

July 24

Dear Folks,

Last night was one of those times that are so encouraging and inspiring. We had a mass meeting in Indianola. Three weeks ago, there was no movement at all in that community. A few Project workers went in and began canvassing for registration. It was decided to set up a Freedom School. Another few workers went in as staff. In that short time they had generated enough interest and enthusiasm to bring out 350 people to the meeting!

I sat and watched faces that had been transformed with hope and courage. They were so beautiful, those faces. It is hard to put into words an experience like this. That sense of hope was so strong, so pervasive, each of us there felt with complete certainty that there can, there will, be a better world and a good life if we work for it. When James Forman speaks, he talks "soul-talk," reaching out to that part of us that is vital, that is creative, and the people respond with a radiance and a sureness that is so new to them. The word "new" is very significant — it not only means a change in the externals of their lives ... the greatest import of "new" is the emerging "new value of themselves as human beings, with the right and will to act, to move, to shape their lives ...

Love,
Ellen

There were other times, other places, when all the long hours of walking and talking seemed worthwhile.

McComb, August 20

The voter registration program, despite its shortcomings, is a beautiful thing to watch. Such a big step for these people! The voter registration classes are slightly tense, but what is more present is hope, positiveness. The people dress up

That Long Walk to the Courthouse

carefully. They shake each other's hands, await eagerly the return of those who have gone down to the courthouse already. Two functional illiterates have come, and so many others have so much trouble filling out the form. But they're going down — a cemetery caretaker, a blind man, a cafe owner, a domestic ...

Not only did people in a single town range from the fearful to the militant, but Negro communities as a whole varied from one part of the state to another. There was Greenville, for example, located on the Mississippi River; once a major port, it had been opened to the outside world ...

Greenville, August 9

Dad,

Greenville is certainly a liberal city by Mississippi standards. It has three Negroes on its police force. The town appropriations to white and colored schools have each year come closer to being equal, and the police force watches the Klan as closely as COFO ... The public library is integrated (after a small group of Negro high school students last year demonstrated and spent months in jail.) The Negro and white swimming pools are exactly alike. One of the town's leading newspapers, Hodding Carter's *The Delta-Democratic Times*, urges moderation and compliance with the law. In other words, Greenville does not use terror tactics to maintain segregation and it has come a bit closer than other cities in Mississippi to making the separate but equal policy a reality. In Illinois, a city like Greenville would be ultra-conservative and would make even Winthrop Harbor seem a haven for fanatic revolutionists. In Mississippi, it's liberal ...

Buzz

Greenville, unlike the rest of the Delta, had a sizable Negro middle class.