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A SUMMARY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FOUR KEY
AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE FIGURES
OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

by

Michelle Margaret Viera

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
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Michelle Margaret Viera

A SUMMARY OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF FOUR KEY AFRICAN AMERICAN FEMALE FIGURES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Michelle Margaret Viera, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 1994

This thesis will present historical data to summarize the contributions of four key African-American female figures of the civil rights era. The theme is devoted to the historical contributions of these women. Their achievements will be shown to have answered to human needs during the struggle for African-American civil and human rights. These achievements were preceded by their personal perceptions as to what constituted tenable rights and needs, introspection, and their willingness to assume a leadership stance and leadership roles.

This written historical assessment will illustrate the chain of events, social and geographical particulars which triggered participation in the civil rights struggle by Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Diane Nash and Fannie Lou Hamer respectively. Through a brief biography of each figure, and a discussion of how each woman overcame personal and social obstacles, it will be shown that they collectively provided the backbone of the struggle for civil rights. This was accomplished by each figure without consciously seeking social recognition or personal acclaim. They were true revolutionaries in that each one of them risked either life, liberty or the pursuit of happiness at some point in their careers. The historical ramifications and impact of their participation in the hostile racial and condescending gender arena of the civil rights era will be highlighted.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis focuses on four African-American women who were actively involved in the civil rights movement. This researcher found that the women had a common ground of having been active in voters registration during the civil rights movement. However, all of them are noted for different areas of the movement. Three of the four women were educated in the south, and three of the four were also born and reared in the south. At one point in their lives the four women joined together to work on voters registration and for the formation and survival of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP).

The second chapter discusses Septima Poinsette Clark, and her key role with the Highlander Folk School. The Highlander Folk School (Citizenship School Program) prepared the community for voters registration by providing the students with a rudimentary knowledge of socio-economic and political processes and procedures. This paper will illustrate how African-American women did not receive the recognition that was due. They were not valued by the leaders of various organization. Historian Harvard Sitkoff states the omission of women from many of the histories of the movement is also apparent in the widespread use of the metaphor of "reaching manhood" to describe the self-confidence that African-Americans gained as they matured through the civil right movement. Historians

have failed to credit the impact African American women contributed to the civil rights movement, dating back to slavery. These women belied the stereotypical African-American long-suffering nannies with simplistic minds. Instead they were women of strong qualities. Their struggles were not helped by African-American males. Male preachers have been classified as the powerful leaders in African-American communities (the church has long been the chief vehicle of the protest). Credible information however shows that African-American women have been important to the outcome of the civil rights movement.

Chapter two discusses Septima Clark who spent over fifty years fighting for social and political change for southerners. Prior to her work in the civil rights movement she had been a very effective school teacher. Her teaching aided in her effectiveness at the Highlander Folk School. Chapter three discusses Ella Jo Baker's key role with the SCLC. She was also founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). As a result of the philosophy of the SCLC, Ella Baker had a vision of her own to encourage the involvement of others in the struggle for human justice. The fourth chapter discusses Diane Nash's key role in the Freedom Rides. She was a proponent of integration and equality. The fifth chapter discusses Fannie Lou Hamer's leadership role in the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party and voters registration. Fannie Lou Hamer was able to gain national attention for a brief moment in time, but was not able to acquire sustained national focus for her work. African-American women were in the trenches of the movement. They coordinated boycotts, provided food and shelter

for activists, and participated in the political arena to the best of their ability. They were oppressed on every side and often suppressed by physical violence. African-American males realized the full price of the civil rights battle but they still allowed the ugly head of sexism to rear itself in dealing with these strong, emotionally powerful women. Although they were never fully recognized for their accomplishments, the work they accomplished can never be forgotten because they and other women laid a solid foundation for the gains achieved in the entire civil rights movement.

CHAPTER II

SEPTIMA POINSETTE CLARK: PREPARING FOR CITIZENSHIP

Educator, humanitarian and civil rights activist Septima Poinsette Clark was described by Jessie Carney Smith, author of *Notable Black American Women*, as the "queen mother of the civil rights movement."¹

She was born on May 3, 1898, in Charleston, South Carolina, to parents, especially her father, a former slave, who stressed the importance of education and sent her to private schools during her primary education years. Later, she received her bachelor's degree from Benedict College, in Columbia, South Carolina, and her master's from Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia. Both schools are historical black colleges.

In 1916, Septima Clark began her teaching career at John Island, South Carolina. During that period in America's history teaching was one of the few occupations to which African-American women could aspire. She was a successful teacher for many years. In 1919, Clark became involved in activism. She began to canvas door to door for signatures on behalf of African American women teachers. In the early twentieth century African-American teachers were

¹Smith-Carney, Jessie. *Notable Black American Women* (Detroit: Vision Press, 1992), 192.

not allowed to teach African-American children in the public school system. Clark credited this incident as the catalyst for her involvement in the struggle for equality. Due to her efforts this policy was reversed one year later.

Later she moved to Columbia, South Carolina and was a participating member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She became involved with the campaign to increase the salaries of African-American school teachers to compare more favorably to that of their white peers. The NAACP filed a law suit on behalf of the teachers and absorbed legal costs. The Supreme Court represented by attorney Thurgood Marshall ruled in favor of equal pay for equal qualifications regardless of race. Clark stated that she was pleased with Thurgood's Marshall cooperative spirit in regard to the case. She related her experience with the campaign for equal pay for equal work as represented in the following quote:²

My participation in this fight to force equalization of white and Negro teachers' salaries on the basis of equal certification, was of course, what might be described by some, no doubt, as my first "radical" job. I would call it my effort in a social action challenging the status quo, the first time I had worked against people directing a system for which I was working. But in this case, too, I felt that in reality I was working for the accomplishments of something that ultimately would be good for everyone, and I worked not only with an easy conscience but with inspiration and enthusiasm.³

The aforementioned victory represented her second for the cause of

²Brown-Stokes, Cynthia. *Ready Within* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1990), 30.

³McFadden, Grace. *Oral Collections as Mechanisms for Investigating the Social and Political Philosophy of Septima Poinsette Clark* (Columbia: USC Instructional Service Center, 1980), 169.

equality in the state of South Carolina as mentioned above. Her first victory was her involvement in the push for African-American teachers to teach in the public school system. When she began teaching in Columbia, South Carolina, Septima earned \$65 a month. When she left Columbia, South Carolina, after eighteen (18) years of service (1956) her teaching salary was \$400 a month.⁴

In 1947, Septima Clark returned to Charleston, South Carolina. She continued to teach and to devote her energies to such community service projects as soliciting Christmas Seal Stamps for the Tuberculosis Society. She also sought support from Parent Teacher Association groups, and served as Chairperson of the Young Women's Christian Association for several years. Clark's efforts were dedicated to drawing membership and to collecting funds to restore the outside of the YWCA building. She called on other women to work for the donation of beds for African-American migrants who came there for shelter as newcomers to the area. Clark was a member of the Metropolitan Council of Negro Women which sought to lift the cultural awareness of African-American women and girls. Nationally the group encouraged local clubs to sponsor four-year college scholarships. As Basileus (president) of Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority she initiated a health program to transport students to immunization clinics. Other sorority projects included the donation of milk to day care centers and finding rides for children to ringworm clinics. Under Clark's leadership, hot lunches were provided to collective benefit.

⁴Clark, Septima. *Echo in My Soul* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1960), 83.

In 1956, the state of South Carolina passed a law prohibiting the involvement in civil rights to any city or state employee.⁵ Clark refused to withdraw her membership from the NAACP. Instead she sent letters to other African-American teachers urging them to protest the law. This action was not successful --only twenty-six (26) of the 726 teachers responded. Later Septima was dismissed from her teaching career and lost all of her retirement benefits after over forty years of service.

In 1955, Myles Horton, Founder of the Highlander Folk School, part of the Citizenship School Program, in Montague, Tennessee asked her to be its Director of Workshops. The school worked to bring about social change. Highlander Folk School assisted African Americans to pass the literacy test which was required in order for them to vote in certain southern states. Clark's involvement caused some conservatives to brand her a communist. With its emphasis on process as well as human rights, the Citizenship School Project has been called the basis for the civil rights movement.

Septima Clark devised her own method for teaching literacy. The simple but effective method required students to trace letters from pre-cut cardboard. Once the students learned basic reading, she prepared reading material on laws and regulations, social security, voting and taxes. The language was simplified. In addition the students were taught to endorse their paychecks, and to make

⁵McFadden, Grace. *Septima P. Clark: The Struggle for Human Rights* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 85.

deposits and withdrawals. Clark later recruited her cousin Bernice Robinson as a teacher. She planned to have more time to devote to establishing more schools. Clark's cousin was not a teacher by vocation, but she and others who Clark recruited during her travels, were taught to teach. When Septima was not traveling, she taught. She described her joy of teaching in her autobiography Echo in My Soul.

By 1959, the citizenship school program came under the direction of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. asked Clark to continue with the program. In 1960, Septima Clark wrote to Ella Baker, another activist who served as Executive Secretary of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. She requested that Baker encourage those students who were conducting sit-ins to participate as teachers in citizenship schools. For unknown reasons Baker refused the request. Baker expanded her network to include Andrew Young, later Mayor of Atlanta, Georgia, and Dorothy Cotton, an activist. In an interview with Cotton in 1993, she mentioned that Septima Clark was a determined woman who was motivated by the struggle for equality. She maintained her residence in Atlanta, but traveled with Young and Cotton recruiting for the Dorchester Center in Atlanta, another Citizenship Program school. Those recruited were trained at Dorchester and asked to return to their own communities to continue their work in voter registration.

Under Clark's leadership, the citizenship school received a \$250,000 grant from the Marshall Field Foundation. The money was distributed among the adult

students as an incentive to attend the schools. Those who committed themselves to attend two nights a week for three months were eligible for a stipend of \$30. Baker considered this the least that could be done for those who were willing to work day jobs, and spend their meager resources going to and from the school. Teachers received a salary of \$75.00 a month.

Most of the time she spent talking to people about the importance of literacy. The citizenship schools were designed to be grassroots organizations for social change. Clark exerted major effort of training teachers to teach and return to their own communities to teach others the basic literacy . She set a goal to visit at least three citizenship schools a day to monitor the content of the subjects taught. She tried to ensure that the students were learning practical subjects which would be used in day to day transactions.

In 1962, the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) organized to sponsor a Voter Education Project. Within four year, 10,000 teachers had been trained by citizenship schools, and 700,000 African Americans had been registered to vote.

Later, after this project was functional, Septima Clark became involved in other areas of protest. She traveled to Birmingham, Alabama with members of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1963 to prepare for a demonstration. In keeping with her earlier declaration of being unafraid to participate in any march, she marched in Atlanta, after taking time to provide non-violence

training to students there. A strong believer in non-violence, Clark worked directly with Dr. King.

In addition with her other work, Septima Clark maintained primary responsibility for on-going training at citizenship schools. Dr. King's attention was focused on organizing demonstration, and Clark did not like what she saw as a lack of follow-up on the Program teachers by officers of the Southern Christian Leadership conference. She wrote to Dr. King advising him of the problems:⁶ Although Septima played a major role in this segment of the civil rights movement, she was not credited as a major player. She noted:

I was on the executive staff of SCLC, but the men on it didn't listen to me too well. They liked to send me into many places, because I could always make a path in to get people to listen to what I have to say. But those men didn't have any faith in women, none whatsoever. They just thought that women were sex symbols and had no contribution to make. That's why Rev. Abernathy would say continuously, 'Why is Mrs. Clark on the staff?' Dr. King would say, 'Well she has expanded our program. She has taken it into eleven deep south states'. I had a great feeling that Dr. King didn't think much of women either. He would laugh and say 'Ha, Ha, Ha, Mrs. Clark has expanded our program'. That's all. But I don't think that he thought too much of me, because when I was in Europe with him, when he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964, the American Friends Committee people wanted me to speak. In a sort of casual way he would say 'Anything I can't answer, ask Mrs. Clark', but he didn't mean it, because I never did get the chance to do any speaking to the American Friends Service Committee in London or to any other group.

The above quote shows that she was sensitive to the sexist attitude and practices by the men in SCLC, including Dr. King, but she maintained respect for Dr. King's leadership abilities. She expressed her frustration in yet another letter

⁶Memo Septima Clark to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Appendix A.

to Andrew Young.⁷

Septima worked tireless years for social and political change. In 1970, she retired at the age of 72. During the late 1970s she received numerous awards for her service to humanity. She became the first African-American woman to serve two terms on the Charleston, South Carolina school board. An expressway and a day care center have been named for her in her hometown. The women of Alpha Kappa Alpha said of her:

Septima Clark is one of the human sacrifices in the fight for human rights, and is an efficient and conscientious teacher. Mrs. Clark was relieved of her duties by the school board, presumably because of her activities with the N.A.A.C.P. Mrs. Clark has achieved that toward which we all aspire, service to all mankind. Although our community has lost its talented leader, she has gone to serve in a higher sphere. She is the Director of Workshops at the Highlander Folk School in Montague, Tennessee. In this capacity, she touches the lives of many many more people, and is making a great contribution in the job of desegregating the South. She is very busy with the job of making ideas realities.⁸

Septima Clark was pleased with the remarks of her sorority. Ironically, these same women were afraid to be seen with her during the struggle, afraid of losing their jobs and frightened for their lives. Unlike many of her peers and teaching colleagues, Septima Clark believed firmly that a better quality of life was possible for African Americans and acted firmly on the belief that changes are brought about through on-going sustained actions:

The school in which the Negro must be educated is the shopping center he is boycotting, the city council chamber where he is demanding justice,

⁷Memo Septima Clark to Andrew Young, 12 July 1964, Appendix B.

