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# Freedom Riders

SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES



Mary Hamilton, Louise Inghram, and others

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*"... My stay in Jackson ... made my going  
on a Freedom Ride worthwhile."*

—Freedom Rider Mary Hamilton, page 19

*"... I belong to a generation which  
won't live with segregation ..."*

— Freedom Rider Robert, page 46

*"Civil Rights is the name of Freedom  
in this country ..."*

— Freedom Rider Louise Inghram, page 60

Pictured on Front Cover: FREEDOM RIDERS who were  
arrested at a bus station in Jackson, Mississippi, early  
on May 26, 1961, walk to the patrol wagon after their  
arrest. (Wide World)

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## 1 Jackson, Mississippi, U.S.A.

### *Freedom Rider Mary Hamilton:*

We pulled into the Jackson station, Sunday morning, at 10:15. Everything was deadly still. Police were posted all over—outside the station, and inside the terminal. There were a few people standing around watching us. We walked very quietly through the Negro waiting room, and into the white waiting room. Some of the people took seats.

Police Captain J. L. Ray was there, and reporters, and plain-clothesmen, and many policemen. Captain Ray walked up and said, "Who's the spokesman for this group?"

We pointed out the spokesman.

He said, "Are you all going to move on?"

Our spokesman said, "Why must we move on?"

Captain Ray said, "I said are you all going to move on? Move on, and move out of this here station."

Our spokesman said, "We're interstate travelers. What reason is there for us to leave the station?"

And he said again, he was very angry, "I said you all move on and leave this here station."

Our spokesman said, "No. We will not leave the station."

Captain Ray said, "Does that go for all of you all?"

And we all said, "Yes. That goes for all of us all."

He said, "Then you all are under arrest."

We were separated four ways: white men, Negro men, white women, Negro women. Another girl and I, who look white, said we were Negro. we were afraid we might suffer for confusing the authorities if we stayed with the white girls, so we walked over with the Negro girls.

At the entrance to the Jackson City Jail there is an inscription which says this building was erected for and by the people of Jackson, Mississippi, in honor of liberty, equality, and justice—or something like that. Everyone who saw it commented on our state of liberty and equality.

We entered the jail, and were taken to the office. Our personal things and bags were then taken from us. We lined up one by one.

and had to empty everything from our purses. Our money was counted, and watches, rings, and other jewelry were taken from us and placed in an envelope. We had to sign a receipt stating the amount of money that we had, plus any other valuables.

The official who checked our money and belongings had put on my slip I was white. When the girl behind me told me, I notified him otherwise. He was very angry. He told me that I was lying, and that I'd better not try to fool them.

I told him I wasn't lying or trying to fool them, and would he please change the identification. He did this after conferring with two other plainclothesmen, but he was obviously disturbed. This also happened to the other girl. By this time, we were getting a big kick out of it.

Then we were lined up to be fingerprinted and photographed. When I went in I was told to be seated and asked if I have any scars. I told the policeman, "No." He asked me if I was sure, so I said, "None that I can recall."

He then looked at my face, around my neck, and through my hair, and at my arms. He discovered a scar on my elbow, and told the typist to write it down. He asked if I had any others, and I said, "No."

After that, he said, "Are you Negro?"

I said, "Yes."

He said, "What else are you?"

I said, "I'm Negro and nothing else that I know of."

**"NEGRO, WHITE, MEXICAN — COMMUNIST"**

He then took it upon himself to decide what other races I could be, and told the typist to put down that I am Negro, white, Mexican, and I believe that's all. This made me very angry because I felt he had no right to take it on himself to decide what race anyone could possibly be.

After that, he began questioning me whether I had been in any other interracial demonstrations. Before I realized it, I said, "Yes."

When he asked me, "Like what?" I realized I had decided I wasn't going to answer any questions, so I told him I wasn't going to answer any questions until I saw my lawyer.

Then he began shooting questions at me very fast: "Are you a member of CORE? Are you a member of NAACP? Are you a member of the Communist Party?"

I told him I refused to answer any question. He kept throwing these questions at me. I told him he was wasting his time. He said,

"Did CORE tell you not to answer any questions?"  
I didn't say anything. I just sat there. He said, "Put down that she refuses to answer whether she belongs to the Communist Party."

I said to him, and to the typist, "Listen, you put down that I refuse to answer any question whatsoever CORE, NAACP, or anything else. But don't put down that I just refuse to answer whether I belonged to the Communist Party, because that's misleading."

He looked at me strangely, and then said, "All right. Put down that she refuses to answer any questions at all."

He told me to get up. I was fingerprinted. Then I was taken to another room where all the family history was taken down. After that we were taken into a room that was locked. When all the four Negro girls were finished, we were taken to a cell. There were two other Freedom Riders already in there. We were very surprised to see them, and very happy.

These two girls were students from Tougaloo College which is just outside of Jackson, Mississippi. One was from Texas, the other from Jackson.

After we introduced ourselves, they told us that they, and two fellows from Tougaloo had decided they would go on a Freedom Ride to refute Governor Barnett's public declaration that all Negroes in Mississippi are satisfied. These four were only the first from Mississippi to go on the Freedom Ride.

Also in the cell were four other Negro women inmates. We introduced ourselves and told them we were Freedom Riders. While they didn't speak much, their manner was very friendly. Before we left, we gave them our Freedom Rider buttons which they took very gladly, and concealed.

On each side of us there were women inmates. As we sang our songs, or shouted down the corridor, or across the way to other Freedom Riders, the other inmates said, "We know who you are, Freedom Riders. We're with you. When we get out we're going to join you."

**WHITE-JAILER RUDENESS AND NEGRO DIGNITY**

Since it was a hot, humid day, we had taken off our dresses, and hung them on the wall. There were no hangers. After we had been in the cell for 20 or 30 minutes, the door opened suddenly, and the policeman, who had become angry when we told him we were Negro, barged in on us. The girls scrambled to cover themselves.

I very politely said to him, "It isn't necessary for you to walk in on us like this. You could knock to give us a few minutes to get dressed."

He mumbled something or other, and called two of the girls out, the Tougaloo students. When he left we commented on his rudeness. We said that this was probably to be expected since Southern whites don't expect us, as Negroes, to have any modesty or respect for ourselves.

About 15 minutes later he barged in again. I said to him, "There's absolutely no reason why you have to barge in on us like this. You can knock on the door, and we'll be glad to hurry and get dressed. If you do it again I'm going to report you."

He called me a lot of dirty names, and asked me who I thought I was. He threatened to kill me.

He called two more girls out, and I told them to report it when they went downstairs. He heard me say this, and heard the girls agree that we would all report this. He became very angry, swinging his arms and threatening with his fists.

About ten minutes later, someone knocked at the door, and said, "Coming in."

There were two of us left. We got dressed. The jailer called both of our names, and we went out. This time there were two plainclothesmen. One asked me if I was Mary Hamilton. I said, "Yes."

He said the police officials requested that we keep our dresses on. He gave me a two-minute lecture, in a very nice and polite way, which all amounted to the fact that we should keep our dresses on.

When he finished, I said to him, also in a polite and quiet manner, the reason we had taken them off was because we wanted to keep them as neat and clean as possible, for as long as possible. Especially for the trial. Also the fact that it was very, very hot, and that we were mainly concerned with keeping our clothes clean.

When I said this his face dropped. He looked as though he had never heard anything like this before from a Negro woman. He looked as though he just couldn't understand that a Negro woman could feel this way. In a sense, he lost his composure for a few minutes.

When all of our girls were downstairs, we were taken to a room where all the Freedom Riders were being placed. From here we were called out, one by one, for another interrogation session.

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The interrogator went over the information that had been taken down by the first male stenographer. He asked, in a very belligerent manner, what organizations I had belonged to, and what interracial demonstrations I had participated in.

I told him I would not answer any questions until I had seen my lawyer. He took it as a personal insult because our lawyer is Negro.

I remembered that we had been told that we would probably be questioned in Jackson, and that we were not to answer any questions unless we were going to answer all questions. Our attorney, Jack Young, had given us an example. He said the other group that went through were asked a lot of questions, and then were asked if they were Communists. The other group thought this question so ridiculous that they scorned to answer it. In Jackson, they took that to mean that they were Communists, and wrote it down.

At the time we were being fingerprinted, when I was first arrested and booked, the police had said, "Do you realize that all of these people from California are not answering questions, and that therefore they must all be Communists." At that time I had replied that there was certainly no reason to assume that people are Communists just because they refuse to answer questions.

During this second interrogation, my interrogator said, "Do you realize that the Communist Party is an enemy of our country?"

This was the only time I answered him. I said, "Oh, Even you realize that it is our country also."

He told me to shut up and get out. I stood up very slowly and walked out the door.

We were moved to a cell upstairs next to some of our fellow Freedom Riders. After we got settled, we heard a jailer say to someone on the other side of us, "I told you to stop singing. Since you can't you're going into solitary."

On one side of us was a solitary confinement block. Two male Freedom Riders were put in it. One was an Episcopalian priest, and the other was a student of his. They continued to sing in solitary. We yelled over to them who we were. Then that cell, ours, and the one next to us on the other side, which also held some male Freedom Riders, all began singing Freedom Songs at the top of our lungs.

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The next morning, about an hour after breakfast, someone knocked on the door and said, "Get ready girls, I'll be in in 15 minutes." We dressed, and 15 minutes later in walked the same police official who had threatened me. This time he was forcing himself to be polite.

We were called down about lunch time to meet our lawyer. All the Freedom Riders were held in one room, and there we met him. He explained that the first trial had been long and involved, but since all trials proceed along the same lines, and since all questions and motions had been raised at the first trial, ours would be brief.

#### HINDS COUNTY JAIL

After our trial we were transferred to Hinds County Jail. It is right across the street from the City Jail. Crossing the street, we sang "We Shall Overcome," the beautiful theme song of the Freedom Rider movement. The jailers told us if we didn't stop singing we were going to find things very difficult. They shouted at us and threatened us. We continued singing as we crossed the street.

We were herded into a very small room with our luggage. Then we were split up into Negro and white, and told to follow some plainclothes policemen. We began again to sing our theme song, "We Shall Overcome." We were told to shut up. We sang louder and louder. The officials told us we were just making it harder on ourselves.

Upstairs, we were told to put our suitcases down and pick up a bedroll. We weren't allowed to take any personal things like wash cloths or tooth brushes. We were told we'd get them that night. We didn't.

The cell was about 15 by 15 feet. It had a shower stall and a toilet, all completely open. There were two barred windows at the top, and four steel bunks. When we entered, we found two other girls already there, one from Atlanta and one from Los Angeles. White girls were in one cell, and Negro girls in another. Everyone cheered as we came in.

Our blankets all smelled of urine. The sheets were soiled and dirty, and the mattresses were very dirty. The girls had collected shoe laces, and torn up their lingerie to make a clothesline that stretched from one end of the cell to the other, and to hang up the sheets and blanket around the shower. Although it was not completely effective, it did give us a little privacy. Whenever one of the girls took a shower, somebody would stand by the bars listening

to warn if the sheriff was coming, and thus give her a chance to get out of the shower.

