

They say in Mississippi
 There are no neutrals found
 You either Tom for Ross Barnett
 Or else you are a man.
 Oh, which side are you on, boy?
 Which side are you on?...

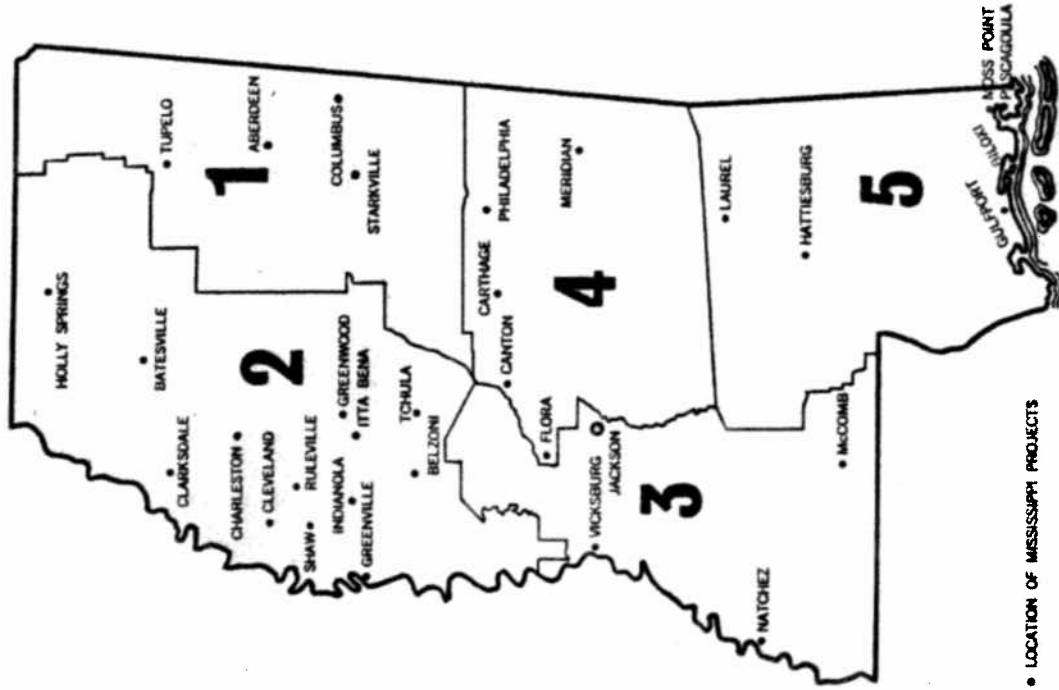
Freedom Song

That Long Walk to the Courthouse

Oxford, June 24

Howard Zinn says that Mississippi is not just a closed society, like the rest of the South. It is a locked society for which we must find the key. Many feel that the vote is the key and the number of votes the pressure on that key. All I can say is that I hope so....

The Summer project was a five-pronged assault on the status quo: 1) voter registration and organization of the new Mississippi Freedom Democratic party; 2) the Freedom Schools; 3) community centers; 4) the white community project; 5) Federal programs



• LOCATION OF MISSISSIPPI PROJECTS

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS OF MISSISSIPPI

research (to see how Negroes might obtain aid under existing or potential government arrangements). The volunteers worked on one or sometimes two of these programs; a small number were assigned to man the Project offices.

The first three programs formed the heart of the Project. They were interrelated, for the success of each depended on getting the Negro community organized and moving. The Project's basic idea was that in the absence of federal action in Mississippi, the Negro had to lead his struggle for salvation himself; that to do so, he must find his own strength — and that the volunteers would aid him in this.

The largest number of volunteers were assigned to what they called VR — voter registration. They had two, simultaneous tasks: to help Negroes register in the conventional way, and to help build up the Freedom Democratic Party, a new political organization designed to give a voice to the disenfranchised Negro voters. The Freedom party is described in Chapter X. Regular VR meant, of course, registering in the way prescribed by Mississippi law to vote for federal, state and local officials. At the beginning of the summer, the volunteers concentrated on this aspect of political work. They had been briefed at Oxford.

Oxford, June 25

Dear people,

Mississippi's eighty-two counties are divided in five congressional districts, and these districts serve as the frame for our work. The first district is the northeastern part of the state; Bob Moses describes this region geographically with the three letters, TVA. The TVA has had some liberalizing influence here. Also, the proportion of Negroes in the area rarely goes over 30% in any county and is under 5% in one county. The Negro farmers here are isolated from the mainstream of thought and action and the problem of registration workers is not so much the hostility of the local

white citizens as it is the difficulty of finding, educating, and bringing the unregistered to the court-house.

The Second Congressional district is the delta area, the land of extensive plantations, and poor, dependent sharecroppers. The Negro population here runs well over 60%. In the Second district, the principal opposition to registration work comes from the White Citizens Councils, and their main weapons are economic here: one way or another, the majority of Negroes depends on the plantations for jobs and homes. Senator Eastland's plantation in Sunflower County is in this region.

The Third Congressional district runs from the Second south to Louisiana. This is mainly hill country, and our work here is centered in five areas. Jackson, the capital; Vicksburg, which has had an indigenous voter registration drive since the late forties and is generally considered "open"; Natchez on the Mississippi, which has a large Armstrong tire and rubber plant, and the whites there feel definitely threatened by Negro labor (terrorism and brutality are believed to be the work of white industrial workers in this area); McComb, the capital of Pike County, with a long record of brutality and terrorism. Most Negroes in the Third district are small farmers, and a high percentage own land. The danger in the Third district, which is 40-50% Negro, comes from the revived Ku Klux Klan.

The Fourth district, directly east of Jackson, is generally considered the "easiest" in the state, but what happened in Philadelphia shows how relative that is. Negro population here runs under 50%.

The Fifth district runs south from Laurel to the coast. This area includes Hattiesburg and the Gulf Coast which has a large shipbuilding industry and tourism and is generally exposed to the outside world. The Negro population is under 33% and they don't have much trouble registering to vote on the coast....

Jim