

From Myrlie Evers-Williams and Manning
Marable, eds., *The Autobiography of Medgar
Evers: A Hero's Life and Legacy Revealed
Through His Writings, Letters, and Speeches* (New
York: Basic Books, 2005).

(3) Evers to Wilkins

February 1, 1957

National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People
20 West 40th Street, New York 18, N.Y.
Longacre 3-6890

Please direct reply to:

Medgar Evers
Mississippi State Office
Masonic Temple Building
1072 Lynch Street, Rm. 7
Jackson, Mississippi

Telephone Jackson 3-6906

Mr. Roy Wilkins
Executive Secretary
20 West 40th Street
New York 18, New York

Dear Mr. Wilkins:

After giving your letter of December 18, 1956 careful study, I am herewith submitting a tentative report as to my point of view on the possibility of a program of education and training for registration and voting.

This report is to deal exclusively with the cities of Jackson and Meridian, Mississippi, as follows:

JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI
HINDS COUNTY, 48TH CITY, 75 PRECINCTS

1. *Registrar*

The Hinds County circuit clerk, Registrar H. T. Ashford has from the very beginning opposed the new voter amendment and steadfastly said, "I am going to register anyone that comes up here who can read and write," and to my knowledge no one has been turned away.

2. *Poll Tax*

As you know, Mississippi is one of the last "Frontier" states that is still holding on to the poll tax system as a subterfuge to voting. Consequently, we, the NAACP, Progressive Voters Leagues, Elks, and the American Legion, launched a "Pay Your Poll Tax Campaign" to get as many persons to pay their poll tax as possible so as to take advantage of the "present forces" in the office of the registrar. We have had a very healthy response from local citizens.

3. *Number of Registered Voters—City of Jackson*

There was an overall total of 32,697 voters in Jackson November 6, 1956 according to the circuit clerk of which 3,946 were Negro.

4. *Number of Negroes in City*

There are 47,000 or more.

5. *Future Plans*

Our most immediate plan now, since our "Poll Tax Program" ended with the deadline (January 1-February 1), is to put on a campaign for registration. We hope to accomplish this similar to the program of our Poll Tax, except that in addition to the use of the telephone, radio, television, and correspondence, our plans call for "Register Now" bumper stickers, to be used on some 5,000 or more automobiles in the city for a given period of time.

We are anticipating an additional 2,000 registered voters (Negro) in 1957.

6. *Climate of Opinion*

Contrary to the southern pet expression "the time ain't ripe", the time is ripe, for in this particular area we can get even our ultra-conservative Negroes to voice a positive reply when you ask them to pay their poll tax and register. Even our city teachers are getting into the act, generously without any reservations.

7. *Precincts*

The formation of precinct leaders and organizations are also a part of our immediate goals.

MÉRIDIAN, MISSISSIPPI

Statistical data was not immediately available on Meridian, however, it is understood that the registrar there could be placed in the same category with the Hinds County, Jackson clerk.

These two areas mentioned would be the ones that I would suggest that we start in to get the fastest and most effective results.

I shall report periodically on our progress.

Oh! I enjoyed my visit to your home very much. Warmest regards to Mrs. Wilkins.

Sincerely yours,

Medgar W. Evers

Field Secretary

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(4) Wilkins to Evers

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Manuscript Division, Library of Congress]

February 8, 1957

Mr. Medgar W. Evers

Field Secretary

Mississippi State Office

Masonic Temple Building

1072 Lynch Street, Room 7

Jackson, Mississippi

Dear Mr. Evers:

Thanks for your letter of February 1 on the registration and vote campaign in Jackson and Meridian.

You may count on assistance from this office if we understand clearly how the work is being carried on from day to day and what

phases of the program require help. I gather from your letter that a cooperative effort is being made by several organizations, including the NAACP. How are expenses being met? Who is paying for the printing of materials? Are volunteers being enlisted to make personal contacts with individual citizens—that is, is any door to door work being done? Are speakers appearing before group meetings and is literature being distributed? Is any effort being made to teach people about the questions they will be asked and about the answers that should be given? I assume the churches are being used to the fullest.

What kinds of leaflets are being used? Is any mail campaign to individual homes being used? Is it planned to use block meetings in neighborhoods? Just how are you going about carrying out the program?

We are anxious to have the NAACP participate fully in this effort and to make its contribution, along with the other organizations toward the expenses of an effective educational campaign. I will appreciate hearing more details from you.

Very sincerely yours,

Roy Wilkins

Executive Secretary

P.S. This is a most important campaign. We are interested in a steady increase in the number of registered voters, not in spectacular spurts. I hope you will keep the necessary records, so that methods may be made more efficient as we go from year to year. You can assure the other groups that we intend to cooperate on a continuing plan of education and registration.