-Americans and Activism in Memphis, Tennessee"
Dr. Russell Wigginton, Department of History, Rhodes College
The lecture will examine the nature of activism in Memphis on the part of the Black community and its impact on the Black community in Memphis. In addition, these presentations will place the historically significant events in Memphis within the context of the national Freedom Movement and the events of the 1964 Summer Project.
- 10:30 am - noon *Lecture: "African-American Women in Memphis, Tennessee"*
Dr. Beverly Bond, Department of History, University of Memphis
Dr. Bond will analyze and discuss the role of women in the Memphis Freedom Struggle. She will look at the linkage(s) between women's involvement in Freedom Summer and their support and leadership in the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike.
Readings: Honey, chapters 6-end.
- Noon - 1:30 pm Lunch on your own
- 1:30 pm *Memphis Civil Rights Tour*
Participants will visit the office of the Tri-State Defender, Clayborn and Mason Temples, and the Zion Christian Cemetery. We will end the workshop at Ernest Wither's Photo Studio.
- 3:30 pm Bus departs for Jackson, Mississippi

FIELD TRIP DETAILS

Day Three: Some of the sites explored in the Jackson Civil Rights tour include: the Masonic Temple (birthplace of the Freedom Democratic Party); the Council of Federated Organizations building (state-wide headquarters of Freedom Summer); the Pearl Street AME Church and Farish Street Baptist Church (two sites of frequent mass meetings during Freedom Summer); and Medgar Evers' home and museum. At these sites we will have local people discuss their memories of the history and the location.

Day Five: In transit to Memphis, we will tour and visit with Civil Rights veterans in Greenwood, Clarksdale, and Ruleville, Mississippi. In Greenwood, the group will speak with State Senator David Jordan about the Freedom Summer activities in that city. Senator Jordan will describe the role of Jennings Temple C.M.E. Church, where mass meetings were held in the 1960s. Jennings Temple was also the site of several Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party gatherings in 1964. The participants will visit Wesley United Methodist Church, which played a major role in the 1963 Greenwood protest and served as the major location for the distribution of clothes and food to local people during the 1963 boycott of the Greenwood merchants. Wesley was also the venue for mass meetings and rallies for the MFDP. The group will also tour the Saint Francis Center, a facility owned by the Catholic Church, which played a major role in 1964. The Center was one of the venues for the Freedom Schools in Greenwood. Senator Jordan will also take the participants to the LeFlore County Courthouse, which was the scene of many efforts to get African Americans registered to vote in the 1960s. The group will also visit the Greenwood City Hall where Senator Jordan serves as President of the City Council.

In Clarksdale, the participants will tour the sites with the assistance of Mrs. Vicki Hearn Moses, who is working with a group of local people to establish a Civil Rights Learning Center in honor of the late Dr. Aaron Henry. She will lead the group on a tour of Dr. Henry's Fourth Street Drug Store, which was a key meeting place for local Civil Rights leaders in Clarksdale. We will retrace "The Freedom March," which started at the Fourth Street Drug Store and proceeded west on Martin Luther King Drive to Yazoo Street to East Second Street to the Coahoma County Courthouse on First Street. Next, we will tour Haven United Methodist Church, which was the home church of Dr. Henry and his wife, Noell Henry and daughter, Rebecca. The church was also the venue for local NAACP chapter meetings. Dr. Martin Luther King, Wyatt Tee Walker, Andrew Young, John Lewis, Fannie Lou Hamer and many other Civil Rights leaders spoke at Haven. The tour will also take us to other churches where mass meetings were held in the 1960s: Rayford Chapel, Kings Temple Church, and Chapel Hill Church. In addition, we will visit the New Roxy Theater, the only African-American theater in the city, and the Bates and Riverside Hotels, the only lodging facilities for African-Americans in Clarksdale. The Riverside Hotel was the last place that blues musician Bessie Smith stayed before she died. Finally, the group will tour the Blues Museum in Clarksdale.

The Ruleville tour features a visit to the home of Fannie Lou Hamer. We will meet with members of the Sunflower/Ruleville Black Historical Society, who will lead us on a tour of the recently dedicated Fannie Lou Hamer Multi-Purpose Complex and the Fannie Lou Hamer Memorial Park. The minister of Williams Chapel (Mrs. Hamer's home church) will talk about the church's role in the Civil Rights Movement and the leadership of Fannie Lou Hamer. We will also visit the site of the farm cooperative started by Fannie Lou Hamer and the Hamer Early Childhood Center, and conclude with a visit to the gravesites of Mrs. Hamer and her husband Perry "Pap" Hamer.

Day Six: To tour of the National Civil Rights Museum, the group will be broken into five smaller groups. Master teachers, core faculty members, and experienced museum guides will provide appropriate commentary as the participants tour the museum. Special attention will be paid to activities related directly to Freedom Summer and the Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike.

Day Seven: Participants will conclude the workshop with visits to several historically important sites. Clayborn Temple was where the first protest march by the striking sanitation workers was organized and initiated. Mason Temple is where Dr. King gave his famous "I've Been to the Mountaintop" speech on the evening of April 3, 1968. As we know, it would be his last public appearance before his death the next day. Both of these churches symbolize more than simply places of worship; they were the places of organizing, strategizing and empowerment for all supporters of the black sanitation workers. Zion Christian Cemetery is a forgotten landmark that represents the transition from slaves to freedom and independence for black Memphians. The cemetery is the resting place for several generations of blacks who laid the foundation for tangible change in political and social mores in the city; approximately 22,000 former slaves and free(wo)men were buried here from 1870-1922. The Tri-State Defender newspaper has been the primary media voice for African-Americans in the mid-south since its founding in 1951. Located a stone's throw from the NCRM, the Defender immediately became the 'eyes and ears' for black communities in west Tennessee, northern Mississippi and eastern Arkansas.