⁸Brown, 177.

the ballot box at which he chooses his political leaders, the hiring office where he demands that he be hired on merit, the meeting hall of the Board of Education where he insists on equal education. The Negro needs leaders who are also teachers, who are psychologically fit and competently trained to work directly with the problems of life.⁹

Septima Clark fought the battle for educational equality during her lifetime. She was a committed public servant and dedicated advocate of social change for all people. She also was a strong advocate for voter's registration. She worked closely with Ella Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer which will be discussed in subsequent chapters of this document. Clark, Baker and Hamer stood on the shoulders of our foremothers: Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, and Charlotte Forten. Martin Luther King, Jr. referred to Clark as the "mother of the civil rights movement according to Jessie Carney Smith in Notable Black American Women.

Septima Clark was an agitator for social change long before the historical period of the 1960s. As scholars record historical events, we must remember it was because of Septima Clark that Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat in Montgomery, Alabama in 1955. Because of the period That Septima lived, she did not receive her due recognition.

⁹Ibid, 238.

CHAPTER III

ELLA BAKER: BIGGER THAN A HAMBURGER

Ella Jo Baker can best be described as a civil rights strategist, agitator, and activist. Born in 1903 in Norfolk, Virginia, she grew up in Littleton, North Carolina on land that belonged to her grandfather's former master. This property was purchased after emancipation.

In 1927, after graduating with honors from Shaw University in North Carolina, Ella left for New York City arriving at the later part of the Harlem Renaissance. She did not pursue the usual teaching choice of her contemporaries. She had dreamed of becoming a medical missionary but found the choice closed to her; she could not afford the cost of medical school. She was exposed in Harlem to progressive ideas of the time, which no doubt impacted the course of her life. For several years, she wrote articles for the American West Indian News and the Negro National News.

In 1932, she became the Director of the Young Negro Cooperative League in response to the need created by the Great Depression. The Cooperative League was the brainchild of George Schuyler, Ella's employer and a known "race man," which meant that he criticized the legal and social repression of black people. Members of the league formed a cooperative where members pooled their money for the purpose of purchasing goods in volume. Baker became an

expert on consumer affairs and was soon teaching classes to teach on how to spend money wisely. She soon became involved with the Works Progress Administration, part of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, by teaching consumer affairs at a Works Community Project in Harlem. Additionally she involved herself in working to improve conditions for female day workers in 1935.

Three years later, she began her historic association with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in 1938 as Assistant Field Secretary. Historically the NAACP is known for fighting racial injustice by instigating cases of discrimination before the courts. The national focus of the organization in the late 1930's and early '40s was lynching. Baker's primary responsibility was to establish branches of the NAACP, and to increase overall NAACP membership throughout the southern region.¹⁰ The NAACP sought unsuccessfully to get congress to pass a law against lynching.

Baker was aggressive in meeting the demands of her job. She traveled six months out of the year in areas where any racial activism was dangerous. She could have been lynched or worse because acts of violence were systematically directed at NAACP workers. They were despised by southern whites and considered race agitators. Her method for reaching southern blacks was direct. She related her tactic as follows:

Where did people gather? They gathered in churches. In schools. And you'd get permission. You'd call up Reverend so-and-so, and ask if you

¹⁰Ballard, Shrylee. *Ella Baker: A Leader Behind the Scenes* (Englewood Cliffs: Silver Burdett, 1990), 42.

could appear before the congregation at such-and-such time. Sometimes they'd give you three minutes, because, after all, many people weren't secure enough to run the risk, as they saw it, of being targeted as ready to challenge the powers that be. And they'd say, you have three minutes after the church service. And you'd take it. And you'd use it, to the extent to which you can be persuasive [convincing]. It's the ammunition you have. It's all you have.¹¹

The Ku Klux Klan was a hate group which was active throughout the civil rights period and before. The Klan specialized in lynching and acts of terror to prevent African Americans from registering to vote. Among Baker's most difficult tasks was to overcome fear of retaliation by whites, but to change working peoples' views of the NAACP as a black elitist organization. She saw herself as a bridge across the sharpening social class divisions in the black community. She disagreed with office bureaucrats who thought the civil rights movement should come to them. Instead she envisioned the staging of grassroots movements, and tried to recruit more working class people into the NAACP.

In 1942, Ella Baker became the National Director of Branches. Her many duties included organizing membership and fund raising drives. By this time the NAACP's emphasis had changed from lynching to integrating schools. Ella Baker was so busy as National Director of Branches that within three years she had attended 362 meetings and traveled 16,244 miles to develop NAACP membership drives. She encouraged the branches to get involved in solving the problems of African Americans and proposed many solutions herself. During this period she was asked to do a study on integration in New York's public school system.

¹¹Ibid, 15.

Ella Baker returned to government service concurrent with working for the NAACP. She conducted surveys to determine whether rationing could be more effective for African Americans, and made suggestions to improve the use of rationing stamps. The government adopted some of her suggestions. When the Second World War broke out (1941), she had the vision to realize the shortage of workers was an opportunity for African Americans to gain economic ground by filling the labor needs in the marketplace. The vacancies left by white males, who had dominated the industrial sector, created openings which were soon filled by African Americans and women.

In 1946, she left the NAACP for the first time to care for her niece. She returned to Harlem, New York, and although she remained active with the New York Branch of the NAACP, she accepted a position with the National Urban League Service Fund. In 1954, Ella Baker returned to the NAACP and became the first woman president of an Urban League branch. She worked toward building leadership at the local level. This was around the time that the Topeka, Kansas branch of the NAACP was instrumental in bringing *Brown vs the Board of Education* before the Supreme Court of the United States. The decision was won to integrate schools, however the actual desegregation process was to take many years.

Ella Baker became indirectly involved with the Montgomery Bus Boycott which challenged Jim Crow separatist practices on city busses in Montgomery, Alabama. In 1955, the boycott began with Rosa Parks, a NAACP officer, who

had worked with Ella Baker previously in Montgomery, Alabama. The two women had become very good friends during Baker's travels to increase NAACP membership. Parks refused to give up her seat to a white man on a city bus and was arrested. This was the event which started the boycott which continued for an entire year, and was destined to be a historic event in the civil rights movement. The Montgomery Improvement Association was chosen to spearhead the boycott and Dr. King was chosen as its President. Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, and Stanley Levinson formed an "In Friendship" fund raising crusade to raise money for the boycotters. Their support boosted the efforts of the boycott. The boycott met with success, and ending with the desegregation of public transportation in Montgomery, Alabama. This collective effort proved what Ella Baker had always preached: that African American collective peaceful negotiation could work. Her philosophy was shared by other leaders in the civil rights movement. After the boycott Baker spoke with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. about forming an organization that could continue to fight for civil rights in the South. Shortly afterward, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) was formed. Its mission was to bring about social change through non-violent protest. The SCLC was composed of civil rights organizations throughout the south and did not accept individuals for membership. Leaders of the various organizations (usually ministers) became officers of the SCLC. The members advocated non-violence in the face of violence. They felt that the practice of nonviolence showed strength and nurtured courage. In 1958, Dr. King asked Ella Baker to serve as Secretary to

the SCLC at its home office in Atlanta, Georgia. Previously, in 1957, the Civil Rights Act had been passed by the federal government, but Jim Crow laws still existed in southern states. When Baker became secretary of the SCLC, the organization began to plan a crusade for citizenship to register African Americans to vote. Many of the people, unable to pass the literacy test required by southern states, were not registered to vote. A massive effort of 22 rallies in 22 states was planned. This effort was to culminate on February 12, 1958. The planning process did not go as planned for a number of reasons, and Secretary Ella Baker was asked to direct the campaign. Previous experience in the public arena had well prepared her for the work. She organized the whole crusade in four weeks and defined her perception of a crusade as "a vigorous movement with high purposes and involving masses of people." ¹²

The crusade was not successful on the whole and many blamed the NAACP for the failure; Ella Baker blamed the SCLC for lack of follow through. There were, no doubt, a number of reasons not the least of them the prospective voters fears of white backlash. Baker returned briefly to her home base in to New York after the crusade ended. When she returned to Atlanta several weeks later, the office was in a state of disarray. To compound matters the Executive Director position was vacant. Baker ran virtually a one person show trying to get things back on track. In fact most of the legwork of the SCLC was done single-handedly by Ella Baker during most of 1959 and 1960. She made reference to

¹²Ibid., 72.

her work when she said "There was no machinery, no staff, except me."¹³ Her responsibilities were not reduced because of the staff shortage. She continued to prepare newsletters, schedule board meetings, and organize and plan activities. Dr. Martin Luther King, President of the SCLC, busy with writing, fund raising, and traveling was unable to give her the support she requested. Several weeks later the position of Executive Director had not been filled. Baker could have been selected because of her qualifications, and was aware that she had been passed over for the position yet she was interested only that the work continue. She recommended John Tilley, who had worked on a successful voting crusade in Baltimore, for the position.

Tilley was accepted by the SCLC and he and Baker worked on registering voters in preparation for the 1960 Presidential Election. Baker and Tilley were assisted by Bernice Reagan and Dorothy Cotton who had both worked at the Highlander Citizenship School, a voter education project in Tennessee. They were joined by Septima Clark who had worked extensively to set up citizenship schools via the Highlander Folk school project, and had worked with Reagan and Cotton.¹⁴ The crusade met with heavy white opposition and was a failure on the whole; very few people had been registered by the deadline. John Tilley was blamed for the failure of the crusade. He was fired from his position as

¹³Morris, Aldon. *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), 112.

¹⁴Memo Septima Clark to Ella Baker, 11 July 1960, and Ella Baker to Septima Clark, 18 July 1960, Appendix C.

Executive Director, and Ella Baker was named interim director. Baker noted that the SCLC "asked me to serve as the director with a cut in whatever little salary I was getting, which is not new to me. You see..., it was more important to go ahead. I may as well play the supporting role there as anywhere else. So I stayed on." ¹⁵ But she knew that she would never be made director permanently, "I ...knew from the beginning that having a woman to be an executive of SCLC was not something that would go over with the male-dominated leadership. And then, of course my personality wasn't right...I was not afraid to agree with the higher authorities."¹⁶

Ella Baker resumed her work on the Crusade for Citizenship in Alabama and Florida after she was appointed interim director. She planned to continue the crusade for voting using mass movement techniques. On October 23, 1959 she wrote:

In search of action that might help develop for SCLC more of the obvious characteristics of a crusade, a line of thinking was developed which I submit for your consideration.. (T)o play a role in the South, SCLC must offer, basically a different "brand of good" that fills unmet needs of the people. At the same time, it must provide for a sense of achievement and recognition for many people, particularly local leadership.¹⁷

As time passed, Baker began to have differences of opinion with SCLC. These differences related to the management of the SCLC. She outlined some

¹⁵Dallard, 76.

¹⁷Ibid., 77.

¹⁷Memo Ellen Baker to Committee on Administration, 23 October 1959, Appendix D.

problems in a Memorandum dated October 1959. detailing lack of supplies, procedural concerns and what she felt was too heavy a dependence on a leader.¹⁸

She believed in leadership at local levels, and voiced her dissatisfaction with leadership hierarchy. Ten years later, in a taped interview, she stated, "I have always felt it was a handicap for oppressed people to depend so largely upon a leader, because unfortunately in our culture, the charismatic leader usually becomes a leader because he has found a spot in the public limelight."¹⁹

Historians have recorded that Dr. Martin Luther King was the success behind SCLC. In reality, Ella Baker's leadership style and organizational skills contributed significantly to the success of the SCLC. In time she began to regard Dr. King as a pompous preacher with an inflated ego who lacked full political awareness. She considered his attitude toward women condescending, and that she had not risen to leadership because she was a woman.²⁰ She did not find Dr. King easy to get along with and was quoted as saying: "He wasn't the kind of person you could engage in dialogue with if the dialogue questioned the almost exclusive rightness of his position."²¹

The SCLC was spearheaded by men and alleged to be Christian in

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Lerner, Gerder. *Black Women in White America* (New York: Vintage Press, 1972), 351.

²⁰Fairlough, Adam. *To Redeem the Soul of America* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1987), 49.

²¹Ibid., 49.

practice, yet women working for civil rights did not succeed in gaining leadership positions in Baker's era. This has been a trend in black churches and may have been partly because the male officers were also ministers. The male membership defined the roles of the women, and they did not receive recognition for goals they had worked toward.²²

Meanwhile a group of students in Greensboro, North Carolina organized a sit-in at a Woolworth's lunch counter in 1960. Word of the sit-in spread and the students were joined by other students the next day. Soon thousands of students were involved in a dozen locations across the south. Ella Baker recognized the potential behind the sit-ins and requested that the SCLC provide funds for a strategy meeting to organize the students. The SCLC complied with her request. The meeting was a success with a larger than expected turnout of students. Instead of the one hundred (100) students expected, three hundred (300) showed up. Representatives from three civil rights groups: SCLC, NAACP and CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) attended the meeting. Each organization saw the potential in the movement and wanted to recruit the protesting students as an arm of their organizations. The students wanted to maintain their autonomy. Baker was in full agreement with the students maintaining their autonomy but did not express her opinion until later even though she wrote to Dr. King with details

²²Payne, Charles. "Ella Baker and Models of Social Change," *Signs* 14 (1989): 890.

prior to the conference.²³

After the strategy meeting, Dr. King called a meeting with SCLC and Ella Baker. A heated argument ensued, and Ella Baker walked out. This was 1960 and she resigned from the SCLC shortly thereafter and became an advisor to the students. The students named their organization the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). This group started out with black membership but eventually began to include white students. Their slogan "we are all leaders" went along with Baker's philosophy about all members having a voice in decisions. Baker was careful to let the students develop their own strategies and did not push her own ideas. When the students were uncertain whether to pursue direct action or voter registration (considered less exciting), she suggested that they could do both. They implemented this idea, and SNCC divided into two components. The direct action group participated in the Freedom Rides. Both SNCC groups met with extreme violence in their activism. The students successfully set up voter registration offices throughout Mississippi and held a mock election in 1963. The mock election involved 90,000 people and put to rest the idea that African Americans were not interested in voting.