Meals were served at 5:00 A.M., 12:00 Noon, and 5:30 P.M. Breakfast usually consisted of biscuits, grits, syrup, and chicory, a so-called coffee. For lunch we usually got cornbread and beans; and for supper usually beans and cornbread. Every once in a while there'd be a piece of fat-back—or something that looked like bacon except that it had hair on the skin which was very tough.

Our mail was always censored, coming and going. You were never sure letters got out or in. Sometimes they brought the girls an empty envelope. This is a very distressing thing. It's enough to make you break down, but none of the girls ever did. I consider myself fortunate because I did receive two or three letters at Hinds.

We were never allowed to get anything from our suitcases although we had been promised this. We had to use what was left in the cell by the Freedom Riders before us. We had face soap and detergent for our clothes, cigarettes (but often ran out of matches), playing cards, and books.

The women of Jackson had delivered something like \$400 worth of cigarettes, wash cloths, towels, blouses, Bermuda shorts, etc., to the first group of Freedom Riders. By the time our group arrived, the Jackson women were not permitted to help us. We were not allowed visits from anyone. A Negro minister visited us once, but was permitted to talk only to Negro girls. The white girls tried to talk to him, but he evidently felt it too dangerous to talk to them.

We were in a cell right next door to the white girls. The jailers were always walking by and gawking at us, but they stopped to talk with the white girls. It wasn't that we cared whether the jailer talked to us or not, it was simply that we recognized that we were being discriminated against. We really didn't discuss it openly among ourselves. We didn't want to cause any kind of trouble or misunderstanding between our two groups, but we were annoyed.

Louise noticed that this was the situation, that the white girls were receiving better treatment, and said we should all insist on equal treatment.

The other inmates did as much for us as they could—buy things for us and exchange notes between Freedom Riders. The

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fellows were down at another end. In the evening we sang to each other. The fellows sang first, and we answered. All day we looked forward to notes passed between the fellows and the girls. Our morale was high.

#### THINKING OF THINGS, BIG AND LITTLE

My feeling was that the only reason they allowed us any rights at all was because of the political situation on the outside. I felt also that it was part of the historic movement for freedom which began with the Abolitionists. I remembered David Walker and his Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the United States, and the way it had been described in News & Letters:

#### DAVID WALKER'S APPEAL

In 1829, so extraordinary a sensation was caused by the appearance of a pamphlet entitled, *Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the United States*, that legislatures in the South were called into special session to enact laws against free Negroes as against slaves for reading it. They put a price of \$3,000 on the head of its author, David Walker.

David Walker was a free Negro from North Carolina who had settled in Boston where he earned a living by collecting rags. His Appeal was addressed to the free Negroes. He took them to task for their meekness. He urged them to make the cause of the slave their own because the wretchedness of the free Negroes' conditions was due to the existence of slavery.

Walker urged them to make freedom their business. He pointed to the superiority of Negroes, in numbers and in bravery, over the whites. He took the great to task as well -- especially Thomas Jefferson. Prophetically, he wrote that race prejudice would yet "root some of you out of the very face of the earth."

50,000 copies of this 76-page pamphlet were sold and circulated from hand to hand. Those who could not read had others read it to them. The South trembled at the simple words of an obscure Negro.

The Cambridge Modern History writes that "the excitement produced by Walker's Appeal had not subsided when the danger of writings of this sort was brought home to the

slave-owners by a rising of slaves in Virginia—an outbreak known as 'Nat Turner's Insurrection'."

What the historians fail to see is that it was not "writings of this sort" that produced the revolts, but the revolts that produced the writings. Before Nat Turner and the Appeal, there was Denmark Vesey and the Underground Railway. The revolts of the Negro slaves were in fact one continuous chain of struggle from the moment they were brought to this country in chains of bondage. These slave revolts not only produced the writing, but the actual Civil War.

The Negroes had no money, no press, no vote, no party. They were armed only with their feelings for freedom and the certainty that they were right and could not and would not be kept down.

#### THE ABOLITIONISTS & TODAY'S HISTORIANS

Out of the genius of America, with no assistance from any alien tradition, there emerged the great Abolitionist movement which combined white and Negro in the cause of freedom.

As Wendell Phillips put it: "We do not play politics; anti-slavery is no half-jest with us; it is a terrible earnest, with life or death, worse than life or death, on the issue. It is no lawsuit, where it matters not to the good feeling of opposing counsels which way the verdict goes, and where advocates can shake hands after the decision as pleasantly as before."

This great American saw more clearly 100 years ago than the intellectual sees today. Today, the split of this country into two worlds—white and Negro—warps the mind of the white much more than it does the Negro. But when the white aligned himself with the Negro, as did the Abolitionists, he saw clearly enough the only road to emancipation of white as of Negro. Wendell Phillips insisted that even the Civil War could not establish new human relations unless "the blacks (became) the very basis of the effort to regenerate the South. We want the 4 million of blacks—a people instinctively on our side and ready and skilled to work; the only element in the South which belongs to the 19th century."

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Until the historian today begins where Wendell Phillips left off he will be unable to understand either the history of the country or its future perspectives.

(Excerpted from *News & Letters*, March 5, 1957)

It helped to remember the big things like this, because most of our time was "free", and taken up with the small things, which in jail suddenly all became part of the freedom fight. For example, I had to get something very personal from my suitcase. After about three days, the jailer still refused to let me go. Finally he said, "Tell one of the white girls your name. She can go to your suitcase and get it for you."

We were all immediately incensed, and told the jailer we were as responsible as any white girl, and that we were able to get our own things.

He said, "If that's the way you feel, you just won't get anything." We told him we wouldn't have anyone else doing that for us, we would do without.

This was Friday. The next morning, I didn't feel well when I woke up. I felt worse as the day went on. I thought since there was no bulk in the diet that I had constipation. I felt worse and worse. I finally decided to ask one of the white girls to ask for some epsom salts. The jailer brought it for the white girl immediately.

I took it, but it just made me worse. I became very ill. The girls began to yell for the jailer. They took cups and banged on the bars. It took a long time before he came and asked what was wrong.

When the girls asked for a doctor, he looked at me, and walked away, and came back two more times, and then said, "Oh well, we all have to die sometime. We can't live forever."

I must have become delirious. The girls tell me I said, "That bastard isn't going to kill me! That's what they want to do—kill us all off."

It took two hours to get a doctor. When he finally came, he was with the sheriff and three other cowboys. The doctor said, in a very guff manner, "What's the matter?"

You could tell by looking at me there was something wrong. My hands were drawn up, and I had no feeling in my arms or legs. My stomach hurt so much, the girls were afraid it was appendicitis. I looked up, and said, "All these men don't have to be gawking at me. Only the doctor is necessary."

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The others walked away and stood around the cell, and near the door—as though they expected us to make a break.

This doctor wouldn't even touch my bare skin. He only pressed as though examining for appendicitis. He questioned me about my bowel movement. When he heard I hadn't had any, he told the girls to give me an enema. The girls expected him to do it. They said they didn't know how. He said they couldn't pay him to give me an enema.

Earlier, the sheriff had brought in some ammonia, and had told the girls, "Give her three spoonfuls and she'll perk up." The girls said, "Are you crazy? You'll kill her." That's when he said, "Oh well, we all have to die sometime."

The next day, Saturday, the jailer brought in some things from the women of Jackson—wash cloths, tooth brushes, blouses, and such. We had gone from the previous Sunday night to that Saturday without our tooth brushes. I told the girls the only reason he finally brought them was because he feared it would get out that a girl was ill, and we had been denied our personal things.

We had been hearing rumors that we were to leave for Parchman, the maximum security state prison. They never give you more than a few minutes notice. We expected it Saturday, and then Sunday, and then Monday. We had also heard rumors that 500 Freedom Riders were to come to Jackson on the 4th of July. We all believed that, and expected it.

#### MOVING TO PARCHMAN

We were moved from the Hinds County Jail on the 3rd of July. We weren't given any time to prepare. The jailer came in, and said, "All right. You've got 30 minutes before you go to Parchman."

We sent the few things we had down to a cell at the end of the block, where Negro women inmates hid them for the next Freedom Riders. These women had also given us their names as witnesses when I was sick, which was very brave because they have to live in that city, and have no protection at all.

We were hustled upstairs to get our belongings, and to sign receipts that everything was in order. On several occasions Freedom Riders reported that money had been taken from their purses. One girl reported that she missed a \$275 ring.

We were then taken back to our cells. We were always being herded around like animals. The doors to both our cells were open. Spontaneously, we hadn't discussed it at all, I walked into the

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white cell, and one of the white girls walked into the Negro cell. When the jailer locked the doors, and was on his way out, we hollered, "Ha-ha, you're integrated!" He had to take the time to come back, unlock the doors, and put us in our segregated cells. We all got a big kick out of the incident.

Five minutes later, the jailer came back again, and opened the cells again. Again we were herded out like animals, taken upstairs, and loaded on a truck. The fellows, Negro and white, were put into a large truck. The girls were put together into a smaller truck.

All the way to Parchman, about a three-hour drive, the driver periodically slammed on his brakes real fast to throw everybody forward. We started singing "Rock-a-Bye Baby," with the words changed somewhat: "When the bough breaks, down will come baby, driver and all."

Going through town, the police escort always turned their sirens on. At the time, most of us thought this was to warn off the threatening KKK, and White Citizens Council members.

However, I found out when I returned to Jackson, after our release from prison, that this was just a device the police use to try to intimidate the Negroes of Jackson. The wife of one of the lawyers defending Freedom Riders said the police intimidation was ineffective. "We recognize it for what it is."

We finally got to Parchman. As we got out of our truck we could hear singing from within the prison. This was wonderful. It was reassuring. We had been very nervous. In our minds, going to a state prison was different from going to a city jail. We had no idea what to expect. When we heard the girls singing from the inside we were relieved. It was wonderful.

#### INTIMIDATION AT ITS WORST

They called us two at a time. Everything was done to make us feel unlike human beings. We had our toiletries in our hands, wrapped in towels. We were not allowed bags nor purses. We had with us the few little letters we had received. We walked into the building that housed the Maximum Security Unit. The first thing we were told was to put our things down, and take off our shoes. We were very surprised, not certain of what we had heard. We asked to have it repeated. "You heard me! Take your shoes off!"

I asked, "Did you say for us to take our shoes off?"

He said, "Yes. Take your shoes off."

I asked him, "Why do we have to take our shoes off?"

He said, "Shut up! You're in jail now! You're not running

things!" That's all we ever got, "You're not running this outfit! We got!" So we had to take off our shoes, and leave our towels and the few things we brought with us.

We were then taken, one at a time, into a small room. We were the first group to receive the "examination"—a vaginal test, and not performed by a doctor either.

You're always supposed to be conscious of group morale. When I went in, and saw what was happening, I practically went out of my mind with anger; but rather than say anything I just made a joke of it. That was the only way I could handle the situation without blowing my top.

When I entered the room, I saw that the two girls who had gone before me were standing—dressed in white blouses and striped skirts, but no shoes—at one end of the room. There were two white women, and one Negro woman (one white woman was a matron, the other two were inmates). I was told to strip to be examined. They gave us a vaginal examination which, as far as I'm concerned, was just the worst intimidation they could think of.

The white girls were examined by the white inmate, and the Negro girls by the Negro inmate—and it was not at all sanitary. While examining the girls, the examiner wore the same pair of rubber gloves. First she spread some type of powder on them; and then afterwards she dipped her-gloved hands into a common pot with some sort of solution in it, which was used for all the girls.

When we entered the cell block, all the girls there were singing. This made everyone feel very good. I was placed in a cell with two other girls. The jailers were shouting at us to shut up, and stop the noise. All down the cell block the girls put their hands through the bars, and grasped each other's hands to form a friendship lock, and sang. Even the jailers seemed impressed by the welcome we got.

Within the cell block, we were, of course, segregated into different cells. In the cell itself, I was able to walk seven steps in one direction, and five steps in the other direction. The cell had steel-plate bunks, a toilet, and a wash bowl. The lights in the cell were on at all times. There was no way to drink water except to use your hands as a cup. There was one bar of very oily soap, and each girl had one towel. The floors were of concrete, and were very dirty. The mattresses were made of raw canvas and smelled of disinfectant. The toilet wasn't very clean.

That evening, after we had introduced ourselves to the previous group of Freedom Riders, each giving a little bit of her background, we settled down. After supper, to pass the time, one of the women began to tell a Greek myth. It was perfectly quiet. You could hear a pin drop.

Then in stormed Sergeant Tyson, ranting and screaming, "If you girls don't stop singing I'm going to take your mattresses away from you!" It seems Tyson had been threatening the girls with this ever since they had arrived.

**FIGHTING BACK**

All at once the girls said, "Take your mattresses. We don't want them."

He was shocked. He just stood there a moment. Finally he said, "Do you really mean you don't want your mattresses?"

The girls said, "Yes. We don't want your mattresses. You're always screaming at us, saying we're misbehaving when we're not. Take the mattresses."

When they got the mattresses out—I can't explain it—the girls just started banging on the steel plates that held the mattresses. The noise was tremendous. It was really wonderful as far as I was concerned.

These kids were really fighting back, at last. We kept banging, and the officials kept running into the cell block. This went on for about three minutes. Tyson said if that was the way we wanted to act, he'd take everything away from us. "Everything" meant the one towel we had, our tooth brushes, and the tooth powder. We were left with only that horrible greasy soap. By this time we were all in striped skirts. For blouses we had to use our own. The girls said, "Take it all. We don't want it." They didn't take the Bible. We were permitted the Bible.

Lights were blazing all the time, night and day. The lights in the corridors, and the lights in the cells. At night, they opened all the windows so that the bugs could get in, and turned on the cooler so that it got very cold. By day, they closed the windows. Sometimes they left the cooler on, but it seems to me most of the time they turned it off.

We were without mattresses for two days. The steel pallets had holes in them the size of a half-dollar. The girls had bruises all over their bodies from lying on them.

A few days later, Sergeant Tyson came back and practically begged the girls to take the mattresses back. Then nine of the Negro women were moved out of their cells—I was one of them—and taken to a hospital room with nine bunks in it. We were kept there for two days.

We found out later that this was the time the delegation from Minnesota came to inspect prison conditions, and Governor Ross Barnett ordered the prison authorities to make things look good. The press reported, as a result, that the Freedom Riders were being treated fairly well. They never mentioned the crowded conditions or poor ventilation. When we got back, the other girls said they had been given back their towels, and mattresses, and tooth brushes, and had been given a decent meal, so that when the delegation came the girls supposedly had nothing to complain about. Still, it felt good to know that national interest had been aroused.

At first, we were allowed to write two letters a week. This didn't mean that the letters would get out. Nineteen lines on one side of the page only. A couple of weeks later, even this was denied us. When the mail was distributed, the only ones who received mail were those currently in favor with the matron or jailer.

The inconsistency of the officials was terrific. It reminded me of things I had read about the Nazi concentration camps. They said one thing one time, and another time they said the exact opposite. No strict schedule was ever followed. We got meals at different times. The only thing that was strictly adhered to was the 4:00 A.M. shaking of the bars, and the 4:00 P.M. shaking of the bars. Everything was done to keep us in a state of nervous tension.

We had our discussions. We had discussions about quiet hours; whether or not we would have quiet hours; or have rules imposed on us from the top. Whether we would protest because the food was lousy.

When the food was brought in, it was first hauled into an outer room, and left there for 30 minutes before it was served to us. By then it was ice cold. Mostly it was beans and cornbread. The only thing that kept most of us going was that we did get milk. We got half a cup of milk twice a day, and a horrible thing they called coffee in the morning. It was hot. That was the only good thing about it.



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## 2 The Wonderful Southern Negro

After I was released, on July 25, I remained in Jackson for four days. To me, it was my stay in Jackson that made my going on a Freedom Ride worthwhile. The four days in Jackson were really wonderful.

I had no clothes except the blouse I wore, and a few little rags I had planned to use inside of prison. The people in Jackson gave me a nice dress and lingerie. Women came over to give me skirts and blouses. People came over with fruit and food. Anything they could do to show they were with us, they did.

The Negro community pays no attention to the police. They go their own way. At an NAACP meeting, where 200 to 300 people were present, the speaker said, "Freedom is more important to us than our jobs." He really meant it. The people all cheered.

A woman speaker said, "We're tired of scratching our head when it doesn't itch. We're tired of laughing when we don't feel like laughing." Everyone cheered.

I worked at the CORE office there. Kids from the street, little tiny kids, came up the stairs and just stood there and looked at me. I said to a little 7-year-old, "What are you going to do when you grow up?"

He said, "I'm a Freedom Fighter. I'm going to be a Freedom Rider."

The same spirit had been true in New Orleans. The girls I met in the CORE group there were human beings such as I have never before met in my life. They live and breathe the movement. They told us, "I'm not only fighting this battle for my children, but for myself. I'm not waiting until I have kids to stamp out segregation." And they told us, "I would rather die than see segregation continue."

I know, of course, that the Freedom Rider movement is only an extension of the Sit-Ins in the South. A friend of mine at the State Teachers College, in Montgomery, Alabama, wrote up her experience in March, 1960:

### NOBODY MOVED

The student president, Bernard Lee, suggested that we should have sit-down lunch counter strikes, and we all

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agreed. We pledged to it. The next day 35 students went down to the City Court House to be served.

We all marched in twos and the waitress just stared at us, as though it was just a disgrace. She came over to the first table and she asked, "What do you all want?"

One boy, loud, "We want to be served."

"Served, what do you mean?"

"Of course served!" By that time she went into the main office and brought out the manager. He asked the same question and they told him the same thing.

He said, "What rights do you have here?"

One fellow, loud, "The 14th amendment." We just stood and stood. Finally in about 10 minutes there were cops just pouring in the doors.

They asked a lot of questions. They asked us our names but we refused to tell them, only that we were students at the college. The photographers made it there by that time, and they started taking pictures. We turned our backs. In this way they couldn't identify us, but they did take close up snap shots, and they took them over to the president's office, and he had to identify the students.

We went home, and back to school. The next day, the student council met and we suggested that we would have another meeting, at a church this time. We kept our meeting off the campus. After this meeting we said we were going to have another but it rained on the day planned and we didn't make it. The next day was Saturday and although we had planned to go we refused. Oh, it was awful, there were people standing all over, especially by the 10c stores. They had bats and little brown paper bags and one lady got hit by a bat.

That same night we held a meeting and we suggested that we would go up to the capital. The following morning, Sunday morning, we went to Dexter Avenue. We had planned on a march but there were approximately 600 to 700 policemen stationed on the streets and along Dexter Avenue. They were on horseback, on motorcycles and some were walking. They made us go across the street one by one. We went into the church and sang songs and prayed prayers, then we all went home. They wouldn't let us march to the capital.

The following Monday the students had signs, lots of signs. Some of the signs had on them "9 down, 2,900 to go." "1860 to 1960." "Democracy Died Today." "Who is Who?" and "It's A Shame."

**"WE WEREN'T AFRAID"**

We demonstrated on the campus, and the ground director told us to move off the campus, to go anywhere but on the campus. We refused to move off. We just gathered around in large numbers. Bernard Lee was talking to us when the ground director rode up in his car, and he has a gun of course, and he told us if we don't leave the campus there'll be serious trouble. But we paid him no mind. Immediately he fired two shots into the air. It was hysterical. Did anyone move? No! He called the police.

In about five minutes they were just numerous. Policemen all around and on every corner. The students yet held up the signs. That's when the cops said, "The baddest Negroes step out." Fourteen or 15 boys stepped out and walked right up to their guns. They arrested them and some others along the street.

One teacher just happened to be looking on and she said, "My, they are treating them brutally," and they clasped her around her arms and put her in the paddy wagon too.

They told us to move back off the streets. We refused to and just stood and stood there. They went down to get tear gas at that time. But we weren't afraid and we just didn't move.

There were several things that inspired us but I think the one that inspired us the most is when they had the tear gas and they were telling us if we stepped out we would get hurt and we just stood there and they didn't blow that tear gas. We knew we could go on.

We had planned a meeting at a church for 2 o'clock and so we began leaving two by two for the church. That is when we moved off. The policemen didn't scare us away.

One of the students at the meeting said, "Together we stand, divided we fall."

The teachers made some remarks too. They gave advice like this: "This is your life, make it what you want it to be;" "We use as we have, but we make what we want;"

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"Our laws are established and why can't we all live by them."

The whole emphasis of the strike is freedom. I do hope we can win our struggle, our fight. I hope with your help we will succeed.

What was new in the Freedom Rides is that they involved white and Negro in the South. Everyone was so anxious to do something really definite to change this system that they threw themselves into the Freedom Movement completely.

### ***Freedom Rider Louise Inghram:***

I agree with Mary that the most wonderful experience of all is getting to know the Negro community in the South. You get to know them first when you are in jail. It was in the Hinds County Jail that Mary became quite ill. She was naturally in a Negro cell.

She had been sick for about six hours, but they hadn't told us in the next cell. When we found out about it we screamed for a doctor for about 50 minutes. She was turning quite pale, her hands were becoming stiff and freezing. She felt she was going to vomit but couldn't. We feared that she had an appendix condition, so we screamed. The prisoners in the next cell, who were Negro girls, also screamed. The ones who were on the other side of them, white girls, also screamed: "Jailer! Jailer! Doctor. Call a Doctor!"

When you are in jail the most frightening thing is for someone to get sick because you don't know what it is. You don't know what kind of medicine you are going to get. You don't know if you are going to get any. It becomes imperative for the prisoners to try to get help for the sick person.

Finally, the doctor showed up. I said we thought she might have an appendix condition. We therefore refused to let her have an enema unless he would administer it himself. He said, "You can't pay me to touch that girl." As you can see, he was a white doctor.

Since Mary had become so ill, and since we had been calling for our lawyer, demanding that we see him immediately to try to get a Negro doctor for the Negro prisoners—and, we hoped, for the white Freedom Riders also—the guards decided to give us the packages sent by Woman Power Unlimited.