Ella Baker's involvement with SNCC led her to become involved with the Freedom Summer voter registration drive. Freedom Summer was an important milestone in guaranteeing the right to vote for African Americans because it was

²³Memo Ella Baker to Dr. Martin Luther King and Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, 23 March 1960, Appendix E.

at this time that white students became actively involved in voter registration through SNCC. On June 21, 1963, tragedy struck. Two white and one black student voter registration workers were brutally murdered by Mississippi whites. Their disappearance caused a search by hundreds of military personnel and the FBI. When their bullet riddled bodies were found, the tragedy was heavily publicized. Their death aided in the passing of the Civil Rights Bill. Congress signed the Civil Rights Bill of 1964 which outlawed segregation and guaranteed a number of rights related to employment of African Americans.

Ella Baker went on to help organize the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), another idea conceived by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Fannie Lou Hamer, the subject of Chapter 4. Baker worked with Fannie Lou Hammer to elect delegates to the 1964 Presidential Convention. The regular Democratic Party in Mississippi would not allow black participation. The MFDP was also an interracial organization.

In 1963, Ella Baker was selected to present the keynote address at the State Convention of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. This was the only time in her life she was ever in the public spotlight. During this same period in history African-American women were excluded from the upper echelon of political participation. In 1964, she would have been a good choice to speak at the March on Washington, but was not asked because of her split with the SCLC and Dr. King. None of the women initially considered were asked to speak.

In 1965, after the Voting Rights Act was passed. Ella Baker returned to her home in Harlem but did not give up working in the public area. She continued with various organizations in a career that spanned fifty years. She never lost her warm personality or her ability to personally touch people's life. Diane Nash observed that she had a way of "picking you up and dusting you off."²⁴ Ella Baker died in 1986 at the age of 83.

²⁴Personal interview with Diane Nash, December 1993.

CHAPTER IV

DIANE NASH: BAIL NO JAIL

Diane Nash is a nearly forgotten woman of the civil rights movement. Born in 1938, she grew up and completed high school in Chicago, Illinois. She attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. and later transferred to Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee, where she assumed a major role in the battle for civil rights.

Diane Nash did not experience "Jim Crow" while growing up in Chicago or later during the period she attended Howard University. At Fisk University she experienced segregation during outings with her friends in downtown Nashville.

In 1959 she attended the Tennessee State Fair where there were two separate rest rooms one for blacks and whites. This appears to have been a turning point in her life. Nash described it as dehumanizing.²⁵ African American students elsewhere had started a nonviolent form of resistance that must have had its impact on Nash, because twelve days after the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sit-in at Greensboro, North Carolina, Nash and several other students began a sit-in at Woolworth's in Nashville. Their aim was to

²⁵Personal interview with Diane Nash, 4 September 1994.

integrate not only lunch counters, but also hotels, restaurants and theaters. Nash pursued a breakneck schedule of all night strategy meetings and day classes. She recalls feeling overwrought and having sweaty palms during the planning meetings. Diane Nash and other students drew up a code of conduct that was used throughout the sit-ins:

Don't strike back or curse if abused

Don't laugh out loud

Don't hold conversations with floor walkers

Don't block aisles or entrances to the store

Show yourself courteous and friendly at all times

Sit straight and always face the counter

Remember love and nonviolence

May God bless each of you²⁶

When questioned about the university's response to her activities, she conceded that her professors were supportive, but the dean was not.²⁷ She recalls that he threatened her with expulsion and tried to intimidate her. Later, Nash became frustrated with the failure of the faculty and administrators of historically black colleges to support the efforts the students were putting into the movement to bring about change in America, and she condemned certain ones.

²⁶Blumberg, Rhonda. Civil Rights: The 1960s Freedom Struggle (Boston: Twayne, 1991), 12.

²⁷Personal interview with Diane Nash, November 1993.

Diane Nash involved herself in activism even more when in April 1960, she and several other students attended a conference at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina under the leadership of Ella Baker. This conference was sponsored by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). Nash said of Baker: "she had a way of picking me up and dusting me off."²⁸

Historically, women were discouraged from seeking leadership during this era, however Nash refused to allow the perceptions of others to interfere with her goals. She became the spokesperson for the students, and experienced some media exposure. The April 25, 1960 issue of the Nashville Tennessean, noted the following: "Diane Nash, a student at Fisk University, and leader of the Nashville sit-in movement said here yesterday, segregation is aiding the cause of communism more than anything else. It is the unfair treatment of the colored people that the Red Press and propaganda are playing havoc with, she said, I think segregation is an evil that is really holding America back in this international struggle."²⁹

Nash and other students were arrested three times in Tennessee, Alabama and South Carolina. Bail was not set and there was an ever present threat of physical harm or death while in the custody of the authorities. Nash shared her days in jail on national TV shows describing the convictions for disorderly conduct

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹_____, "Fisk Coed Tells of Day in Jail," *Nashville Tennessean*, 25 April 1960, 5.

and subsequent sentencing to the workhouse. She and her fellow students scrubbed floors and washed commodes believing the sacrifices were for the greater good and if Negroes were given equal educational opportunities in the South, "maybe some day a Negro will invent one of the new missiles."³⁰

Nash remained in the forefront of the Nashville desegregation movement. In April 1960 she and several black leaders were named to a negotiating committee with the objective to "desegregate downtown Nashville." After she and her colleagues were successful in desegregating the lunch counters, Nash was asked if the demonstrations would continue. She replied:

Our struggle does not end here. Rather we shall continue to insist in a non-violent Christian, loving fashion that the inequalities of segregation be recognized and dealt with in such a manner that true brotherhood within the democratic society can be achieved.³¹

In 1961 Diane Nash became involved with the Freedom Riders, a movement that sought to integrate public transportation in the South on interstate bus lines. As Nashville Coordinator of SNCC, her job was to plan the Freedom Ride Campaign. On May 4, 1961, a group of thirteen Freedom Riders decided to test the system by riding the Greyhound and Trailway busses from Washington, D.C. to New Orleans. The initial 13 Freedom Riders would be replaced by another group of students in Birmingham, Alabama. Nash spoke to James Farmer, Director of CORE to gain approval for Nashville students to be the replacement

³⁰Ibid., 5.

³¹_____, "Woman Remembers Resolve in Lunch Counter Dispute," *Nashville Tennessean*, 10 April 1960.

group in Birmingham. Nash prepared the students for the journey by requesting sealed letters and wills that were to be distributed in case of their death. The students did not hesitate in committing themselves to the Freedom Rides despite the very real threat to their lives.

The first Freedom Ride started on May 4, 1961 and left Washington, D.C. to New Orleans. The group of Freedom Riders divided into two teams in Atlanta. One team rode the Greyhound Bus, and one team rode the Trailways bus. Both groups were soon to experience retaliation and hatred for daring to take part in the bus ride. In Anniston, Alabama, the bus driver had to escape the Greyhound terminal by driving the bus away with slashed tires and smashed windows. When the disabled bus was forced to stop because of a flat tire, the same mob threw a fire bomb into the bus forcing all passengers to barely escape with their lives. As the protesters were being treated at a hospital in the area, a huge mob gathered and prevented them from leaving. This group was rescued by the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth of the SCLC. Nash ordered the students to be flown to New Orleans.

On May 17, 1961, the second group of students departed from Nashville to Birmingham. When they arrived in Birmingham, they were arrested, held in protective custody, and escorted to the Alabama-Tennessee border by Eugene "Bull" O'Connor who was the Commissioner for Public Safety of Alabama. The students contacted Nash who sent transportation for them to return to Birmingham. They were to continue the Freedom Ride to Montgomery,

Alabama, but when they reached the Birmingham terminal, they were attacked outside of the terminal on May 20, 1961, and beaten with baseball bats and metal pipes.

On May 23, 1963, Diane Nash, John Lewis, Ralph Abernathy and Martin Luther King, Jr. held a press conference to announce that the Freedom Rides would continue. Nash said:

I strongly felt that the future of the movement was going to be cut short if the Freedom Ride had been stopped as a result of violence...

The students who were going to pick up the Freedom Ride selected me Coordinator. As Coordinator, part of my responsibility was to stay in touch with the Justice Department. Our whole way of operating was that we took ultimate responsibility for what we were going to do. But it was felt that they should be advised, in Washington, of what our plans were...

I was also able to keep the press informed, and communities that were participating, such as Birmingham, Montgomery, Jackson and Nashville. And I coordinated the training and recruitment of more people to take up the Freedom Ride.³²

This quote demonstrates Nash's commitment as well as her awesome responsibility. As a young woman, she joined with others to protest the treatment and separation of a people which the collective conscience of America had been hardened against. People who it was thought were somewhat less than human, and therefore not worthy of equality.

Attorney General, Robert Kennedy, requested a cooling-off period. His request was not heeded. Ten (10) new riders were sent by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee. The federal government petitioned the

³²Smith-Carney, 799.

state of Alabama for police protection and safe passage for the riders. Alabama Governor John Patterson deserted the freedom riders by pulling out his forces before the riders reached Montgomery, and the Freedom Riders were attacked in Montgomery, Alabama. President Kennedy dispatched federal marshals to protect the riders. The Freedom Riders departed Montgomery for Jackson, Mississippi. They had previously agreed that anyone arrested would stay in jail rather than pay the fines. The riders were jailed in Jackson, Mississippi, convicted of breaking segregation laws and given sixty (60) days in jail. The events of the Freedom Rides have been sketched to show what a tremendous undertaking it was. The stubborn persistence of the riders, Ella Baker, Diane Nash, and the eventual support of the federal government gave the resistance momentum and ended with the Interstate Commerce Commission issuing a ruling that ended segregation on all interstate busses in September 1961.

In late 1961, Diane Nash went to Jackson, Mississippi, to work on organizing a massive direct action campaign. Her conviction led some to liken her to "Joan of Arc"³³ because of her single-minded pursuit in Mississippi where this type of campaign had previously failed.

During the time of the Freedom Rides, Fred Shuttlesworth (SCLC) and Diane Nash have both acknowledged communicating with codes as a precaution against phone tapping. Codes were used whenever the two discussed the

³³Cagin, Seth and Philip Dray. *We Are Not Afraid* (New York: Bantam, 1988), 175.

Freedom Rides. The Nashville Office of SNCC supported the effort by being on call 24 hours a day during the Freedom Rides.

In time Diane Nash was charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors for conducting the direct action workshops in Jackson, Mississippi that prepared the young people to participate in the Freedom Rides. Nash turned herself in to the authorities in April 1962. The presiding judge was very surprised when he saw that she was pregnant. She noted that they seemed uncertain what to do about her because of her condition. She was sentenced to serve two years of incarceration initially. In response to her predicament Nash said: "people have asked me how I can do this when I am expecting my first child..." She went on to reiterate her determination to refuse bail and asserted that if justice were not done by her, her child would be born in a Mississippi jail. When she was remanded to the custody of the Sheriff, all of her personal effects were taken away and she had to wash the items she was wearing at night in the small sink in her cell to keep clean. She often sat up all night to keep the roaches from dropping in her face from the ceiling.³⁴ Meanwhile Nash wrote a letter to her supporters asking them to follow her example as a show of solidarity.³⁵ The letter read:

I believe the time has come, and is indeed long past, when each of us must make up his mind, when arrested on unjust charges, to serve his sentence and stop posting bonds. I believe that unless we do this our movement

³⁴Personal interview with Diane Nash, 4 September 1994.

³⁵Cagin, 176

loses its power and will never succeed.

We in the nonviolent movement have been talking about jail without bail for two years or more. It is time for us to mean what we say.

We sit in, demonstrate and get beaten up. Yet when we are arrested we immediately post bond and put the matter entirely into the hands of the courts even though we know we won't get justice in these courts.

This is first of all immoral, because the Southern courts in which we are being tried are completely corrupt. We say this is a moral battle, but then we surrender the fight into the legal hands of corrupt courts....

When we leave the jails under bond we lose our opportunity to witness--to prick the conscience of the oppressing group and to appeal to the imagination of the oppressed group and inspire them. We stifle any effort to use what we in the nonviolent movement see as truth force and soul force. We renounce the concept of redemption through suffering. Gandhi said the difference between people who are recklessly breaking the law and those who are standing on a moral principle is that those who stand on principle are willing to take the consequences of their action. When they do this a whole community, indeed a whole nation and the world, may be awakened, and the sights of all society are raised to a new level....

Money can be raised for some test cases. But if we all want to get out on bond, we automatically removes the possibility of a mass movement. There will simply not be enough money to get hundreds of people out on bond in scores of communities and pay the expenses of appealing their cases. And even if there is such money available, there are much better uses to which it can be put in the integration movement.

Let's be realistic, Either we can fight a legal battle with one or two test cases--and in effect abandon our struggle for the several years it takes to litigate the cases in the courts, or we can resolve to stay in jail and have a movement involving massive numbers.

Some of the considerations I have mentioned are matters of pure principle; they involve the center of what nonviolence means. Some of them are practical considerations, matters of tactics in our struggle. But it is difficult to draw the line between what is principle and what is tactics, because the two merge together. In the long run, right principles are always right tactics.

I think we all realize what it would mean if we had hundreds and thousands of people across the South prepared to go to jail and stay. There can be no doubt that our battle would be won. But we have perhaps erred, each of us, as we have sat and waited for the hundreds to act.