#### WOMAN POWER UNLIMITED

Woman Power Unlimited is an organization of Jackson women founded as a result of the Freedom Rides. They had formed in order to bring things to make life easier for the Freedom Riders in Hinds County Jail. They brought cigarettes, candy, fruit juices, change of clothing for the girls and for the boys. They did as much as was possible to make jail more bearable, until the jailers told them that they could no longer do that. Then they set up a committee to feed the Riders as they came out of jail: Give them a good meal, a place to wash and change into fresh clothing. Whenever possible, they took the girls to beauty shops and the fellows to barbers. In short, they tried to do whatever was necessary to help us feel and look like human beings again.

Their relationship to us, white and Negro, when we were in jail, gave the lie to the slanders in the press that the Southern Negro was "hostile" to the Freedom Riders. The greatest of all thrills was their activity outside. This is what really inspired the Freedom Riders from the North. I will never forget the enthusiastic mass meeting right in Jackson when we reappeared for our trial.

We got into Jackson and went around both colored and white waiting rooms. We boarded the bus and were taken immediately to Tougaloo College, a Negro college just outside of Jackson. Tougaloo and Campbell Colleges were the only two campuses brave enough to house the Freedom Riders.

We had a meeting in the Chapel—we were always having meetings—which was called by the brass to work out how we were to behave in Jackson. I might add here that we were instructed, before we left New Orleans, not to test the facilities in the depot where we were sure to be arrested again. That's why we went around the two waiting rooms. At the meeting we were informed that the police had threatened to arrest everybody if we so much as sang one note of one song in the City of Jackson, or on the way there or back. We agreed not to sing.

The white New York lawyer suggested to us, in order to avoid re-arrest, that we go into Jackson and into the courtroom segregated and to integrate only after we were inside the courtroom. He also asked us to let him handle the legal problems if they insisted on trying to segregate us in court.

There was a great murmur of disappointment. We left the meeting disappointed and unhappy. During lunch, little groups

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began clustering and discussing the situation. We decided that we would not segregate. Another meeting was called.

At the second meeting, Rev. Vivian said someone had told him we weren't happy about the decision to segregate. A yell of "That's right!" went up in that hall. We decided then and there that we would integrate. This time the roar of approval was deafening. When we sang "We Shall Overcome," this time, it was a victory song. We had won. We had come to Jackson to integrate, and integrate we would.

#### MASS RALLY IN JACKSON

There was a rally in Jackson the night before we went to court. It was pouring down rain. I've never seen rain like that in person, only behind bars. I'm sure many people who would have come were kept away by that rain.

The place holds 1,500 people, and it was filled to capacity. The police, who were out in force, refused to let anyone stand. When the seats were filled, the rest of the people were made to disperse. They weren't even permitted to wait outside the building. They were forced to move out of the neighborhood altogether. That leads me to believe at least 3,000 people turned out to attend that rally—there in Jackson, Mississippi.

The police refused to allow any white people, except the Freedom Riders, to enter the auditorium on the grounds that they were keeping the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens' Council out. Actually they were keeping Negroes out.

The Freedom Riders were all there. We received a standing ovation. We sang that night within the borders of Jackson. The police did not arrest us for doing it. I think they would rather never see a Freedom Rider again, if possible, and the last thing they wanted was to put 189 of us back in jail at once. They also were not so foolish as to try to arrest us with 1,500 Negroes around, and in the middle of the Negro section.

At the rally we learned that Woman Power Unlimited, the organization of Jackson women I mentioned before, had moved from aiding the Freedom Riders—since they were no longer permitted to come to the jail — into the arena of civil rights itself. They had taken on the project of voter registration in Jackson. They said that this was the result of the Freedom Rides. We Riders stood and gave them a standing ovation. There is no doubt that Jackson will never be the same city.

Many Negro homes are patrolled by police, spotlighted at night, and so forth. This form of intimidation does not stop the people I have met, but only makes them more determined than ever to continue to fight.

After the rally, we returned to the campus. The next morning there were reporters all over the campus, but they were not allowed at our meetings. We recorded our songs which will appear in an album similar to the one on the Sit-Ins.

We then boarded busses, integrated, and drove to Jackson. On the way in we waved to all the Negroes we saw, and they all waved and smiled back. Even when their white bosses were standing right there beside them. There must have been a lot of unemployment on that score.

We walked up the courthouse stairs, integrated, and we were the most wonderfully good looking people in that city that day. There were 189 Freedom Riders walking with heads held high, broad smiles on our faces. Negroes waved to us wherever they could.

#### MAXIMUM SECURITY UNIT

I now wish to retrace my steps back to jail and show the treatment of the white "prisoners." I will describe Parchman. The part we saw was surrounded by barbed wire with the top of it electrified. You can see the generator. There were two gun towers on each side of a long, low, red brick building that looked like something out of Dachau. It was quite modern but it had an ominous look. There were also two gun towers behind it. They were about 50 feet high and very well constructed.

They pulled the boys' van up to the girls' side of the prison, which was a tremendous mistake on their part for the girls immediately started singing welcome songs. The girls yelled to the boys. "Who is there? What is the news? Do you know so-and-so? My name is so-and-so."

We girls who were at the front of the building didn't know the questioning that was going on, but we could hear the singing. We couldn't hear any men prisoners on the inside singing. This worried us because we knew that they were in there. We began to sing too. We sang our songs. Each person had made up his own songs because nobody knew the original Freedom Rider songs. We had no time to learn them so we made up our own verses. Some of them go like:

"... Barnett, he shall be removed—

Just like the garbage  
Floating down the water,  
He shall be removed."

Then,

"We're going to roll  
We're going to roll  
We're going to roll  
Right over them."

"Then" meaning Barnett and all his friends.

Finally, we were taken inside a little vestibule, two girls at a time. There was a wooden table, and a cot. This is where we found out later our matron lived. She used to be a trustee. She graduated. She is free. She is a matron.

There we were searched. We were told to remove all our clothes, which we did. We left all our personal belongings on the outside. We were not allowed to take anything, not even string, in with us. All the preparations we had made to have writing paper and all that, were to no avail. Inside, we were made to submit to a vaginal search. We were the first group to be subjected to this humiliation.

Then they took the bobby pins out of our hair and gave us striped skirts. We were allowed to keep our bras, panties, blouses, and the striped skirts. We were not allowed to keep our shoes or stockings or any of such niceties. Then we were led inside.

In the meantime, the girls had still been singing along, the girls on the inside who knew we were Freedom Riders. They greeted us with beautiful singing. We were given towels, sheets, tooth powder, tooth brush, and soap. That was our little kit.

Eventually, the singing stopped, and one of the girls, Betsy, began to tell us her Greek mythology. This was our bedtime story every night. Each person would do something if she could. Because we couldn't see each other, we told stories or sang. The Southern students had beautiful voices. Unfortunately we Northerners weren't as talented.

In the middle of the Greek story, Sergeant Tyson, of Jackson farm, and Sergeant Storey walked in and said, "You going to keep quiet?"

Betsy asked our spokesman, a Southern Negro student, Pauline, what to do. Pauline said, "We aren't making that much noise. Go ahead and finish your story." Betsy continued with her story. That was when they took our mattresses as Mary has described.

It is very hard to sleep on steel. I would keep leaving that steel tray to lie down on the cement floor for coolness. The bugs would start coming so I would go back to the tray for getting away from the bugs. This was July 3rd.

As we found out later, a delegation from Minnesota was on its way to inspect conditions at Parchman. All of a sudden, they started cleaning. Each cell was washed. They took nine of our Negro girls out completely, and put only two inmates in each cell. We didn't know what was happening, and didn't know where those girls were going nor what was going to happen to them. They were taken out on the morning of July 5th. Our mattresses were given back to us.

One delegation came in. We didn't know who they were. We didn't know what was going on, so we didn't get a chance to tell them very much. They asked us how conditions were. Pauline was taken along with the other eight Negro girls. She was our spokesman; they made sure to get her. We had two other spokesmen. We had elected three in case anything should happen to us, a first, second, and third spokesman. Our second spokesman, Joan, is a white Southern student, which was very aggravating to the guards.

The delegation asked her how conditions were. She said, "Don't kid yourself. This is the best we have ever had it. We just got our mattresses back. They have taken nine of our Negro girls out, and we don't know where they are. We did have three in a cell."

As a result of all the delegations, we got three brushes for the whole cell block, and one comb.

The white men were taken to a barracks-like enclosure which had no cell. The whole barracks was a big cell. Which meant that they could run, they could talk, they could move around, and they could take showers as often as they wanted. They got no extra privileges, however. They immediately went on a protest hunger strike against being moved away from the Negro men. They said that they either wanted to be returned to Maximum Security Unit (MSU) or to have the Negro men brought to the barracks. The protest was to no avail.

The white men still had to wear the MSU uniform, which consisted entirely of one pair of khaki undershorts. They were

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apparently deliberately given out in the wrong sizes--all too big. This meant that the men would have to walk around holding their shorts up to keep them from falling off.

Their food was about the same as ours. Rumors were fostered by the guards to the Negro men that the white men had all kinds of extra privileges which the Negro men didn't have. This was not true, and when CORE found out about it through people leaving they sent in messages to dispel the rumors.

The girls were in a much better position than the fellows. We knew that when we got in. The boys were not singing any more. We could not hear them at any time, and that depressed the girls a great deal. But the girls continued to sing.

When the guards took the mattresses from us, and we pounded on the steel, that was the only time the boys knew what was happening. The jailers had closed off the doors so that we couldn't hear each other. But the tremendous din of 28 steel pallets being pounded in rhythm with our singing reached quite a pitch. Everybody heard it. The boys knew then that our mattresses were gone because you don't make a sound like that otherwise. They protested also. They waited until Tyson walked in, and said, "Give the girls back their mattresses."

He said, "Go to hell."

They said, "All right, take ours." He did.

We didn't know that. We had no way of knowing.

We had heard a story, when we got in, that a Negro girl from Tallahassee, had refused to take a shower because she is afraid of athlete's foot. So they came to her cell, three trustees, one Negro and two white, and took her out to the shower, put wrist-breakers on, and took a floor brush, and gave her a G.I. shower. Apparently she was badly scratched and bleeding, and everything else when she came back. This was before we got there. We only heard the story. This girl, apart from that, had a bleeding ulcer and vomited up every meal consistently. The only thing she could keep down sometimes was milk. So we all gave her our milk.

There was only one other incident of physical violence against the women that we heard about: a Negro girl was said to have been slapped by a guard when she refused to say, "Sir." She was booted out within four days of her arrest. The guard was reprimanded and then put back as a guard. I don't know which one of the guards it was.

### DISCUSSIONS, AND CHOOSING A SPOKESMAN

We had meetings for hours on end about non-violence.\* Some said, "We believe in it as a way of life. Gandhi would have done such and such and such and such."

Then some of the Northern people started to say, "It is not non-violent to protest at all."

Whereupon the Southern students who believed in Gandhi said, "Now wait a minute here. That's not so. We kept our singing going. We should have stopped singing if that is what you believe; do everything that the jailer tells you, and simply lie down and let them step on you."

There was quite a turnover of "prisoners." Some went out on bail and others took their place. As the composition changed, so did the discussions. When the food got very bad we debated: Should we protest? Despite all the delay over whether that would be considered violent or non-violent, we voted to protest, and chose our spokesman.