History also shows--both recent history and down through the ages--that a few people, even one person, can move mountains. And even if we cannot honestly foresee great effects from our stand, it is my belief that each of us must act on our conscience--do the thing we know in our hearts is right.

The letter has been included in almost in its entirety because it conveys the strength of Diane Nash's commitment. Nash encouraged activists to serve the time they were given for their activism in order that the cause would not be sacrificed when funds was depleted bailing people out of jail. She had the courage to label the judicial system as corrupt and emphasized that staying in jail was her choice. The letter is also included because of a lack of a "woe is me" attitude on Nash's part concerning her confinement in jail. In time, all charges against Diane Nash were dropped, and she served only ten days in jail.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee meanwhile had split into two wings, voter registration and direct action, after a heated disagreement in the ranks. Diane Nash officially served in direct action but also worked in voter registration. She said that the voter registration plan in Mississippi was comprehensive, and her duty was to do all of the typing. Also during this period, Nash submitted documentation to the federal government urging them to retain the federal commodities program in poor Mississippi counties such as Sunflower and

Louisville Counties.³⁶ This was one of her many accomplishments during the civil rights era, yet Historians have written about the civil rights era with only scant mention of Diane Nash. The Fisk University library also contains insufficient information about Diane Nash whose participation helped end the practice of segregation in this country, particularly in public transportation and public accommodations.

She never received national attention for her contribution, and only made headlines in the Nashville Tennessean and Nashville Banner during her earlier activism. She made her mark in American history, and should be accorded her due as an African-American woman with a vision. Nash was dedicated to the civil rights movement, and left school to serve in its arena. In the 1970s she returned to Chicago, Illinois where she currently resides. She is the mother of two grown children.

³⁶Personal interview with Diane Nash, 4 September 1994,

CHAPTER V

FANNIE LOU HAMER "SICK AND TIRED OF BEING SICK AND TIRED"

Fannie Lou Hamer, born October 6, 1917, was the youngest of twenty children born to Jim and Ella Townsend, in Montgomery County, Mississippi. Her parents moved to Sunflower County, Mississippi in 1919 where they lived and worked on the Joe Pullum plantation. She was only six years old when she began picking cotton. When she was thirteen, Fannie Lou left school to help support the family and often picked between two to three hundred pounds of cotton a week. Living conditions in the Townsend family shanty included no electricity, running water, or plumbing. The evening meal often consisted of bread and onions. The children had no shoes and tied gunny sack produce bags around their feet to ward off the elements. Ella Townsend sang hymns and old Negro gospel songs to encourage her children to continue striving. She advised them not to nurse hatred in their hearts.

In 1944, Fannie Lou Townsend married Perry Hamer and moved to the Marlow plantation in Rulesville. The changes did not bring about much of an improvement in Fannie Lou Hamer's standard of living.

On the evening of August 1962, Fannie Lou Hamer attended a mass meeting for voters registration lead by the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

Committee (SNCC). Soon she came to be described as a stomper, agitator and political activist. Two weeks later she and seventeen other African Americans traveled to Indianola Courthouse to register to vote but she did not pass the literacy test. Additionally on their journey back to Rulesville, the police intercepted the bus and the driver was fined because the bus was too yellow. She learned early that theirs would be a hard fight. Hamer began to sing to calm down the group. Music helped her overcome her own fears. Unfortunately her troubles had just started. When she returned home, she was summoned and subsequently fired from her employment as a timekeeper on the Marlow plantation, where she had worked for eighteen years. The termination was conditional: she could relinquish her activities to register to vote if she wanted to stay on at the Marlow Plantation. Hamer refused, her family's welfare and her life was threatened and she fled Ruleville.

On December 4, Fannie Lou Hamer returned to Indianola to re-take the voter registration test. She announced her intention to continue to take the test until she passed it, and was allowed to register to vote. In early 1963, Fannie Hamer passed the literacy test, but her family continued to be threatened by the local authorities. She did not even have running water, but received a \$9,000 water bill. Still Hamer felt she had achieved a victory by passing the literacy test. She could never go back to laying down and playing dead. Yet she continued to agitate. In April 1963 Hamer became involved in Citizenship Teacher Training in Dorchester, Georgia. Three female giants of the civil rights movement came

together in this program. Septima Clark, originally of the Highlander Folk School, in Monteagle, Tennessee, and Ella Baker traveled with Fannie Lou Hamer from Cleveland, Mississippi to Dorchester, Georgia. Both of the other women were involved in some aspects of voter registration. Fannie Lou Hamer planned to help more people prepare for the voters registration test. She decided to become trained properly. While training she sang spirituals which helped her reach people and made them feel more comfortable. In May Fannie Lou Hamer was selected for additional training through the citizenship program. This training put her in contact with renowned scholars Vincent Harding and John Henrik Clark.

On her way home from the training in June 9, 1963, she had no idea that she was destined to go down in the history of the civil rights movement. When the bus she was traveling on arrived in Winona, she stepped off the bus with other participants Anneal June Johnson, Rosemary Freeman and Euvester Simpson Ponder to get something to eat. They were refused service, and arrested. After being arrested Hamer, and the three others were brutalized by the police officers or their agents. Fifteen year old June Johnson was beaten until her face was bloody. Hamer and Ponder were beaten with blackjacks and belts by three officers. The police officers also instructed two African American inmates to beat Hamer with a blackjack until they gave out. During the night the women heard the officers plotting to kill them. In spite of the excruciating pain, Hamer's voice would not be stilled. She kept faith as she sang about early Christians Paul and Silas being bound in jail. The law officers did not carry out their plans for

murdering the women perhaps because this occurred during the time of the Medgar Evers assassination and several telephone calls were made to the jail to inquire about the well-being of the women. The beatings, however, caused blood clots that affected Hamer's sight in one eye and contributed to declining health as the year wore on.³⁷ The FBI was called in to investigate the police brutality and the incident had the attention of then Attorney General Robert Kennedy. The Justice Department filed a civil complaint and criminal charges were filed in the federal court. However, the judicial system found the officers not guilty. After the verdict Fannie Lou Hamer became more determined than ever in her political activity. She often sang "Nobody's going to turn me around." A courageous woman, she was determined to continue what she had started on the road to becoming a first class citizen. She continued to encourage people to register to vote. Hamer stated:

Although we've suffered greatly, I feel that we have not suffered in vain. I am determined to become a first class citizen. Some people will say that we are satisfied with the way in which we are living, but I am not. I've never been satisfied because we've always worked hard for little of nothing. So if registering to vote means becoming a first class citizen and changing the structure of our state's government, I am determined to get every Negro in the State of Mississippi registered.³⁸

Mrs. Hamer's first public speaking engagement was in November of 1963 to an audience of 300 at a SNCC leadership conference. She told her story about being in jail, then she sung "This Little Light of Mine." SNCC leaders felt they

³⁷Mills, Kay. *This Little Light of Mine* (New York: Penguin, (1993), 60.

³⁸Ibid, 79.

should try to gain support from Robert Kennedy who in turn might get the administration to act on conditions in Mississippi. Its strategy was for Fannie Lou to meet with Cardinal Cushing, a close friend of the Kennedy's, in Boston, Massachusetts. Many hoped that her status as a grassroots member of the movement would win her some points. Cardinal Cushing did not give her support in her request. She returned to Mississippi in the cold of the winter to find many people not only suffering from cold but also an unemployment rate that had increased in retaliation against voter registration. Fannie Lou requested assistance from Boston. The friends of SNCC in Boston sent 30,000 pounds of food and clothing for the people in Ruleville. Hamer, still recuperating from the brutal jail beating, continued to advocate for the people of Ruleville.

Fannie Lou Hamer soon became involved in the Congressional race against Jamie Whitten who had been the incumbent since 1941. Her goal was to demonstrate to her people that political participation can produce change. The campaign kicked off on March 20 in Ruleville. She traveled throughout Mississippi debating Jamie Whitten's platform. Whitten was outspoken in his opposition to political, educational and economic betterment for African Americans. Hamer's platform rested on the promise to help all people regardless of race if elected however she did not win. Always a lover of music, she sang songs during her campaign. Victoria Gray, an entrepreneur in the Hattiesburg community, was convinced by Fannie Lou Hamer to run for the U.S. Senate. Gray stated to a Washington Post journalist that her goal was to have a psychological impact on

both races.³⁹

The summer of 1964 was a time of intensive action by the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to get people registered to vote called Freedom Summer. President Lyndon Johnson became interested in what was occurring in Mississippi. White student involvement occurred because they were recruited by SNCC who decided that until white students became involved and were at risk, Americans would not take action against the social injustices being done to African Americans. White students were brought in to assist with voters registration. The Justice Department sent in federal marshals to protect them. Fannie Lou Hamer, Bob Moses and James Foreman trained those young white volunteers to defend themselves without striking back. To keep the momentum going, she always sang during her lectures. Hamer informed the students that they were the answer to the faith of the people in Mississippi. During her lecture she said:

Hatred should have no place in your thoughts, just as hatred has no place in mine. Hatred solves nothing. The white man is the scaredest person on earth. Out in daylight he don't do nothing. But at night he'll toss a bomb or pay someone to kill. The white man's afraid he'll be treated like he's been treating the Negroes, but I couldn't carry that much hate. It wouldn't solve any problems for me to hate whites because they hate me. Oh, there's so much hate! Only God has kept the Negro sane. Help us communicate with white people.⁴⁰

Fannie Lou Hamer became impatient with the slow progress and violence that

³⁹Mills, 94.

⁴⁰Ibid, 98.

1965
 continued to occur. She and others decided to form the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP). The purpose of the MFDP was for African Americans to have their own party because the Democratic Party, the majority party in Mississippi, was preventing blacks from voting. The Republicans were not a strong force in Mississippi. The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party moved to challenge the regular Democratic Party. Negroes felt their dignity was trampled on and that they were ineligible to participate in the political process in Mississippi. Victoria Gray and Fannie Lou Hamer's agenda was about anti-poverty programs, medicare, education, rural development and civil rights. It was easier for both women to be declared candidates for Congress of the U.S. than it was to register at the state convention. Hamer said to an audience once "we are sick and tired of being sick and tired."⁴¹ During this time Ella Baker was busy setting up the Party's Washington office. Baker gave the keynote address at the MFDP's state convention in Jackson, Mississippi. Victoria Gray held a news conference announcing MFDP's tentative agenda. At the conference she asserted that the national Democratic Party was aware of the situation in Mississippi "stood quiet while the all white delegation from the magnolia state have come to party conventions with no thought of African Americans on their agenda."⁴²

The MFDP's goal was to get a minimum of the one hundred members on

⁴¹Ibid, 108.

⁴²Ibid, 110.

the convention's credentials committee to vote for the MFDP's request to the convention floor. Fannie Lou Hamer and other members prepared to give testimony for the National Democratic Party's Credentials Committee:

On the first day of the convention, the MFDP took its case to the national Democratic Party's Credentials Committee. Fannie Lou Hamer was the star witness invoking memories of Medgar Evers's assassination, James Meredith's battle to gain admission to Ole Miss, and the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. 'If the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America,' she said. 'Is this America? The land of the free and the home of the brave? Where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hook, because our lives be threatened daily?' She also told of the abuse she had suffered in retaliation for attending a civil rights meeting. 'They beat me and they beat me with the long, flat blackjack,' said the farm woman, 'I screamed to God in pain. My dress worked itself up. I tried to pull it down. They beat my arms 'til I had no feeling in them.' Then Hamer broke down and wept in front of the network television cameras that were providing national coverage of the testimony.⁴³

When President Johnson heard Fannie Lou Hamer's testimony he became outraged and demanded that his Aide contact the national network to stop taping the convention. He held a national press conference. Later, that evening the national network ran the footage of Hamer's testimony. Americans were disheartened by Hamer's testimony, and politicians received calls from all over the country. Hamer, unlike Septima Clark, Ella Baker and Diane Nash was in the limelight in America. Her testimony became a significant event in America. She did not stop after the first night. On the second night of the convention Hamer and the MFDP members returned to the convention on borrowed passes that were given to them by one of the delegates. On Wednesday, the third night,

⁴³Williams, Juan. *Eyes on the Prize*, (New York: Penguin, 1987), 241.

Hamer and the MFDP returned to the convention floor. She spoke again on national TV in Atlantic City accusing the American political system of being insensitive to the treatment of African Americans in Mississippi:

Mr. Chairman, and the Credentials Committee, my name is Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer, and I live at 636 East Lafayette Street, Rulesville, Mississippi, Sunflower County, the home of Senator James O. Eastland and Senator Stennis.

It was the 31st of August in 1962 that eighteen of us traveled twenty-six miles to the county courthouse in Indianola to try to register to try to become first-class citizens. We was [sic] met in Indianola by Mississippi men, highway patrolmens, and they only allowed two of us in to take the literacy test at the time. After we had taken this test and started back to Rulesville, we was [sic] held up by the City Police and the State Highway Patrolmen and carried back to Indianola, where the bus driver was charged that day with driving a bus the wrong color....

On the 10th of September, 1962, sixteen bullets was fired into the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Tucker for me. That same night two girls were shot in Ruleville, Mississippi. Also Mr. Joe McDonald's house was shot in.

And in June, the 9th, 1963, I had attended a voter-registration workshop, was returning back to Mississippi. Ten of us was traveling by the Continental Trailway bus. When we got to Winona, Mississippi, which is Montgomery County, four of the people got off to use the washroom, and two of the people--to use the restaurant--two of the people wanted to use the washroom. The four people that had gone in to use the restaurant was ordered out. During this time I was on the bus. But when I looked through the window and saw they had rushed out, I got off of the bus to see what had happened, and one of the ladies said, 'It was a state highway patrolman and a chief of police ordered us out.'

I got back on the bus and one of the persons had used the washroom got back on the bus, too. As soon as I was seated on the bus, I saw when they began to get the four people in a highway patrolman's car. I stepped off the bus to see what was happening and somebody screamed from the car that the four workers was in and said, 'Get that one there,' and when I went to get in the car, when the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.

I was carried to the county jail, and put in the booking room. They left some of the people in the booking room and began to place us in cells. I was placed in a cell with a young woman called Miss Euvester Simpson. After I was placed in the cell I began to hear sounds of licks and screams. I could hear the sounds of licks and horrible screams, and I could hear somebody say, 'Can you say, yes sir nigger? Can you say yes, sir?'

And they would say other horrible names. She would say, 'Yes, I can say yes, sir.'

'So say it.'

She says, 'I don't know you well enough.'

They beat her, I don't know how long, and after a while she began to pray, and asked God to have mercy on those people. And it wasn't too long before three white men came to my cell. One of these men was a State Highway Patrolman and he asked me where I was from, and I told him Ruleville. He said, 'We're going to check this.' And they left my cell and it wasn't too long before they came back. He said, 'You are from Ruleville all right,' and he used a curse word, and he said, 'We are going to make you wish you was dead.'

I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack. The first Negro prisoner ordered me, by orders from the State Highway Patrolman for me, to lay down on a bunk bed on my face, and I laid on my face. The first Negro began to beady, and I was beat by the first Negro until he was exhausted, and I was holding my hands behind me at that time on my left side because I suffered from polio when I was six years old. After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the State Highway Patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack.

The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro who had beat to set on my feet to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush. One white man--my dress had worked up high, he walked over and pulled my dress down--and he pulled my dress back, back up.

I was in jail when Medgar Evers was murdered.

All of this is on account we want to register, to become first-class citizens,

and if the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America, is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?

‘Thank you.’⁴⁴

Although the MFDP did not meet its goals the party received respect from America. [The Atlantic City Democratic Convention certainly created racial tension throughout the United States.] It was time for America to wake up and become involved with the so-called political system. Freedom Summer had created an environment in which African Americans and whites worked side by side in the state of Mississippi. Hamer’s actions in Atlantic City caused additional pressure on liberal white politicians.

After returning to Mississippi from the Democratic Convention, Hamer continued the activism that had now become her life’s work. She decided to run for U.S. Senate with Mrs. Annie Devine, Victoria Gray and Aaron Henry in the November 3, 1964 elections. Voters registration remained a problem. As a result of that they lost in the election. She still embraced the cause of voters registration, however, finances began to dry up. Harry Belafonte raised \$60,000 to keep voters registration alive. Hamer went on the road traveling speaking and singing to supplement the funds for voter registration.

In December 1964, she was in New York and met with Malcolm X, the Black Nationalist leader. She continued the task of voters registration and

⁴⁴Mills, 119.

fundraising.

In 1964, Fannie Lou Hamer was instrumental in establishing the Head Start Program. Head Start is a preschool designed to give disadvantaged children the opportunity to learn basic skills they need to begin kindergarden. Head Start (still active today) also provided health and dental care that Blacks normally would not have received. In Sunflower County, Head Start provided incomes for Alcoholics Anonymous women who worked with the program. Initially, 400 children were enrolled in the program. Politicians felt that African Americans were beginning to have some control in Sunflower County. White politicians reported to Washington that the Head Start Program was mismanaging funds. Hamer and others went to Washington to fight for the Head Start grant to be funded. After a long process of speaking to one politician after another, Sunflower County was funded. By this time over 1,000 children were benefitting from this program.

Voter's registration, and being in the political process was an ongoing process for Hamer by this time. In 1969, she began to move into a new direction by establishing Freedom Farm Cooperatives. The Freedom Farm Cooperative program provided food for over 3,000 people in Sunflower County. The majority of the people in this county lived under deplorable conditions. Head Start and Freedom Farm Cooperative gave hope to the people in Sunflower County. Economics and education had also been on Fannie Lou Hamer's priority list. Hamer, herself, lived in poverty throughout her life and left school at an early age. She continued to insist that others in her community would exist under better

conditions than she had. Mrs. Hamer formed a partnership with the National Council of Negro Women, and purchased forty (40) pigs, 35 females (sows) and 5 males (boars). She said "you can give a man some food and he'll eat it. Then he'll only get hungry again, but give a man some ground of his own and a hoe, and he'll never go hungry again."⁴⁵

The Pig Bank was started to feed the families in Sunflower. The sows were used to produce additional pigs and loaned to families who had space to keep the pigs when the sow delivered. The sow was returned to the Pig Bank and the pigs were raised by the reciprocating family. During the first year of the program, thirty-five families benefitted from the pig bank. The families committed to give a pregnant sow to two other families the next year after they received a sow to breed. By the third year the pig bank had produced 3,000 pigs. In 1969, Fannie Lou Hamer purchased 40 acres of land. The land was used to produce crops of butter beans, collard greens, tomatoes and other produce for the people. The Freedom Farm was so successful that people from other counties used it as a model. Hamer continued to raise money for this program. Throughout the early 70's, farmers from the state of Wisconsin supported the project. They donated machinery to keep the program going.

In 1974, Fannie Lou Hamer's health began to decline. She suffered from a nervous breakdown in addition to high blood pressure, diabetes, and fluid

⁴⁵Peterson, Franklin. "Fannie Lou Hamer: Mother of Liberation," *Sepia*, December 1972, 16-24.

retention. Her medicare bills were very costly, and she often did not have funds for medical care. In spite of these health problems, she maintained her speaking engagements to raise money for the people in Mississippi. She did so until her death March 20, 1977.

Fannie Lou Townsend Hamer was a heroine in American history. She did as much for the poor people in Mississippi as any other individual. Her battles included voters registration, educational opportunities for pre-school (Head Start), and economics for the poor. She was not afraid to risk her life for what she believed in. This was the only way she saw to bring about change. Unfortunately, she died in the same state she was born in, living in poverty. Life did not improve for Fannie Lou Hamer. She stood on the shoulders of our foremothers Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth. She gave her life for others. She was a female Martin Luther King, and Americans should recognize her birthday as a national holiday. In one of her last speeches to a white women's audience she said:

You know I work for the liberation of all people, because when I liberate myself, I'm liberating other people. But you know, sometimes I really feel sorrier for white women than I feel for ourselves. Because she been caught up in this thing, caught up feeling special, and folks, I'm going to put it on the line, because my job is not to make people feel comfortable. You've been caught up in this because, you know, you worked my grandmother, and after that you worked my mother, and then finally you got a hold on me.⁴⁶

Often she was astonished by the treatment she received from middle class

⁴⁶Lerner, 252.

African American women. She expected more support from them than she received. Often they were not willing to be voices in their local communities for the issues she was fighting for in the struggle. These women seemed down on Hamer for her work. She said to this group:

You see now baby, whether you have a Ph.D., D.D or no d, we're in this bag together. And whether you are from Morehouse or No house, we're still in this bag together. Not to fight to liberate ourselves from the men--this is another trick to get us fighting among ourselves--but to work together with black men. And then we will have a better chance to just act as human beings, and be treated as human beings in our society. We have a job as black women, to support whatever is right, and to bring in justice where we've had so much injustice.⁴⁷

Whenever Hamer often spoke, she did so within the framework of her religious teaching:

A house divided against itself cannot stand. America is divided against itself and without considering them considering us as human beings one day American will crumble! Because God is not pleased! God is not pleased with all the murdering and all the brutality and all the killing for no reason at all. God is not pleased that the Negro children in the state of Mississippi [are] suffering from malnutrition. God is not pleased because we have to go raggedy and work from ten to eleven hours for three lousy dollars! And then how can they say that in ten year's time, we will force every Negro out of the state of Mississippi. But I want these people to take a good look at themselves, and after they have sent the Chinese back to China, the Jews back to Jerusalem, and given the Indians their land; they take the Mayflower back from where they came from, the Negro will still be in Mississippi! We don't have anything to be ashamed of in Mississippi, and actually we don't carry guns because we don't have anything to hide.⁴⁸

According to author Bernice Reagan who worked in the movement, Fannie Lou

⁴⁷Reagan-Johnson, Bernice. *Women as Culture Carriers in the Civil Rights Movement: Fannie Lou Hamer* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 214.

⁴⁸Ibid., 214.

Hamer stands among a chorus of African-American women leaders, such as Ella Baker and Septima Clark, who never gave up fighting for liberation for their people.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

As women of color move toward the 21st century they still face sexism and racism in executive board rooms, academia and corporate America. They are underrepresented although American ideals stress diversity in the workplace and multiculturalistic approaches. Ideals which are seemingly based on an awareness of the changing domestic and global marketplace. Some social observers contend that only small changes have been made since the civil rights era. Since the slavery era, African-American women have been trailblazers in their families, churches and communities. They have never been fully credited for their contributions. These women who remain nameless and faceless have put the pieces of the puzzle together as Septima Clark, Ella Baker, Diane Nash and Fannie Lou Hamer did during their time. These four women were activists whose lives and times remain largely buried in our history. Yet the end result of their work broke the back of "Jim Crow" and made political changes possible for a whole race. Part of these changes related to acquisition of fundamental rights of African Americans to participate in the political system through the ballot. They have yet to receive the recognition for helping to change the face of the nation by ensuring that more of Americans citizens became involved in the political process.

Recent scholars have also omitted these women from their scholarship.

African American women have a history of their own which they wrote through their actions and their suffering. They fought courageously for liberation. These soldiers looked within themselves for courage. They drew from the example of African American foremothers such as Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Ida B. Wells Barnett and Anna J. Copper. These women displayed courage on a day to day basis sacrificing their lives for the betterment of African Americans in the south and elsewhere. They used their wisdom, moral and psychological strength to be more than bystanders on the battle fields. The civil rights movement was viable and powerful because they were at the helm of the movement. They often were willing to serve as behind the scenes facilitators forsaking any claim personal recognition. All them strongly believed in Frederick Douglass' motto "slavery is not abolished until the black man has the ballot." All of them are noted for different segments ranging from fighting segregation to the fighting for African American rights to the ballot. They collectively worked in rural communities trying to improve voting rights throughout the south.

Septima Clark is noted for her contributions through the Highland Folk School which was later turned over to the SCLC and renamed the Crusade for Citizenship. She began her work long before the civil rights era. Her aspiration was to liberate African American minds. She used the Citizenship Schools as a vehicle for voters registration.

Ella Baker was a seasoned activist by the time she joined SCLC. She was twenty-five years older than the members of SCLC and contributed leadership

and organization skills to the movement. She felt the movement was "Bigger than a Hamburger". Although she ran into several road blocks, she did not allow the road blocks to deter her. This is demonstrated in the appendix section of this paper. The actual letters demonstrate clearly that Martin Luther King and other male centrists in SCLC showed little appreciation for her work. Aldon D. Morris discussed in his book The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement the restrictions imposed on her.

On February 1, 1960 when the sit-in movement took place at Woolworth's in Greensboro, North Carolina to de-segregate lunch counters, Ella Baker saw this as opportunity for a direct action protest approach. The students were in need of leadership; thus she became involved as one of the founders of SNCC. She felt the time has come for the new approach being advocated by the students. She believed that SNCC should be an independent organization. Through SNCC the students would make their own decisions and be free of any hierarchy. Her theory was that "strong people don't need strong leaders." Ella Baker, fought for social change behind the scenes for fifty years.

Diane Nash is noted for leading the Nashville sit-ins twelve days after the Greensboro sit-in. She is credited for the coordination of the Freedom Riders whose sole purpose was to integrate interstate transportation. The concept of "jail no bail" came from Nash. She worked without receiving national attention for her contributions to the movement although she worked very close with the federal government during the Freedom Rides. Diane Nash worked closely with Ella

Baker and Fannie Lou Hamer in voters registration. Diane Nash sacrificed her college career to fight for equal justice for African Americans.

Fannie Lou Hamer was a heroine in American history. She will be remembered as a woman of perseverance who had a vision of life with dignity. She never achieved any measure of personal financial security, but she provided economic assistance to the poor farmers of Sunflower County. All in all she was responsible for the feeding of 3,000 people throughout her pig bank program.

Appendix A

Memo From Septima Clark to
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

To: Dr. M.L. King, Jr.
From: Septima P. Clark
Re: CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION PROGRAM

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The program in the whole state of Alabama lacks supervision, therefore, it is practically moot. People walked 50,000 of them. Your book sold, 200,000 of them and a mixed group cannot be served in the Negro restaurants in Montgomery. The people who came for training in Mississippi and attempted to teach are full of a smoldering hatred. They have been so depressed that they take this out on each other. In Hattiesburg, we have the beginning of a well-operated system of schools, but Greenwood is far below par.

Southeastern and Southwestern, Georgia under Mr. Hosea Williams show great promise. The registration increases there also, but that is approximately 50 counties of Georgia's 159.

South Carolina has a coordinated set-up under Mr. Ben Mack. We have reached 40 out of the 46 counties, and the registration, plus desegregation, show the results. The people have been listened to, worked with, and educated to a certain degree. There is still much to be done.

Louisiana has sent in many to be trained, but the

follow-up has been lacking and no results have come from the ⁵⁹ output. Virginia, North Carolina, Florida, and Tennessee have given very little in return for the amount spent on student who were trained.

I stated the foregoing so that you could see that many states are losing their citizenship schools because there is no one to do follow-up work. I have done as much as I could. In fact, I'm the only paid staff worker doing field visitation. I think that the staff of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference working with me in the Citizenship Education Program feels that the work is not dramatic enough to warrant their time. Direct action is so glamorous and packed with emotion that most young people prefer demonstrations over genuine education.