All of a sudden, Tyson showed up. Somehow he knew we were going to protest. He walked in and stood in front of the spokesman's cell, waiting for something, until she protested. She got about halfway through her speech, when he said, "We don't have no menu down here you know." And he went away. But within two days the food got better.

We learned to listen to each other. We could never see each other except on shower days. We were all such physical wrecks then that we knew we'd never be able to recognize each other on the outside. One of our jokes when we got out, and thought we recognized a Freedom Rider, was to say, "MSU, class of '61: say something so I can recognize you!"

This is how we chose our spokesman: We all knew at least our own group. The newer people were excused from voting for the spokesman until they got to know the people better. Each candidate also gave a small talk on her civil rights experience, and how she viewed non-violence, as a tactic or as a philosophy. For instance, when I came in, we already had a first, second, and third spokesman. They were elected by the group which was there before we came. By the time those spokesmen left, we knew the rest of the girls from the discussions and meetings we had.

Mary said that in a movement of this kind she'd like to see a Negro as first spokesman, and a white as second. We'd decided on only two because we now had fewer girls. One of the girls

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spoke out and said, "Nobody's going to tell me whom to vote for. I'll vote for the person I think is qualified." There were people who said, "That's prejudice in reverse."

As I recall, I had been nominated for spokesman at that time, and I said, "That's not prejudice in reverse, and I don't think there is a person in here who isn't qualified. In a movement of this kind it would be the way to show our democracy by having at least one, or even two Negro spokesmen, rather than two white." It turned out that we elected a Negro as first spokesman, and a white as second.

#### KENNEDY'S NAME IS A DIRTY WORD

There was no hope that the government would intervene. The girls kept griping about the fact that the government was not coming in. As for Kennedy's name—among the "prisoners" it was a dirty word. The Jackson students invented a song. We girls sang it a little differently: (to the tune of "Frere Jacques")

Brother Bob  
 Brother Bob  
 Are you sleeping?  
 Are you sleeping?  
 Freedom Riders waiting,  
 Freedom Riders waiting,  
 Enforce the law!  
 Enforce the law!

The only difference between our version and that of the Jackson students is that they sang: "Brother Ross . . ." (Ross Barnett, Governor of Mississippi).

We were expecting to leave on bail, Tuesday, August 1st. They usually took people out on Tuesdays and Fridays. Apparently they change the routine every once in a while, just when you're getting used to it. It's done to shake you. Until this time, whenever they brought prisoners in, they took others out in the same truck. This time, when they brought prisoners they didn't take any out. We were three girls all dressed and waiting to leave. We saw the trucks leaving, and our hearts went down a bit.

Finally, the truck came on August 4th with no prisoners on it, and took us out. I guess they were just playing their usual demoralizing games.

By that time, after being ill, having no exercise, and just lying in my bunk all the time I was in the penitentiary, I wasn't in very good physical condition. When we were taken back to Hinds

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County Jail to sign our bail bond, I almost didn't make it up the two flights of stairs.

#### MEETING A WEST GERMAN REPORTER IN A MISSISSIPPI COURTHOUSE.

It was at this point that we met an Indonesian student, and a West German reporter. We had heard about them in Parchman because they had been with another group of Freedom Riders which had just come in.

We found out that the Indonesian student was on a Freedom Ride and was told by the State Department to get out of the Ride. He was told that it would embarrass both his government and our government a great deal if he got arrested in Jackson. When he refused to leave, two FBI men bodily removed him from the train before it arrived in Jackson.

The West German was in the station at Jackson covering the Freedom Riders. He took pictures as a group of Riders was arrested. He was told to stop photographing and to move on. He refused, so he was told again. He still refused, so he too was arrested.

He was the only man who defended himself at the trial of the Freedom Riders, and he did it beautifully. He said he'd just come from covering the Eichmann Trial in Israel. There, he said, was a mass murderer, a man who had killed six million Jews, yet he was given the privilege of coming into court with a clean shirt and a shave. Yet, here, in Jackson, Mississippi he was not granted the same privilege for the "crime" of walking into a train depot. The judge responded that maybe if he had killed six million Jews he might have been granted the same privilege.

Then he caught himself and tried to say that he really wasn't in favor of killing six million Jews, which I doubt. The reporter continued with phrases like, "When I was in Washington talking to Robert Kennedy —" At that point the judge sank low in his chair. The reporter actually talked his way out of the charges, and I bet he was the only man ever acquitted of "breach of the peace."

He tried three more times to get arrested. Every time a group of Freedom Riders came in, he went down to the depot to join them, and each time he was not arrested.

In Jackson we were met by CORE people, by our lawyer Mr. Young, and were taken to the homes of women in Woman Power Unlimited. There was a beautiful fried chicken dinner which, unfortunately, I couldn't eat as I had lost my appetite.

Then we were informed that our trials were to take place in

ten days, on August 14, 1961. We had a choice: we could go home, which was inadvisable; or we could stay in Jackson; or we could go to New Orleans, and wait there until the trial. I said I was going home to see my son, and would return to Jackson on the day before the trial, but that I had to go to New Orleans first to pick up some things I had left there.

**REIGN OF TERROR IN NEW ORLEANS JAILS**

All of our group went back to New Orleans on Friday, August 4th. I made arrangement to leave there, by plane, on Monday night. On Sunday night, however, I was waiting for a bus at a bus stop with two other girls, one of whom was a white Freedom Rider, and the other was a Negro CORE member from New Orleans.

It was about 1:15 in the morning. A squad car pulled up beside us and asked for our identification. All that the other Rider had with her for identification was a CORE card. They asked her, "Have you ever been arrested before?"

She said, "I just got to New Orleans a few days ago, and couldn't possibly have been arrested in such a short time."

Then they said, "Well, have you ever been arrested before in any other place, like Mississippi?"

She answered, "What makes you think that?"

By this time, I knew they were going to take us in. I wasn't going to let them think that I was ashamed of being a Freedom Rider. I said, "I'm a Freedom Rider." The other girl said the same. I said that we were on our way home. They replied that they'd like us to leave as soon as possible. I answered, "That's what we're trying to do."

Another squad car pulled up while we were talking. We thought, before this car had pulled up, that we might get off with only a lecture. But one young policeman from the second squad car said to the others, "Listen, you book them, I'll be a witness." They liked that idea and said, "OK we're gonna book you."

I said, "On what charge?"

Smiling, they answered, "We'll think of something."

I think that when they saw an integrated group standing together their wee minds clicked, because the news that all the Freedom Riders were to appear in Jackson on the 14th had been in all the papers. It was from this time until the end of the week, that the reign of terror began against Freedom Riders.

Although I had \$15, and am a housewife; and the other Rider had \$20, and is a student, and the third one of us lives, and is

employed, in New Orleans, we were nonetheless picked up on charges of (1) vagrancy, and no visible means of support; and (2) loitering. Where else can you catch a bus except at a bus stop? I don't know. But in New Orleans that was called "loitering."

In the squad car, on the way to jail, I said to the police that it was obvious they were arresting us for being Freedom Riders in another state, not for anything we had done here.

He replied that was not true, because if it were, we would have been arrested for prostitution!

We were taken to the Second Precinct in New Orleans. We were questioned more brutally and more vulgarly there than we ever had been in Mississippi. The first question out of their mouths was, "Are you Communists?"

All three of us answered, "No!" very fast and very loud.

They asked me such things as, "What does your husband think about you running around like this?" And, "You're gonna have to lay a lot of lovin' on him to get him back when you get home! He's not waiting for you, he probably got another woman by now." Then they smiled and said they were going to call in the FBI to investigate us.

I got very angry by this time and said, "Go right ahead. The FBI had a man on the train with us all the way to Jackson to protect us from people like you. They've already investigated all of us." This set them back a little bit.

Of course, our Negro friend was treated badly, and was the butt of very crude remarks. They used much worse language than we had ever heard in Mississippi. They were just plain mad Crackers.

Then they took us to our cell. This was the worst jail by far, that I've ever been in. It looked like the dungeons out of "Les Miserables." The cell was smaller than MSU, maybe five feet by seven or eight. It was very dark. Instead of having bars on one end, the wall with the door in it was completely solid except for the top two-and-a-half feet, which was latticed. It had one wooden bench in it. In order to see out into the hall, you had to climb up onto the bench and peek out.

We were put in with another white woman prisoner. The three of us had to try to sleep on that bench. There was no sink in that place, there was a drinking fountain instead. The other prisoner, who had been there about six days without soap, without tooth powder or tooth brush, had been washing her underclothes in the

filthy toilet bowl, as there was nothing else there to use. The cell was absolutely filthy.

The meals consisted of two sandwiches a day, and coffee. Our Negro girl friend was put in the next cell by herself.

At about 4:00 A.M. we were taken to Parish Prison to be fingerprinted and mugged. They were much more thorough than Mississippi had been. They were trying to make us feel like real criminals. They took more fingerprints than Mississippi, and even asked if our ears were pierced.

We were returned to the Second Precinct, and went to our cell. Our Negro girl friend was not returned with us. We were told that she had been bailed out. We didn't know whether to believe it or not. We were worried about her. We found out later that her mother had bailed her out, but did not have enough money, or she would have bailed us all out.

We tried to get a little sleep, three of us curled up on the bench. We no sooner fell asleep than breakfast came. After eating half our sandwich, and saving the other half for later in case we got hungry at lunch time, we were again taken to Parish Prison.

This time we were put in the line-up. This is rather unusual treatment for vagrants. They made no pretense of having us there to identify us. We were there to be questioned and harassed. They asked my girlfriend, "where do you get your money?"

She said, "It's my money."

Voices from behind the screen yelled, "She's a nigger f..... g whore."

They asked me how many people in the family I was staying with were CORE members and how many CORE people lived in the house.

I answered that I was not a CORE member and I didn't know who was in CORE and who was not.

We were then returned to the Second Precinct, and released to appear in court at 1:00 P.M. After the judge made a mockery of the courtroom by haranguing us for half-an-hour or more, the charges were dropped. He said the Negroes in the South are all happy, and called us Northern agitators, etc., etc., etc., Ad nauseam. All this took place on Monday.

On Wednesday, at 5:00 in the afternoon, an integrated group of seven Riders was arrested in a Negro project. We had been distributing leaflets about our rally which was to take place that

Friday. We were arrested for distributing leaflets of the wrong size, and without a permit.

This time we went to the Sixth Precinct, which is a much nicer jail. It's clean and modern. We never got into the cells, which looked the same as Parchman except that they had four bunks, and were a little larger. They had no mattresses on the steel bunks, which also reminded us of Parchman.

This time we were taken to Parish Prison immediately to be fingerprinted and mugged. They took mine again, but didn't photograph me again.

When we went back to the Sixth Precinct, we were told that we had been paroled. Before we could leave, they questioned each of us again. This form of questioning was very much like Mississippi. Very polite. Starting with name, address, religion. They didn't want to believe I was Jewish, but I finally convinced them. Then the cop asked, "Is your husband a Negro?" I became furious. Until that question, I hadn't recognized the form of the questioning as the same old harassment technique. I had thought it was simply factual. I answered "I don't think that's any of your business."