A Human Relations Council might like this work. I could search around and see if a switch of organizations could serve the real purpose better. (Developing leadership and building a non-violent army) Each training session that has been held since the summer of 1962, and recently since February 1965, two or more of the staff members have had some excuse to be absent. Then when they do come, they are too tired to work with the students.

It seems as if citizen education is all mine, except when it comes time to pick up the checks.

I have a letter drafted to send to Mr. Hahn about

hiring workers who can help with the follow-up. I await 60
your answer to this befog consulting with him. I have
talked with both Rev. Young and Mrs. Cotton.

In the office I spend most of my time answering
citizenship students and approving their vouchers. All of
them give eight hours a month of their time helping adults,
and three times as much taking the people to vote or to
civic meetings. All of this for the maximum amount of
\$30.00 per month for expenses. Some of these vouchers have
been held up for three months for sheer frivolous
negligence. This little money means so much to them.

President Kennedy's death has revealed real truths, and
no one is being fooled. We can't fool foundations, we must
be honest in our dealings with them.

Did you hear Paul Douglas of Illinois, and Case from
New Jersey on the Today's Show November 26, 1963? Case said
that the Negroes are happy in their kind of culture, why try
to give them more. Louis Martin's November 13, 1963 news
release spoke of a wonderful climate in the U.S. He was
highly satisfied with the status quo and knew that the 1964
election would corral the South along with the North. How
naive! How can we do a better job?

Aaron Henry, James Bevel and Amzie Moore never could
come together and work together for the common good. Samuel
Block on October 26, 1963 told Rev. Young that Bob Moses and
Jim Foreman walked into Greenwood and took over without

involving the people. On that same afternoon, while passing ^{on} through Birmingham, I have many questions in my mind about the Rev. Shuttlesworth and would like to ask him about them face to face.

Two young men from Indianapolis, Indiana came for training among the 71 students in November. They have strong Black Nationalists' leanings and talked with me for more than an hour, telling me how divided the Negroes are in that city, and how hatred is building up against S.C.L.C. I called Rev. Young and pleaded with him to come over. I felt that he could talk more from his theological background and help them. The next day, I blurted out my feelings before the class while Rev. Young was teaching. We really silenced the more radical of the two, but I'm wondering about the smoldering hate.

An FBI agent in August questioned me in New York. He came to find out about a young white woman who worked with me at Highlander, and who is trying to get a Civil Service Job. Of course, he knew all about me and wanted to know about a rift between S.C.L.C. and N.A.A.C.P. He further wanted to know I was a sympathizer of the underdogs, and I had to tell him that I was a Negro in the South and of low income parents, one was a slave, therefore, I had to consider depressed peoples everywhere. I also told him that you and Roy Wilkins were great friends. Of course, I said we don't need to think alike, but we do respect each other's

differences, and in your words I said, "It is healthy to 62 disagree". He mentioned some remarks made by both Ruby Hurley and Gloster Current in Tennessee. I was in the church in Nashville when Ruby splenened her wrath one, and in Oak Ridge I heard Gloster Current do likewise. So again I said, "It is healthy to disagree".

Dr. King, I believe that mass education and a federally financed program will eliminate the political fear and police brutality in the South, especially in Mississippi. We must find a way to do more so that people who register or work in voter registration have employment and peace on earth. Your meeting on Monday nigh, December 9, 1963 made me know that you are aware of the Citizenship Education Program. I firmly believe that you did not know of the lack of supervision which is vital to the success of the program.

Appendix B

Memo From Septima Clark to Andrew Young,
July 12, 1964

11 Rivera Street

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Charleston, S.C.

July 12, 1964

Dear Andy:

My concern has never been with the job descriptions of the staff but with the unfair treatment of the people for whom the grant was proposed. The job descriptions are good if the follow-up can be maintained.

On May 18th there were vouchers as far back as January waiting to be paid. In the meantime -money had to be sent to Ben Van Clark, Carolyn Roberts and Larry Fox. This kind of administration, I greatly detest.

The people for whom we get the money are those in the most benighted areas and to whom \$30 is a great blessing. These are the people who are first on the list to be paid in my estimation. If we fail to do this the great battle for rights is in vain.

On May 7-10, scholarships were paid for the music workshop while vouchers were still laid up. In December just after our interview with Dr. King vouchers were left over until the New Year. In the refresher at Dorchester in January, Mr. Norwood said "My teachers are so disappointed, they expected to have gotten their checks for Christmas." I felt terribly let down about it because it was the very last thing I asked to have done before leaving for Monroe, N.C.

I went to Monroe and worked up to the holidays. The

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vouchers were there before I left. (poor administration)

I agree with you about the men with families but women have great responsibilities also. They need consideration too. I'm paying for maintenance in Atlanta, maintaining a home in Charleston with utilities, taxes, and repairs. Of course I feel obligated to my motherless grandchildren and that makes 3 places to divide my money with but I have no complaint. I have learned to live within my budget. I would like to do something with the Citizenship grant and try to work it a little smoother. Dorothy has to pay rent in Atlanta and maintain a home in Virginia. I understand that the grant takes care of Annelle's rent in Mississippi and she rents out her apartment in Atlanta. Why?

Dan Harrell had to make three phone calls to me and three to Delores before he could get his group from Mobile to Dorchester. That could have been avoided. Mrs. Wheat had to ride the bus all the way from Texas to Dorchester while Ann Ghillie rode the airplane from Atlanta to Dorchester. Both are students. These things can be remedied and money will be saved for other things of real importance. Milk spilt can't be saved but the same things need not occur again.

It was Christian-like of you to send the letter. Has Mr. Randolph Blacksell done anything in teaching adults before? Will Hosea develop leadership as to have classes

It was Christian-like of you to send the letter. Has Mr. Randolph Blacksell done anything in teaching adults before? Will Hosea develop leadership as to have classes observed while he is on the firing line? Mr. Allen has 8 teachers ready to teach but could not get any approval from Hosea's office to start. Did Dorothy consent to do a better job with reports? I wonder what you mean by "Office Administration Citizenship Schools Program."

I'm willing to give anyone a try at anything but having worked with you since 1961, I don't see you doing the eight items you have apportioned to yourself. It can be done with preparation and planning but this is one thing that you don't like too well.

Thus far I've been getting my heart and teeth checked for the grind later on. The heart is a little enlarged and two teeth have to come out. Nothing to be alarmed about. I'm taking my kids up to the World's Fair on Tuesday.

A wonderful young man worked in the workshop on John's Island from Talledega. It is pathetic to hear him tell of people who do not know what to say and what they can do in their communities. We have a long long way to go in adult education.

Septima

Septima worked tireless years for social and political change. In 1970, she retired at the age of 72. During the late 1970s she received numerous awards for her service to humanity. She became the first African-American woman to serve two terms on the Charleston, S.C. school board. An expressway and a day care center have been named for her in her hometown. The women of Alpha Kappa Alpha said of her:

Septima Clark is one of the human sacrifices in the fight for human rights, and is an efficient and conscientious teacher. Mrs. Clark was relieved of her duties by the school board, presumably because of her activities with the N.A.A.C.P. Mrs. Clark has achieved that toward which we all aspire, service to all mankind. Although our community has lost its talented leader, she has gone to serve in a higher sphere. She is the Director of Workshops at the Highlander Folk School in Montague, Tennessee. In this capacity, she

Appendix C

Memoes From Septima Clark to Ella Baker,
July 11, 1960, and From Ella Baker
to Septima Clark, July 18, 1960

HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

MONTEAGLE, TENNESSEE



July 11, 1960

Miss Ella Baker
208 Auburn Ave. N.E.
Atlanta, Ga.

Dear Miss Baker:

The young people in the sit-in movement have shown that there are many doors now open in the South. These doors stand open, waiting to be fully used in many communities. What to do and how to do it are the decisions now facing people all over the South.

In the meantime there are many forces imposing barriers upon these same people. The Highlander Folk School feels that leadership must be developed by those whose experiences are invaluable.

We are attempting to help these people by bringing them to the school for a workshop on the techniques and tactics of follow-through in school desegregation, voting registration, leadership and political education, August 14 through 19.

Won't you come into this workshop and share your experiences in the current problems?

Your name will mean much to southern leaders and the instructions you have to give will be most valuable.

We can offer you transportation and maintenance at the school.

Never before has there been such a crying need for honest and forthright representation of the minority group. I know you will want to help in getting others to use these open doors.

Sincerely yours

Mrs. Septima P. Clark
Director of Education

July 18, 1960

Mrs. Septima P. Clark
Director of Education
Highlander Folk School
Monteagle, Tennessee

Dear Mrs. Clark:

Your letter of July 11, inviting me to participate in the August 14-19 workshop at Highlander, came to my attention when I returned to the office Saturday.

I most certainly would like to be a part of the workshop, but will be in the New York area at that time, which may present more of a travel expense than you had planned for. However, if your budget will permit this, I will be very happy to join you at that time. Incidentally, I will be in Atlanta through August 3 or 4 at least, and after that, I can be reached at the following address and telephone number:

10 West 135th Street, Apt. 14-S
New York, N. Y.
AUdubon 1-3928

At present, I plan to be in New York during the months of August and September. After that, I probably will be back in Atlanta, but will let you know as plans develop.

I agree that we must help to prepare our young people, especially, and our adults also, for honest and forthright communication of what we are striving for and how we plan to go about it.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely yours,

EJB/eb

Ella J. Baker
Executive Director

Appendix D

Memo From Ella Baker to Committee on
Administration, October 23, 1959

October 23, 1959 71

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Committee on Administration
FROM: Ella J. Baker, Director
RE: S.C.L.C. as a Crusade

KING LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE

The more I think of a unique role for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc., in the present struggle for human dignity, the more I seem to focus on the phrase "Crusade for Citizenship".

The word CRUSADE connotes for me a vigorous movement, with high purpose and involving masses of people. In search for action that might help develop for SCLC more of the obvious characteristics of a crusade, a line of thinking was developed which I submit for your consideration.

THE NATURE OF S.C.L.C.

1. S.C.L.C. is a service agency through which autonomous bodies can achieve coordinated action and share their experiences and resources.
2. S.C.L.C. DOES NOT establish local units nor solicit individual memberships.
3. It seeks to supplement rather than duplicate the work of existing civil rights organizations.
4. S.C.L.C. has limited funds and staff.

Hence, to play a unique role in the South, S.C.L.C must offer, basically, a different "brand of goods"; that fills unmet needs of the people. At the same time, it must provide for a sense of achievement and recognition for many people, particularly local leadership.

SOME POSSIBLY DIFFERENT IDEAS

The following suggest possibilities for developing the crusading potential of S.C.L.C.

- a) Searching out and sponsoring indigenous leaders, especially in the hard core states.
- b) Recruiting 1,000 ministers and/or other leaders who will give 8 hours a month for person-to-person contact with people in their communities to push voter-registration.
- c) Stimulate religious bodies, civic and fraternal organizations (composed of women, especially) to utilize the facilities for reducing functional illiteracy among Negroes.
- d) In cooperation with such an agency as F O R - map out a

- 2 -

program for developing action teams in nonviolent direct action.

FOR ILLUSTRATION

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FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.

Time will not permit full discussion of the ideas projected above, but a few brief comments might be suggestive:

Indigenous Leadership - This seems to offer a means of expanding voter-registration activities immediately in Mississippi. In the Mound Bayou area, a young Negro Catholic priest and a Baptist deacon have been conducting weekly citizenship classes, from which more than 50 persons have become registered voters. One person had tried twelve (12) times before and failed. This year in the gubernatorial primary and county races the Negro vote was felt. For the first time, in years, the Negro Mound Bayou vote was counted. Even a hundred dollars could be meaningful here. Again, Rev. G. R. Haughton from Jackson, and another younger minister and a layman in Greenville, Mississippi - could be useful in visiting other areas of the State.

1,000 Ministers - This is but an enlargement upon the idea advanced by Mr. Earl Davis in Montgomery, of having ministers participate in house-to-house canvassing. It could take on crusading proportions. It is possible to contact 4 persons an hour; and in 8 hrs. a month, one minister could reach 30 persons, at least. If one thousand gave 8 hours, it would mean 30,000 persons in one month. For 10 months, this could mean 300,000 persons. If initiated and accepted by the leadership of S.C.L.C., it is quite possible, I believe, to commit 1,000 leaders to give eight hours a month, to work directly with the people.

Functional Illiteracy - Contrary to often accepted belief, the United States is not the most literate nation in the world. Russia claims 99.9% literacy. In the U.S.A., some 2,299,000 have never attended school; and 9,635,000 are functionally illiterate. That is below fifth grade competence. In Atlanta, it is estimated that there are 50,000 functional illiterates and every 3 out of 5 are Negro. There is increased momentum in the adult education field. The U. S. Department of Education has specialists available, and the Laubach method is being used over television in several states. Recently, the Atlanta Literacy Council was formed through the Atlanta Baptist Missionary Union.

It was not my idea that S.C.L.C should conduct classes, but that we could interest such groups as the Women's Division of the National Baptist Convention, the National Council of Negro Women, and national college sororities in such projects.

The real value to S.C.L.C. would be that more people would be equipped with the basic tools (reading and writing), and would then be ready for effective social action.

This is the kind of a program for which funds could be secured. I have talked briefly with Dr. Edward Brice, Specialist in Fundamental and Literacy Education, U. S. Office of Education; with Dr. C. H. Parrish of Louisville and Dean Brazeal of Morehouse College. Both Dr. Parrish and Dean Brazeal have connections with the Center for the Study of Liberal Education for Adults.

Action Teams - The need for training persons in techniques of nonviolent resistance is self-evident, I believe. This calls for specialized ex-

- 3 -

perience which could be provided by a person like Rev. James Lawson, Jr. of Nashville. I have broached the subject to him, and he says he would be available to help plan and supervise such a project under the joint-sponsorship of F O R and S.C.L.C. These action teams would be composed of persons who are committed to doing spade work in their communities.