Then the policeman, who remained polite throughout, said, "You don't have to answer any of these questions, you know."

I said "Fine, then I won't answer any more questions."

He asked another one anyway, "Are you a Communist?"

I said, "I told you I wouldn't answer any more questions."

He said that I was free to go.

The next day, a Thursday, we appeared in court. It was my second appearance before the same judge. Our lawyer argued that since the Louisiana State Supreme Court had ruled recently that no permit was necessary to distribute a leaflet which had to do with things political, religious or ideological, that our arrest was a violation of both the Supreme Court of Louisiana, and of the Federal Government. But these people don't even follow their own laws when it comes to integration. The case was postponed until Friday. The judge said we had to see if we could get a permit. We did.

We were scheduled to appear in Jackson on the following Monday, and had, therefore, to leave the jurisdiction of the court. Our lawyers advised us to go. So we did, and no one showed up for the trial in New Orleans.

After that the terror around us really began to mount. One home where Freedom Riders were living was patrolled at night

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by squad cars. They flashed their spots on the house to see if there were whites there. All the whites had to stay inside.

Naturally, we stayed with Negro families. They were the only ones who would have us. It's against the law in New Orleans, for whites to live with Negroes, to socialize with Negroes. It used to be all right before Freedom Riders came along. They didn't enforce that too strictly.

There was some discussion as to whether we should attend the rally, or not. We expected 15 more Riders on their way to Jackson from California. That would have meant 30 of us at least would not make it to Jackson if we were arrested Friday night. Well, those 15 were re-routed around New Orleans and so that problem was overcome. We were assured by our lawyers that the police would not arrest us at the rally as they never arrest you directly on segregation laws, always on something else.

Friday night we went to the rally. A squad car followed two CORE members, a Negro man and a white woman, while they were on the bus, all the way from the house to the church. The only integrated thing in New Orleans are the busses.

Squad cars were patrolling the entire neighborhood where the rally was. Many people who would have shown up, saw the police and turned around and walked back. The police had also spread the rumor in the neighborhood that they would raid the rally, which also kept many away. As a result, there were only 150 to 250 people there.

I forgot something about the arrest, so I'll add it here. Mrs. Wagner the blind lady whom Jackson, Mississippi would not arrest was one of seven people arrested with me distributing leaflets. If Jackson thought it would be too cruel to arrest a blind woman, New Orleans had no compunctions about it.

Four of us spoke at the rally, and we were able to raise about \$150 for New Orleans CORE, which needed it badly.

We all went home and were restricted to quarters. We were not even allowed to go out to hang the wash anymore, since we lived in a Negro neighborhood.

On Saturday night, we got a phone call informing us that three of the Freedom Riders from my group had been taken out of a private home where they had gone to dinner, and had been taken down to the police station for interrogation. By the time someone was able to go down to see about getting them out, they

had been charged with vagrancy. The next thing we knew, they had been charged with "simple assault, aggravated assault, and attempt to escape."

This is how it happened. They put a man, a white prisoner, in the paddy wagon with them. He found out they were Freedom Riders and he beat them up. As soon as they opened the door, the prisoner claimed that they had beaten him and had tried to escape. I understand he's a very big man, and these kids are very skinny. They'd just been in jail for 40 days, and as a result of many hunger strikes had lost about 20 pounds apiece. They couldn't afford to lose that much before they went in. Then the police beat them, and put these charges on them. One of them ended up with stitches in his head. He is a white Southerner. They were especially rough with him. Another one had his tooth broken. The police had pushed his face into the concrete floor. The third had welts all over his body.

We were all expecting "the law" to knock on our doors, and take us all to be arrested in order to keep us from getting to Jackson. CORE stood to lose \$500 apiece for every Freedom Rider who didn't show up for the trial. None of us slept that night. We were too worried about our three men.

They have the most wonderful lawyers in New Orleans. Ours told us, after he saw the men, that they were the most marvelous and brave people he'd ever seen. He had tears in his eyes when he reported that after such a cruel beating they were able to smile through puffed and swollen mouths, and joke, and send a kiss to the girls. They told him that they weren't worried. They knew that everything possible was being done to get them out in time for the trial.

They may not have been worried, but we sure were. We didn't know what else the police might have in store for them.

The police didn't come to get us. The next morning, we went to the train depot to take our second ride to Jackson. The usual number of police were there, joking and smiling and calling us by our first names to jar us. They said, "We understand you lost three of your men, huh? What happened?"

One of the girls from New Orleans became ill because she was so angry that these may have been the same police who had beaten the men. She shook like a leaf.

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### SELF ACTIVITY OF NEGROES

I want to say here that in New Orleans I met the finest young people in the world. As I wrote when I first came here on the way to Jackson:

The New Orleans CORE is magnificent. They are all very young—from about 17 to 23. And they are mostly girls, only about a half-dozen men.

What a difference between here and up North. These youngsters are so conscious, aware and mature that they make me sick to my stomach at those who do more talking than doing.

They have been picketing Woolworth's here for about three months, every day from 2 to closing. They are spat upon, jeered at, and worse. When they come to picket, carrying the signs, they are run at by cars as they cross the streets. They have a quiet courage that is indescribable.

Those who have been on the rides are some of the same ones who have picketed every day, and they are the real core of CORE. And they are all girls, if you will allow me a bit of feminism.

In contrast to our contingent of Freedom Riders who came with a bit more feeling of adventure (but still very seriously and with deep convictions), those who have ridden from New Orleans can only be described as having an added new dimension of complete and utter dedication.

I don't mean to tear our group down, but these young women have lived in the South all their lives, and know that this is where they will return to live when the ride is done. That is a qualitative difference which I feel as a Northerner immediately upon meeting them, and of which they are also aware.

I have no doubt that every Freedom Rider will come back with a new added dimension, and that this "spirit of adventure" I have mentioned is also a cover for nervousness at the prospect of possibly being lynched if we get past Jackson. I have no doubt that most of us would feel some relief if we don't get past that fair city, including me, but I feel that this must happen soon, and if it happens to be our group, it must be done.

This time, when I returned after forty-two days in Jackson jails, I had an even closer kinship with these courageous Freedom Fighters. The girls I met, and especially the one I lived with in New Orleans, are very sharp and well informed on Africa, on the world situation, and in general. The woman I lived with is a

Gandhian, but she's much more interested in all phases of the world than simply the Sit-In movement, and simply civil rights.

We saw a TV program on Africa which whitewashed DeGaulle, and said how wonderful the French Federation is, and how stupid poor Ghana was to get out of it. We were both having a fine time laughing at that. She was sick to her stomach at DeGaulle. She knew the whole situation in detail.

She's a 29-year old girl who's trying to keep up her studies at the same time, and finding it impossible. She was jailed in New Orleans for 30 days before the Freedom Ride. She went from there to the second bus to Alabama—the one that got through. Then she went to the first bus in Jackson, where she was again jailed.

Another woman was particularly impressed with the special Freedom Rider issue of News & Letters (August-September, 1961). I had thought it was because their story was printed there, and I said so. She replied that what she read first was the editorial on Civil Rights, and she said it was wonderful, and 100 per cent true. I think what she liked best is how distinct it is from anything a Communist might say on the subject. Here it is:

EDITORIAL

**THE STATE OF CIVIL RIGHTS, U.S.A., 1961**

Two events, one in the Deep South, and the other in the capital, disclose the shocking state of civil liberties in the United States, marking us as a nation on the road to totalitarianism.

IN THE SOUTH

The jailing of 227 Freedom Riders in Jackson, Mississippi (See the lead article, "Freedom Riders Speak For Themselves") has focused the world spotlight on the jungle law that rules the South. It reveals equally clearly the willful impotence of the Federal Government to enforce the law of the land on desegregated interstate travel. The Federal officials claimed that they were "helpless" in the present situation. At the same time the Attorney General had the effrontery to ask for a "cooling off period" by the Freedom Riders who were brave enough to challenge the Southern bigots. We suggest that the Attorney General test for himself the coolness of a Mississippi jail during the long, hot summer.

#### IN THE CAPITAL

Allegedly, at the opposite pole from the white supremacists stands the U. S. Supreme Court. Nearly 200 years after the Declaration of Independence, 100 years after the Emancipation Proclamation and the 14th Amendment to the Constitution, the Supreme Court at long last ruled for desegregation in education. As was clear, however, from its "due dispatch" loophole, the South was granted enormous leeway to disregard the ruling. Far from charting a course for human rights, the present Supreme Court differs in no fundamental respect from the nine old men who sat on that bench in order to waylay much of the New Deal legislation.

The shaky majority (5-4), by which some liberal rulings are handed down, is quickly dissipated the moment the atmosphere emanating from the White House changes, at which time the majority shifts to the opposite end.

This has been the case ever since the President of the United States, at the time of the invasion of Cuba, had declared that "the deeper struggle" is not with arms, but with "subversion." He promptly tried to subvert the freedom of the press. The majority of these nine old men on the Supreme Court caught the spirit at once, and they tried to subvert our constitutional freedom of thought with the new rulings on the Smith and McCarran Acts.

Thus, from both the side of the bigoted states righters, and the United States Supreme Court a course of action is established: by failure to enforce federal law in the face of local prejudice, and by legal decision in face of presidential ire, the machinery of totalitarianism is set in motion, and the democratic processes of the United States and precious liberties under the Constitution are made a dead letter. The United States is rushing headlong to be the "equal" of Russia—in thought control.

Justice Douglas said in his dissent:

"Nothing but beliefs are on trial in this case. They are unpopular and to most of us revolting. But they are nonetheless ideas or dogmas of faith within the broad framework of the First Amendment.

"What we lose by majority vote today may be reclaimed

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at a future time when the fear of advocacy, dissent and non-conformity no longer cast a shadow over us."

The learned justice didn't specify when, in the future, "the fear of advocacy, dissent and non-conformity" will no longer "cast a shadow over us." Unfortunately Supreme Court decisions are not easily reversed unless the people show in no uncertain terms that they do not mean to have their freedom tampered with.

#### IN THE PRESS

The majority of the bourgeois press noisily approved the reactionary Supreme Court rulings. The few papers that dissented—and the powerful *New York Times* did mildly dissent—still misled the American public as to the facts about the Smith Act. The impression was given that the issue at stake is "Communism." The Smith Act does not single out Communists and defines "forcible overthrow" so loosely that no act is required to set it into motion. It can and in fact is, applied to any opponent of the ideas of the powers that be. Thus both in Arkansas and Louisiana it was used to try to compel the N.A.A.C.P. to turn over its membership list to KKK-inspired rulers, if not to lynch-bent mobs.

The paper that lays claim to covering "all the news that is fit to print" didn't see fit to print the facts about the first application of the Smith Act. It cited 1940 as the year, whereas in fact it was 1941. It talked of its use against the Communist Party whereas, in fact, the Smith Act was first used not against the Communists. On the contrary, with the connivance of the Communists, it was used against the Trotskyists and militant trade unionists clearing out corruption and do-nothingness on the part of their bureaucratic overlords in the Minneapolis Teamsters Local 544.