The suggested projects would not prevent SCLC from continuing its program of workshops and voter registration assistance where possible; but would add to the leavening influence of our efforts and help generate more of a crusade by putting more people in motion. The 8 hours a month proposal could serve to not only give those participating a feeling of accomplishing a specific task each month, but also make them feel a part of a large and vital movement. On the other hand, the literacy project could provide a "respectable" channel for helping the cause without too close identification with more militant aspects of the struggle. The literacy project could well serve as the basis for calling a Southwide meeting of women, as we proposed before.

Incidentally, the Laubach method is being used in 80 countries, and 253 languages, with phenomenal results. The slogan, "Each One Teach One" certainly has crusading value.

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Appendix E

Memo From Ella Baker to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,
and Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, March 23, 1960

M E M O R A N D U M

March 23, 1960

KING LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.

TO: Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. and Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy
FROM: Miss Ella J. Baker
RE: Student Conference, April 15-17

The following developments have taken place in connection with the student conference on Non-Violent Resistance to Segregation, to be held at Shaw University, Raleigh, N. C., April 15-17:

I. VISIT TO RALEIGH - DURHAM

Last Wednesday evening, March 16, I went to Raleigh-Durham to consummate agreements on holding the student conference at Shaw University. By a favorable coincidence, Glenn Smiley arrived in Durham about the same time as I did, and I was able to discuss in some detail, the conference plans with him and Rev. Douglas Moore, simultaneously.

They agreed that the meeting should be youth centered, and that the adults attending would serve in an advisory capacity, and should mutually agree to "speak only when asked to do so". However, to avoid any conflicting points of view among adults, it is hoped that we might meet for a couple of hours prior to the opening session of the conference. I am mentioning this at this point, so that those of us who are planning to attend might schedule ourselves to arrive by noon of Friday, April 15.

I spoke with President Streamer, his administrative assistant, Mr. Keck, Dr. Grady W. Davis, Dean of the School of Religion, and Mr. Alexander, the Business Manager, regarding housing and eating facilities. Although Shaw University will only be able to accommodate about 40 students, the Dean of St. Augustine College, and the student leadership were pledged to cooperate on housing.

In addition, the YMCA is only 2 blocks away from Shaw campus, and with the combined facilities of Shaw-St. Augustine, and the 'Y', ample housing can be provided.

II. CONFERENCE COST:

- a. Housing - \$1.00 per night
- b. Meals - \$4.30 for six (6) meals (Supper, Friday night, three meals Saturday, and breakfast and lunch, Sunday)
- c. Transportation - The details of the transportation costs will have to be worked out, and will be based on bus fares from Raleigh to the various cities from which representatives are expected. I expect to have this completed by the end of the week.

III. PROMOTION AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1. Fladges of cooperation have been volunteered by F O R, C O R E, and the Southeastern Regional Office of the American Friends Service Committee. This cooperation will include financial assistance, I understand, from both C O R E and F O R, and probably from AFSC. The details of this will be determined after the total promotional cost has been estimated.
2. Contact with students. In addition to mail from our office, C O R E has agreed to send out material for us, and Rev. Douglas Moore will personally visit the key areas in North Carolina to stimulate both youth delegations ~~to the conference~~, and possible adult delegations to attend the Saturday evening mass meeting.
3. Mass Meeting - The Memorial Auditorium has been secured for a public mass meeting to be held Saturday evening, April 16. This meeting will be cosponsored by SCLC and the Raleigh Citizens Association, of which Dr. Grady W. Davis is executive secretary. The Citizens Association negotiated the arrangement, and when Dr. Davis returns to Raleigh, this week-end, He and Rev. Moore will follow through on getting out the neces-

early placards and leaflets.

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr. will be principle speaker, and other freedom fighters, and key student leaders will share the mass meeting program.

Weekly news releases have been sent to the weekly and daily papers, and will continue to be sent.

IV. PROGRAM

Program details have not been completed, but the following suggestions are under consideration:

a) Theme of Conference: Rev. J. M. Lawson, Jr.
Assistant Dean: Rev. Douglas E. Moore

SCHEDULE

FRIDAY

7:30 P.M.

KEYNOTE SESSION

SATURDAY

Morning
Afternoon

Workshop
Workshop

SUNDAY

Morning

Committee Session
Plenary Session
Findings and Recommendations

ADJOURNMENT

At Lunch

NOTE:

We should like to be able to print a program for this meeting.

Appendix F

Memo From George Lawrence to Ella Baker,
October 9, 1958

EMPIRE BAPTIST MISSIONARY CONVENTION

BAPTIST HEADQUARTERS • 453 WEST 143rd STREET • NEW YORK 31, NEW YORK • WAdsworth 6-5187

REV. SANDY F. RAY, President

REV. N. A. MASON
Vice-President

REV. JAMES C. BROWN
Corresponding Secretary

REV. GEORGE L. PAYNE
Recording Secretary

REV. COSBY B. WILSON
Treasurer

REV. SHELTON E. DOLES
Financial Secretary

REV. THOMAS KILGORE, Jr.
Promotional Director

October 9, 1958

Miss Ella J. Baker, Associate Director
Southern Christian Leadership Conference
208 Auburn Avenue, N.E. - Room 203
Atlanta, Georgia

My dear Ella:

This is to confirm the fact that you have been selected to deliver a special address to the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention during its 63rd annual session, to be held at the Metropolitan Baptist Church, 7th Avenue at 128th Street, New York City, October 20-24.

We are anxious that you will bring a message of about 20 to 25 minutes on the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. We are not able to offer any expenses or set honorarium with this invitation, but we are going to lift a special offering for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, during this annual session. As a matter of fact, letters have gone out to all of our churches urging them to bring a special offering for the work of the conference when they come to New York for the convention.

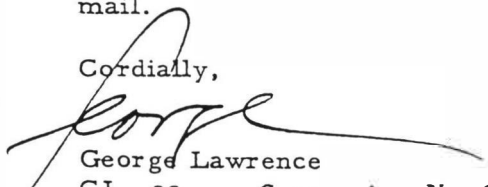
You are scheduled to speak at the 8:15 P.M. session on Friday, October 24, before the entire convention. The general convention theme is "GOD'S WILL BE DONE ON EARTH".

I know this comes as no surprise to you, since Dr. Ray told me he had informed you the official invitation would soon be on its way. Incidentally, I talked with Coretta King this morning, by phone... she says that Martin is doing fine and recovery is rapid. Thank God for his many blessings.

Please let me hear from you at once if you are able to accept the invitation. Also, rush to me about 1,000 additional copies of any promotional material you have on the Christian Leadership Conference for enclosure in our convention packet.

Busy as ever. Love and best regards to all. Looking to hear from you by return mail.

Cordially,



George Lawrence

Appendix G

Memo From Ella Baker to Rev. Sandy F. Ray,
December 16, 1958

December 16, 1958

Rev. Sandy F. Ray, President
 Empire Baptist Missionary Convention
 Baptist Headquarters
 453 West 143 Street
 New York 31, New York

Dear Rev. Ray:

Although our Finance secretary-treasurer, Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy has or will officially acknowledge the contribution of \$200.00 to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference made Friday, October 24, 1958, at the closing session of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention, I wish to express my personal appreciation for being invited to participate on your program.

The warm and enthusiastic response of the audience to our presentation of the Southern struggle for racial justice and human dignity gave heartening assurance of continuing support from our more fortunate brothers and sisters in New York. I am especially interested in the Convention's plans to expand and intensify the social-action aspects of its program, and the Leadership Conference is gratified to know that its efforts have received and will receive your favorable consideration.

Again may I thank you for the gracious reception extended me by the officials and audience of the Empire Baptist Missionary Convention and extend my best wishes for the full realization of the goals you have set for the incoming year. May good health and God's richest blessings be yours for the New Year and thereafter.

Sincerely yours,

Ella J. Baker
 Associate Director

Appendix H

Memo From Ella Baker to Rev. John L. Tilley,
March 4, 1959

CITY-WIDE VOTER REGISTRATION DRIVE

Sponsored By
The United Christian Movement, Inc.
 DR. C. O. SIMPKINS, President

In Cooperation With
The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc.
 1514 Gary Street — Shreveport, Louisiana

TELEPHONE 2-1935

REV. R. C. THOMAS, General Chairman

REV. W. S. P. NORRIS, Finance Chairman

ELLA J. BAKER, Director

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CHURCHES

Co-Chairmen
 Rev. J. C. Smith
 Rev. M. M. Flynn

BLOCK CAPTAINS

Co-Chairman
 Rev. B. Dorsey
 Deacon Ellis T aylor

BUSINESS

PROFESSIONS
 Co-Chairmen
 Mr. James Pitts
 Mr. McKinney Lewing

CIVIC and FRATERNAL ORGANIZATIONS

Co-Chairmen
 Mrs. M. C. Jarrett
 Rev. L. D. Scott

CLUBS

Co-Chairmen
 Mrs. M. M. Flynn
 Mrs. Clyde Lewis

LABOR

Chairman
 Mr. Carl Long

LITERATURE

Co-Chairmen
 Mrs. Dorothy Simpkins
 Rev. J. S. Thompson

MEETINGS

Chairman
 Miss Madeline Brewer

PUBLICITY

Chairman
 Mr. Andrew Berry

TELEPHONE

Chairman
 Mrs. Emily McDonald

AREA MEMBERS

Rev. H. Brown
 Rev. C. Byrd
 Mr. M. M. Coleman
 Rev. C. E. Galloway
 Mrs. Ernestine Germany
 Rev. G. E. Lee
 Mr. Charile Morris
 Rev. J. R. Retledge
 Rev. A. L. Scott
 Rev. L. P. Sims
 Rev. J. B. Simmons
 Rev. J. L. Stills
 Rev. R. S. Taylor

March 4, 1959

Rev. John L. Tilley
 Executive Director
 Southern Christian Leadership Conference
 208 Auburn Avenue N. E.
 Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Rev. Tilley:

Things are happening so fast here that we have been kept constantly on the go. In addition to our efforts to organize a voter registration drive, we have been involved with securing and processing voter complaints from the surrounding parishes. As you perhaps realize, this is the area in which some 10,000 Negroes were purged from the voter rolls as result of pressure from the White Citizen Council. Also, State Senator Rainach has been conducting a state-wide drive to organize registrars and other public officials in his plans to cut thousands more from the rolls. The Commission on Civil Rights has been in the area twice since I have been here and it appears that a possible hearing might be held in the state. The head of the investigation division of the Commission is expected to be in personal touch with us sometime next week. At which time, we will be better able to determine whether a hearing will be held or not.

I realize that our original plan was to have me work with the United Christian Movement for a month. As you know, I arrived here on February 7 and the month will be up this weekend. If there is no pressing reason why I should return to the office, it would be advantageous to remain here at least until March 15 or until it is determined whether there will be a ~~hearing~~ hearing of the Commission held in Louisiana.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Rev. Abernathy, Rev. Lowery, and Rev. Williams and I shall be talking with you Friday.

I trust that everything has gone well and the plans for the registration drive in Columbia, South Carolina is materializing.

Sincerely yours,

Ella J. Baker
 Ella J. Baker

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Appendix I

Memo From Rev. Jacob C. Oglesby to Ella Baker,
April 20, 1959

Christ Baptist Church

HENDERSON JOHNSON
Chairman, Official Board

4428 Burns Avenue Detroit 14, Michigan

Telephone: WA. 2-2149

ROBERT V. LEWIS
Chairman, Trustee Board

JACOB C. OGLESBY, *Minister*

HATTIE JAMES
Chairman, Courtesy Committee

JAMES HILL, Secretary
Official Board

GROVER TATE
Treasurer, Building Fund

GERTRUDE ALLISON
Church Clerk

OLIVETTE HOLDEN
Church Secretary

SAMUEL PAYLOR, Chairman
Finance Committee

ROBERT ALEXANDER
Treasurer

April 20, 1959

The Southern Christian
Leadership Conference
208 Auburn Ave., N.E.
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Mrs. Baker:

Thanks very much for your very encouraging letter which I received this morning. I am so glad that the donation was of some help to the great Cause which you represent. We only wish it could have been much more than that amount. We Negroes in the North are deeply concerned about the conditions of our brethren in the South, and we want to share in their struggles for citizenship and first-class democracy.

Enclosed is another small check of \$75.00 which we trust you can use. May God ever bless you in the great work you are doing. You have our prayers and goodwill. Give my personal regards to Dr. John Tilley, an intimate friend of mine; and tell him I shall write him very soon.

Yours very truly,

Rev. Jacob C. Oglesby

Rev. Jacob C. Oglesby

Appendix J

Memo From Ella Baker to Rev. Martin T. Robinson,
May 7, 1959

May 7, 1959

Rev. Marvin T. Robinson, President
THE INTERDENOMINATIONAL MINISTERS ALLIANCE
80 West Dayton Street
Pasadena, California

Dear Rev. Robinson:

We have been a bit delayed in acknowledging your letter of April 29th, because we are in the throes of promoting an AFRICA FREEDOM DINNER, in honor of Mr. Tom Mboya of Kenya, Africa, to be held at Atlanta University on Wednesday, May 13th, and also planning our Spring meeting to be held in Tallahassee, Florida, Thursday and Friday, May 14th and 15th.

We are happy to know that the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance has pledged to contribute \$100.00 a year to the work of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This note will acknowledge the Money Order for \$50.00 which you sent, and our treasurer, Rev. Ralph D. Abernathy, will send you the official receipt.

With appreciation for your interest and support, we are

Sincerely yours,

EJB/eb

Ella J. Baker,
Director

Appendix K

Memo From Ella Baker to Members of Committee
on Administration, S.C.L.C, October 22, 1959

October 22, 1959

M E M O R A N D U M

TO: Members of Committee on Administration, S.C.L.C.

FROM: Ella J. Baker, Director

RE: Personnel Practices and Office Equipment

The need for established personnel practices and procedures has been mentioned several times before, but now it seems imperative. The office secretary began working with us, January 5, 1959, and will have completed a year at the end of December. To date, nothing has been determined regarding her vacation or other working relations. Last December 10th, when the executive board met in Atlanta, there was some discussion by a small committee on whether the then executive and associate directors should be given one (1) month's vacation or not. It was at the point when differences of opinions became evident that the director and associate were asked to leave the room. However, apparently no decision was reached since no information on this was transmitted to the executive staff.

The matter of vacations is but one aspect of the question raised here. For focus, may we list the things we consider important to the discussion:

1. Work-week (number of hours and number of days)
2. Over-time
3. Holidays
4. Vacation
5. Salary increments
6. Sick-days
7. Termination and Leave of Absence

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W O R K - W E E K

The practice presently obtaining in the office is that clerical personnel work eight (8) hours a day (exclusive of a lunch period), and five (5) days a week or 40 hours. It is generally accepted that the eight (8) hour day should include a lunch period, and in progressive circles, a 10 minutes rest period or "coffee break" in the morning and afternoon.

While a 40 hour week is the nominal work-week for the executive staff, the demands of the office have made it impossible to observe this. It has been necessary to work as late as 3:00 A.M., Saturdays, and even Sundays.

O V E R - T I M E

The validity of compensation for over-time should be recognized. Usually the worker receives either extra pay (specified in advance), or compensatory time.

H O L I D A Y S

The following are usually observed as legal holidays:

New Year's	4th of July	Labor Day
Thanksgiving	Christmas	30th of May

"Good-Friday" is recognized by some agencies, and time is also granted to vote in general elections.

In the absence of a policy, we granted the secretary Good-Friday, Labor Day, and the 4th of July, largely in compensation for the great amount of extra time she had been required to work.

Usually one day is allowed for Christmas shopping.

V A C A T I O N

Two (2) weeks is considered the beginning vacation for clerical personnel after one (1) year of employment. This is usually increased to a maximum of four (4) weeks within a given period of years.

For professional personnel whose working-week cannot be confined to a given number of hours, a minimum of 4 weeks vacation is considered normal.

When a legal holiday occurs during a vacation period, it usually is not counted as part of that period. This year, the secretary has used two days of her probable vacation because of a family emergency, during the week-end of September 11.

The director has taken about 3 weeks in two periods - June 19 - 29, and August 17 - September 2. However, neither was free of organizational responsibilities.

S I C K - D A Y S

Some specified number of days are usually designated as sick-days for which pay is not deducted.

S A L A R Y - I N C R E M E N T S

It is considered good personnel practices to provide for definite salary increments at specified periods, and based on definite criteria. The advantage of this as an incentive is obvious.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE AND TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Provisions should be made for leaves of absence to cover illnesses, maternity leaves, study, etc.

Notice of two (2) weeks is considered the minimum time for termination of employment; and this applies both to the employer and employee. In lieu of a two (2) weeks' notice, the employee should be paid for two (2) weeks of service. If an employee resigns without giving the specified notice, he forfeits his claim to such compensation.

If employment is terminated after one year, and the employee has not had a vacation, he should be entitled to terminal pay to cover vacation pay due him.

We know that one cannot expect to "work by the clock" in a young social-action organization like S.C.L.C., nor can one expect the working conditions that

might obtain in industry or even a unionized social agency. Yet it seems justifiable to expect that good personnel policies and practices should be an inherent part of a program like ours, and should be made available to prospective employees.

As it stands, an immediate decision is needed on the vacation to which the secretary is entitled so that it can be fitted into the office schedule.

II. OFFICE EQUIPMENT

As we move toward expansion, consideration also must be given to adequate office equipment to carry out an enlarged program.

Thus far, our equipment has been minimal, and we have been fortunate to be able to borrow from our neighbors. With the following items, we could operate with greatly increased efficiency and with definite saving of "man-hours":

Postal scale	\$14.50
Mimeoscope	39.50 - 49.50
Paper cutter (30")	6.25
Sealing tape dispenser (mailing literature packages and books)	8.25
Work table	10.00 - 12.00
Desk lamp (especially needed when typing at night)	12.00 - 15.00
Mimeo-lettering guides	
Another typewriter	
Storage cabinets	67.00 ea.
Cabinet Base for mimeograph machine	99.00

We have been borrowing a mimeoscope and scales.

The tape dispenser will do in one motion what it takes several motions to do otherwise. It dispenses tape as it rolls and cuts it the desired length.

With the paper cutter, one quick pull is all that's necessary as compared to using scissors or razor blades.

Organized storage space would reduce the necessity of unstacking and re-stacking boxes when materials are needed; and would add to the neatness of the office. It may be possible to have storage shelves built for less; but a steel cabinet can easily be moved if office location is changed.

Work-table would speed up the collating and stapling of materials in large quantities, such as programs and newsletters.

Typewriters can be rented for \$7.21 a month or \$18.54 for 3 months, and can be bought for \$99.50 - up. These are Royal Standard machines, 1957 - 58 models. New typewriters can be leased for approximately \$7.00 a month, with option to buy. However, a three year lease is required. It is also possible to pick-up excellent demonstrator machines, and there is a factory guarantee on all Royal machines.

In large mailings, when extra help is needed, a typewriter could expedite the work; and we may even find some volunteer help from time to time.

eb/EJB

Appendix L

Memo From Ella Baker to Executive Board Members,
S.C.L.C., February 26, 1960

TO DOUBLE THE NUMBER OF QUALIFIED NEGRO VOTERS IN THE SOUTH

SPONSORED BY

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Inc.

208 AUBURN AVENUE, N. E., ATLANTA 3, GEORGIA
Room 203 — Telephone: Jackson 5-1763

MISS ELLA J. BAKER
Executive Director

February 26, 1960

OFFICERS

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REV. M. L. KING, JR.
Montgomery, Ala.

First Vice-President

REV. C. K. STEELE
Tallahassee, Fla.

Second Vice-President

REV. J. E. LOWERY
Mobile, Ala.

Third Vice-President

REV. SAMUEL W. WILLIAMS
Atlanta, Ga.

Fourth Vice-President

REV. T. J. JEMISON
Baton Rouge, La.

Secretary

REV. F. L. SHUTTLESWORTH
Birmingham, Ala.

Assistant Secretary

MRS. KATIE E. WEICKAM
New Orleans, La.

Financial Secretary-Treasurer

REV. RALPH D. ABERNATHY
Montgomery, Ala.

Chaplain

REV. KELLEY M. SMITH
Nashville, Tenn.

Historian

L. D. REDDICK, Ph.D.
Montgomery, Ala.

EXECUTIVE BOARD

(All officers are members of
the Executive Board)

ATTY. L. M. AUGUSTINE
New Orleans, La.

MRS. DAISY BATES
Little Rock, Ark.

REV. WILLIAM H. BORDERS
Atlanta, Ga.

REV. HENRY C. BUNTON
Memphis, Tenn.

REV. A. L. DAVIS
New Orleans, La.

REV. W. A. DENNIS
Chattanooga, Tenn.

REV. EDWARD T. GRAHAM
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Norfolk, Va.

REV. W. H. HALL
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Clarkdale, Miss.

CLARENCE HENRY
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Birmingham, Ala.

C. O. SIMPKINS, D.D.S.
Shreveport, La.

REV. DANIEL B. SPEED
Tallahassee, Fla.

REV. WYATT TEE WALKER
Petersburg, Va.

Dear Executive Board Member:

This is to especially urge you to be present at the first Retreat Meeting of our executive board on March 3-4, at the Dorothy Hall Guest House, Tuskegee Institute, Alabama.

The recent arrest of our president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., by the State of Alabama, is more than an attempt to harass Dr. King. It is another effort to slow-down the Negro's drive for first-class citizenship. This presents a new challenge to all of us to think seriously about the role that the Southern Christian Leadership Conference must play in the current struggle for civil rights, and the personal responsibility of each of us to further this program. The time for action is NOW.

May we look forward to your presence and participation.

TRANSPORTATION

If you plan to travel by airplane, it will be necessary to arrange to arrive in Montgomery, Alabama early Thursday morning or Wednesday night. There is an Eastern Flight that arrives in Montgomery from Atlanta at 9:24 a.m. (Flight No. 589). If you are traveling by train, the nearest station to Tuskegee is Chehaw, Alabama.

Please let us know not later than Wednesday morning, March 2, whether you will travel by air, and when you expect to arrive in Montgomery, or whether you will travel by train, and when you expect to arrive in Chehaw. It will be necessary for someone to meet you at either place, and drive you to Tuskegee.

We look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely yours,

KING LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES
THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. CENTER
FOR NONVIOLENT SOCIAL CHANGE, INC.

EJB/eb

Ella J. Baker
Executive Director

THE FRANCHISE IS A CITIZEN'S RIGHT . . . NOT A PRIVILEGE

Appendix M

Memo From Septima Clark to Ella Baker,
April 9, 1960

File *With reply*

HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

95

MONTEAGLE, TENNESSEE



April 9, 1960

Miss Ella Baker
407 Auburn Avenue
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Miss Baker:

I would like so much to have you serve with me on an educational committee for Highlander.

Highlander has always been an educational institution working for the development of leaders in an inter-racial residential setting. It works with school, church, labor, farm, and civic groups.

I need your help in planning bigger and more vitalizing workshops for the entire South. I feel that working together we can be of greater service to those who seek our aid.

Can I depend upon you for an immediate answer? I would like to meet and talk this over with you just before or at the close of our May 25 - 28 workshop.

Sincerely yours,

Septima P. Clark

Mrs. Septima P. Clark
Director Of Education

Ed 3-4327
Charles

Appendix N

Memo From Ella Baker to Septima Clark,
April 14, 1960

April 14, 1960

Mrs. Septima Clark, Educational Director
Highlander Folk School
Monteagle, Tennessee

Dear Mrs. Clark:

I have just received your note, so graciously requesting me to serve with you on an educational committee for Highlander.

I would be very happy to work with you in such a capacity, but I am about to terminate my present stay with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; and therefore, the cooperation you suggested may not be feasible.

However, I have a deep and abiding interest in the work you have done, and are doing, and would like to discuss your plans more fully when I come to Highlander in May.

I don't think I ever told you, but several years ago, when I first read the thrilling account of your experiences in promoting citizenship schools on the Sea Islands in South Carolina, I yearned for the opportunity to meet you. Little did I dream, at that time, that we would have an occasion to work together here in our beloved Southland. So you see, I have long since been committed to the idea of "teaming-up" with you.

I look forward to being at Highlander, and will send you a report of our Easter weekend Student Conference.

Sincerely yours,

EJB/eb

Ella J. Baker
Executive Director

Appendix O

Memo From Septima Clark to Ella Baker,
June 2, 1960

HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

MONTEAGLE, TENNESSEE



June 2, 1960

Miss Ella J. Baker
208 Auburn Avenue, N. E.
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Miss Baker:

Thanks so much for coming and working as hard as you did in our May 25-28 workshop.

We feel greatly indebted to you for the kind of service rendered. Next time bring a friend. That's a great service.

You helped to make this workshop one of the most outstanding ones in human relations. As a specialist in the field you made a superb presentation.

Again thank you and mark your calendar for dates of other workshops this summer. We would appreciate knowledge of any outcomes as a result of this workshop promoted by you.

Sincerely yours,

Mrs. Septima P. Clark
Director of Education

Appendix P

Memo From Septima Clark to Ella Baker,
June 14, 1960

HIGHLANDER FOLK SCHOOL

MONTEAGLE, TENNESSEE



June 14, 1960

1045.0

Miss Ella Baker
407 Auburn Avenue, S. E.
Atlanta, Georgia

Dear Miss Baker:

As a member of the proposed Education Committee of Highlander, I am asking you to use your influence and send at least two civic leaders to the workshop on Voting and Registration.

Enclosed you will find ten announcements and stamped cards to help with the recruiting.

Dr. Brazeal came by Saturday and told me that Mr. Warren Cochran and Mr. Lucius Pitts may be willing to find one person. I cannot find the addresses of either in our old phone book; perhaps you can call them and mail the material to them also.

Hope you will take that promised week-end and spend it here in the mountains. We would enjoy having you.

Rosa left for Louisville, Kentucky, with Anne Braden the Sunday you left and stayed there until Wednesday. She had a good time there.

I have many good letters, all from white workshop participants about the directness of the discussion in the last workshop. Many of them said that they grew in stature after hearing the Negro adults and students giving their versions of the kind of relationships they plan to establish.

We have a wonderful group of students from Cornell University here now. They are intensely interested in the current struggle.

Much love to you and hoping to both hear from and see you soon.

Sincerely yours,

Septima P. Clark

Septima P. Clark

P. S. I'm taking a trip with Reverend McKinnon to Fayette and Heyward (in Tennessee) Counties Saturday.

Appendix Q

Memo From Ella Baker to Septima Clark,
June 27, 1960

June 27, 1960

Mrs. Septima Clark
Highlander Folk School
Monticello, Tennessee

Dear Mrs. Clark:

I hope to attend the Voting and Registration workshop, and also hope that some folk will come from Louisiana.

I contacted Mr. Pitts and he indicated that he thought he could interest two persons in attending. It is also possible that some one from the Northeast Civic Council, Atlanta, will attend.

Look forward to seeing you.

Sincerely yours,

EJB/eb

Ella J. Baker

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