Clearly, the 7 years that *The New York Times* is willing to bury in its morgue are not for purposes of "letting the dead bury the dead," but for purposes of letting the dead bury the living. The living were not informed either of the facts of the first application of the Smith Act, or of the fact that it was under the "inspiration" of Dan Tobin's gangster leadership of the Teamsters Union who resented and feared democratization, that the Roosevelt Administration railroaded the Trotskyists and teamster militant trade union-

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ists to jail. So much for the first application of the Smith Act.

The Trotskyists were not powerful enough to compel the Supreme Court to review their case. The Communists, when it was applied to them, were powerful enough to win a Supreme Court ruling. At that time (1957) the Court tried to limit its approval of the Act, by interpreting "advocacy of violent overthrow" to mean not "the mere abstract doctrine of forcible overthrow," but actual "incitement to action." The New York Times of June 7th, 1961, accepts the claim at face value, adding however:

"The sustaining of the Smith Act's membership clause, and the setting in motion of the ponderous Internal Security Act, can only serve again to divert public attention to the virtually non-existent internal Communist threat. The real Communist challenge is from abroad; and the sooner Americans get over the idea that we can solve the problem by persecuting the tattered remnants of American communism at home, the better able we will all be to face the really hard decisions and hard problems posed by the genuine menace of communism pushing outward from China and the Soviet Union."

This linking of the Smith Act, which has nothing to say of "the Communist challenge from abroad," with the McCarran (Internal Security) Act, which does, in its Preamble, mention Russian Communism, is once again to mislead the public. We do not mean to say that the McCarran Act is any less a perversion of Amendment I to the Constitution than is the Smith Act.

We are disentangling the two in order to prove why, with what malice aforethought, the American Communists were not tried under the McCarran Act, but under the Smith Act. This was done in order to set a precedent against genuine working class opponents of capitalist ideas, or even against those who stand for equal rights for American Negroes, as was the case with the Southern states' use of the Smith Act against the N.A.A.C.P.

The Supreme Court was compelled to throw that case out. In the present instance, however, the F.B.I., the Administration, the Supreme Court (and, not so incidentally, the press) did all in their power to force an identity be-

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tween the Marxist theory of liberation, and its opposite, the Communist practice of enslavement.

Thereby, they achieved a veritable conspiracy with Russian Communism, which for its own purposes, has usurped the name of Marxism.

#### THE PRESIDENT

President Kennedy likes words, moving words that speak of freedom. He likes them for ceremonial occasions, like July 4th perorations; he likes them at summit meetings to compete with the Communist use of them; and he likes them for luring the newly emergent African nations into the "Western" camp. On such occasions he speaks of our nation as one "born of revolution." He becomes so passionate an advocate of the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, that he becomes audacious enough to quote from the great American Abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, who, in fighting the Government and the paid press for tolerating slavery, had declared in his LIBERATOR: "I am in earnest. I will not equivocate. I will not excuse. I will not retreat a single inch, and I will be heard."

The one thing that President Kennedy failed to say was the truth about himself—that he was tolerating the jailing of the Freedom Riders; that he had created the atmosphere for the new reactionary Supreme Court rulings subverting the First Amendment to the Constitution; that his brother, far from asking for a "cooling off period" when these decisions were handed down, hastened to announce their immediate application. He was stayed from this course only by the restraint, hypocritical though that was, of Justice Felix Frankfurter, who granted the Communist Party petition for a rehearing in the fall.

Obviously, all too obviously, President Kennedy liked only the "sound" of the words of freedom, not their practice.

The deprivation of our Civil Rights, North and South, and the shackling of free minds have nothing whatever to do with the fight against "Communism." On the contrary, it is the true breeding ground of all totalitarianisms — Communist, Hitlerite, or K.K.K. inspired private enterprisers. When private capitalism begins to compete with Communist state-capitalism in devising ever-new ways of thought control, it can be only because the foundation of

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both is the same and so is their purpose: to repress the working people.

Capitalism, private or state, has been moving from crisis to wars and back again ever since its birth. In our age of oneworldedness, it has the added purpose of single world domination even at the insane expense of a nuclear holocaust that may spell out the end of civilization altogether. Beware then of those who would fight against totalitarianism abroad by embarking on totalitarian ways at home.

The fight against totalitarianism can be won only by Freedom Fighters, who "do not equivocate" in their struggles against discrimination and exploitation, and therefore can exorcise "the shadow cast" over our land. The Freedom Fighters of our epoch, as of the epoch of William Lloyd Garrison, will be heard.

July 4, 1961

—Raya Dunayevskaya

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### 3 Freedom Rides, Marches, Sit-Ins, Bus Boycotts

#### *Freedom Rider Robert:*

I'm 17 years old, a high school student, and, most important, I'm a Freedom Rider. At Jackson they made me wait in a separate room from where the other Freedom Riders were.

They took me into a little office. They asked me my name; to show identification; where I was from; and that sort of thing. They told me to check my luggage with the guard outside the door, which I did. Then I had to stand on the other side of the room and wait until they called me.

They asked me questions such as: Was I a Communist? Did I know that I belonged to a Communist organization? Did I know that the organization that sent the Freedom Riders down would just put them there and forget about them?

When they saw that they were not scaring me, they said that because I am 17 I wouldn't be classified as a Freedom Rider, but as a runaway; that I wouldn't be sent to Parchman, but to Oakley Reformatory.

I told them I had a slip signed by my mother saying that I was a legal Freedom Rider, and that she had consented to this.

They said that didn't make any difference—if they wanted to classify me as a runaway, they'd do it. They asked me if I had ever been in the South before.

I told them, "No, I hadn't."

They said, "Well then, it's none of your business what goes on down here, is it?"

I said, "Yes, it is my business, because I feel that I'm not free unless my brothers are free."

Then they offered to release me in the custody of my lawyer providing I would return to Los Angeles.

When I told the other Freedom Riders that they wanted to send me to Oakley, they told me not to go because I'd be the only one there, and it would defeat the purpose to go as a runaway and not a Freedom Rider. They told me it would be best to return to Los Angeles.

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I asked if I could wait for a trial, and maybe the judge would let me stay as a Freedom Rider. They told me the judge was out of town on vacation, and I'd have to wait in the Jackson City Jail for a week or more until he came back. Then he might send me to Oakley Reformatory anyway. The lawyer also advised me that the best thing was to return to Los Angeles.

I was taken to the CORE office where I met the CORE representative who drove me to the airport. His car had KKK scratched on the window. I asked him how that happened. He said that when the people found out he was helping with integration that happened to his car. He had to get right back, so I stayed in the plane terminal by myself.

I thought that if we keep sending more Freedom Riders down there we can break Jackson. They're tired of us now. They told us this. They wish we would stop coming. The more we send the better. If we keep sending them, time after time, they'll have to do something.

The problem concerns everyone, all over the United States, and all over the world. There's no one who can say that he's completely free as long as people are getting arrested just for sitting in waiting rooms or being in "white places."

The reason I went on a Freedom Ride is because I feel I belong to a generation which won't live with segregation—and we're not the ones who are illegal. It's the government in Jackson that should be arrested. They're not supposed to give anyone six months just for sitting in a waiting room. It's illegal. They should be put behind the bars, not the Freedom Riders.

### ***Freedom Rider Louise Inghram:***

Robert is absolutely right when he calls attention to his age, and says that he belongs "to a generation which won't live with segregation." I felt another thing about the high school students which distinguishes them from the college students. The high school students were more interested in the world, and how to change it, than the college students who were Gandhian by intent and outlook.

Another thing, when the movement for desegregation in schools first started, the white youth in the North joined the movement, not just by tens, or hundreds, but by thousands. A young Detroit high school student I know wrote up the way he felt about the March to Washington, D.C., in April, 1959—

### **Young Marcher:**

About 30,000 youth, Negro and white between the ages of 17 and 20, assembled in Washington, D.C., on Saturday, April 18, (1959) in a Youth March for Integrated Schools. These Youth Marchers came from the East, Midwest, and South.

People from each state were chosen at that time to carry petitions to Congress to integrate public schools. 50,000 people signed these petitions, and we estimate that petitions with another half-million signatures still haven't been turned in.

The 30,000 of us started out for the Lincoln Memorial where we heard speeches from Detroit Congressman Diggs, A. Philip Randolph, Jackie Robinson, Harry Belafonte, and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. The hand-picked delegation of four young people, who were supposed to go with Randolph to see the President, were also on the speakers' platform—more or less for window dressing.

As one of the guys I was talking to said, "This would be a much better March if we busted loose a little bit. Those old people up there are controlling us too tight from on top." Many of the kids I talked to seemed to feel the same way.

Even though this was such a top-controlled demonstration, just the fact that about 30,000 high school and college students were fed up enough with this prejudiced society—and had enough feeling for their fellow-man to come and participate in something like this—proved to a lot of people in this country that the American youth are not just "rebels without a cause."

#### **REBELS WITH A CAUSE**

Just the contrary, we are rebels with a cause—that cause being to change the society which the greedy people who run this country are leaving to the up-coming generation.

We are all willing to come back again and again and again to get what we want. What we want is to get for all human beings the rights and freedom they are entitled to.

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The youth, of course, are not the only ones in this struggle to put an end to segregation and discrimination. I feel that the new page for freedom, in the Negro struggle in the United States, was opened in Montgomery, Alabama, with the 1956 Bus Boycott. It was an "old" Alabamian who wrote a moving article about her feelings.\*

\*The reference is to a column by Ethel Dunbar in *News & Letters*, Feb. 29, 1956:

A Christian life is a miserable life to live. Everything had gets in the way to make you do and say some horrible thing when you are trying to live a Christian life.

Today, many colored people have laid aside their religion for a while to see if the Lord will be as good to them as He is to those Southern white people who don't mind killing every colored person they meet; and a "God damn" at every word they say; and never a word of prayer to be found in their life.

But since the whites see that the Negro people have forgot about all of that, Lord have mercy on poor me when I come to die.

Today, the presidents of the U.S.A. are trying to take back what they said about the Negroes in the South having their rights.

In order to get the white South's vote, they will take back what they said about giving the Negroes their rights.

Even the former president's wife, Mrs. Roosevelt, has turned her back on the Negro people since it is time to vote. But when she and President Roosevelt were in the White House, they spoke well about the Negro people having their civil rights. But now she is for gradualism.

#### HERE TO STAY

But the Negroes in Alabama are taking advantage of what they said some time ago about the South giving the Negro people their freedom.

They started in time to try to get freedom for themselves and all the Negro people.

I was glad to hear about my people in Alabama trying to break up segregation against us. Because we know that we are here to stay.

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By now the movement has gained such breadth that it embraces not only the deep South "in general" but each family. Take Bob from Houston, Texas—

#### STAND-IN IN HOUSTON, TEXAS

**Bob:**

I'd like to say that I'm not exclusively from Houston, Texas. I went to school for a while in North Carolina. I was told not to go back to school the next year there because of the fact that I went to a Sit-In there. I went home to Austin, Texas. I was in a Stand-In there. My mother didn't like that, so I went to Houston.

I went to Stand-In at a theatre there, and was promptly arrested and handed down to jail. The city jail is a very nice jail as jails go. They can keep you 24 hours, theoretically, and then they can transfer you to the county jail. The county jail is all right, until you get into it. The first time I was in, they didn't have us 24 hours before I was out on bond. The second time I was in, the lawyers came and asked if we wanted bond. They asked the officers, and the officers said that we had not requested bond and that we didn't want bond.

We hadn't said anything of the kind. It was just another attempt on their part to intimidate us. We didn't have bond. We were transferred over to the county jail. In this particular case, I was the only white person in the group. There were about 24 of us. Two of them were juveniles, and they were released promptly. There were 21 Negroes and myself. Unfortunately, the jails in Harris County are segregated. We're working on that but it takes time. Not Sit-Ins, but hunger strikes when we go in.

In the city jail, I was put in with a 250-pound ex-cop from Spartanburg, South Carolina, who happened to be in on embezzlement. There were three other persons, too. I was promptly worked over a little bit. I didn't fight back much. I don't believe in violence when there are four people against me. If you don't fight, they finally get tired and decide you're not going to be much fun. But I started to yell when they tried to stuff me down the toilet. This was just not what I considered ethical. I yelled and finally got a cop out. I was holding onto the bars, and they were trying to pull me apart from the bars. The cop immediately accused me of attacking the other four prisoners who are all bigger than I. This

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was an astute statement on the cop's part, but then, you can trust a cop in Houston to say something like this.

They put me in another cell, where I was lucky to find two people of Spanish-speaking heritage, and two Californians who were AWOL from the army. Since California is a little more liberal, and because I speak Spanish, I got along better with the people of Mexican descent than the cop did.

Later they transferred us to the county jail. They got a paddy wagon which, theoretically, can hold ten people. Then they shoved 22 people into the paddy wagon and carried us down there. They sped up the paddy wagon from every stop light, and then they slammed on the brakes real tight, slamming everyone together. It's what they call "race-mixing."

They put me in a little private cell all by myself while they were registering everyone else. Because I was white, I was considered the instigator, since, in their opinion, obviously I knew better and these poor colored folks didn't know any better.

Finally they took me up to the fifth floor where they have the main jail section. What it is, if you've never been in jail in Texas, and I think it's true of most of the county jails, they have a system of having a tank and a group of cells, where they just keep stuffing people in until they can't hold anymore. They have doors, but the doors are left open all the time.

Nothing would have happened if the deputy sheriff who brought me in, pushing me and slugging me, hadn't cursed me out and generally described what my supposed crime was. Then he proceeded to leave me alone with the prisoners. It took them about 15 minutes to get up guts enough to come over and start beating on me. It was in Harris County that I lost one wisdom tooth and one molar.

One of my friends was picked up in a cafeteria with his wife. They caught him a second time down at the court house, walking. They hauled him into the court the second time, and asked him if he was a Communist. They pulled out his wallet which had cards in it that would not normally make anyone think they belonged to a Communist. But in Houston it's bad enough to be a socialist, because if you're a socialist, you're a Communist. If you're anything, you're a Communist, unless you're a member of the John Birch Society.

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### **Charles Denby:**

A professor from Alabama State told me that the day after the Freedom Riders left Montgomery, Alabama, the Negro workers there started going into the bus stations—the same bus stations they showed on TV where they had beaten Freedom Riders, and where all had happened to them.

He says, now they serve every Negro in the bus station, and you don't have that trouble. They went from there to the train station. He said, "Man, I wish you could see it. They don't have signs any longer that say colored waiting room and white waiting room."

While all of this was going on, and everyone was thinking in terms of what next, a Negro porter spoke up, "On the southbound train from the North, you can sit in any coach you want to. On the return trip, you're segregated. I could never figure it out. What the hell is the difference? Anyway, when you come out of the station to get on the train, there's a Negro porter who says to Negroes, 'This car, this car, go this way,' and the whites are shown the other way."

This professor says it wasn't until the Negroes in Montgomery started moving, that some of these Negro porters came to them and whispered "Do you know what? They are threatening us. They told us if we want to keep our jobs, we must tell Negroes to go this way, but from now on, when people come to get on the trains, don't care which way we point, go the opposite way."

The professor said he knew some women who were leaving the next day going North. He took them to the train station. When he got there, the porter was saying, "This way, this way," and he went the opposite way into the "white coach."

When he set the ladies' bags down, a white said to him, "Aren't you in the wrong coach?"

He told the ladies not to listen, not to look up. He said he had only intended to come there to put the women on the train, but he stayed on the train and rode to Birmingham, because he was so happy to see that this was being done. He had to catch another train back to Montgomery.

I agree with those who say that this new page of freedom began with the 1956 Bus Boycott, then the Sit-Ins, and the Freedom Rides are the culmination.

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I would like here to reproduce two articles from News & Letters, one on the Bus Boycott as we saw it in 1956, and one on the Sit-ins which reached a high point in March 1960, the very month of the revolt in apartheid South Africa against the hated passos.

### **MONTGOMERY NEGROES SHOW THE WAY**

MONTGOMERY, Ala. — The Negro citizens of Montgomery have forced the officials of Montgomery and of Alabama, to recognize the powerful success of their boycott against the city's segregated buses.

December 5 has been reported as the day the boycott started. Actually, the boycott started in the middle of November when increasing numbers of Negroes themselves decided to boycott the humiliating conditions they didn't want to put up with any longer.

The spirit was already growing strong in the community, on December 5, when Mrs. Rosa Parks refused to give her seat to a white man. She did not look to make a "test case" by deliberately sitting in the white section. She was seated in the colored section. A white man was standing because all the "white" seats were filled. The bus driver ordered her to get up. She refused and was arrested. It could have been anyone else at the time. This incident, which arose from the growing boycott, speeded up its total spread.

There are about 100,000 people in Montgomery. Three out of every five are Negroes. Practically everyone, 60,000 strong, took an active part in organizing the boycott and holding the line.

Day after day, the buses run empty while Negroes walk or ride in car-pools.

At home, at work, in social clubs and churches and barber shops, wherever people get together, they talk about the boycott and make their plans and pledge to each other to hold fast.

In cowardly desperation, the white supremacy officials have called this firm stand, by thousands upon thousands of Negroes, a "conspiracy." These officials, many of them members of the notorious white Citizens Councils, have singled out a number of the active participants in the boycott. They have termed them "leaders" and have arrested and indicted them.

There aren't enough jails in the whole State of Alabama to hold all the people who organized the boycott. They are the majority of Montgomery. Those who were arrested are prominent but they did not order the boycott to begin and—even if they wanted to—they cannot order it to end.

Mayor W. A. Gayle bragged that he didn't care "whether a Negro ever rides a bus again if it means that the social fabric of our community is to be destroyed so that the Negroes will start riding buses again."

About six weeks ago, the home of a prominent Negro minister, Rev. M. L. King, Jr., was rocked by a dynamite blast.

Following the bombing, the white Central Alabama Citizens Council offered a \$500 reward for a solution to the bombing and said they wanted to fight against integration by "legal" means and that they "deplore this type of demonstration."

State Senator Sam Englehardt is president of the Central Alabama Citizens Council.

Mayor Gayle of Montgomery also posted a \$500 reward for a solution to the bombing. Mayor Gayle and his two fellow Commissioners on the City Commission announced that they would not tolerate such "strange and foreign acts" as the bombing.

They also announced that they had all joined the white Montgomery Citizens Council.

A week-and-a-half later, a bomb was exploded in front of the home of E. D. Nixon, a pullman porter active in the boycott.

No one has been arrested for the bombings.

**ANTI-LABOR LAW USED AGAINST NEGROES**

Rev. King and Mr. Nixon are among those who have just been arrested for "conspiring" to boycott.

The Alabama law under which 90 Montgomery Negroes have been indicted, in a desperate effort to break the boycott, was passed in 1921 to break the miners' strike in Birmingham.

In addition to this anti-labor law, Birmingham mine operators tried to lure Negroes from the farms to work as scabs. Negroes who went and came back to the farms said, "Sure, you can go up and the white man will give you a job, but this is one time when you don't be on two sides. You got to declare where you stand and you better be with the strikers."

Scab laws like this were being passed all over the country at that time in a furious attack against the American workers.

This is the law being used against Negroes in 1956.

In contrast, there is the forceful voice of the Alabama Negroes who have taken the matter of their freedom in their own hands. The spontaneity of the walkout and the organization of their forces to keep up the boycott is a simultaneous action. Clearly the greatest thing of all in this Montgomery spontaneous organization is its own working existence. It should serve as a living lesson to the many who see strikes and struggles but fail to see a new society emerging out of these struggles.

(Excerpts from News & Letters, Feb. 28, 1956)

**SOUTH AFRICA, SOUTH U.S.A.**

With the vicious use of tear gas and fire hoses to disperse Negro student demonstrators in Baton Rouge, La., Marshall, Texas, Orangeburg, S. C., Savannah, Ga., and

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Tallahassee, Fla., the white supremacists of South U.S.A. have shown their kinship to the savage totalitarian rulers in apartheid South Africa .

Despite this use of force, added to mass arrests and the harassing imposition of insulting local "laws," the young freedom fighters of the South refuse to be intimidated. Far from abating, the sitdown movement and mass demonstrations for basic human rights grow daily in scope and volume.

#### Young Freedom Fighters

Since Feb. 1, when four Negro students from the Agricultural and Technical College in Greensboro, N.C., staged the first sitdown at the segregated lunch counter of S. H. Kress & Co., thousands of courageous young Negroes have spontaneously demonstrated in more than 60 cities in Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, Louisiana, and Texas. Even in lynch-ruled Mississippi, the movement has had startling effects. While they have not yet sat down at lunch-counters, they have initiated a successful boycott of stores with segregated lunch-counters.

Since the dictatorship of the deep South was breached by the demonstration of 3000 Negro students in the capital city of Baton Rouge, La., on March 31, the Mississippi racists daily fear the march of the freedom fighters in that state as well. Their lynchers who go scot free at all times are not made of the fibre of the 400 Negroes in South Carolina who were marched into a compound for "breach of peace" charges although it was the police who turned the fire hoses on them while the courageous demonstrators waited, though soaked, in the 40-degree cold for their trials!

Not only have the young freedom fighters stood firm in the face of police threats, they have also taken the measure of the Uncle Toms who head the Negro colleges and have expelled student demonstrators at the behest of the white officials.

At Southern University, for example, in Baton Rouge, La., over 4000 of the 5400 students enrolled in that all-

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Negro college, signed withdrawal slips on April 4, in protest against president Felton Clark's expulsion of 18 demonstrators. With comdence and self-discipline they are resisting every effort to intimidate or to bribe them.

The example of the Southern protest movement has electrified Negro and white youth throughout the country, including some in the South itself. Sympathy demonstrations by high school and college students are daily reported ca from every major campus and in every major city from New England to Oregon, from New York and Washington, D.C., to California. By their self-activity, the students in South U.S.A. have lighted the only path to freedom—mass activity.

(Excerpts from News & Letters, April, 1960)

#### THE FREEDOM FIGHTERS OF SOUTH U.S.A.

(Excerpts from an article written for Peace News, London)  
The greatest achievement of the present Freedom Fighters in South U.S.A. is its own working existence. The elemental outburst of Southern Negro college students took the form of sitting down at segregated lunch counters, asking to be served, and continuing to sit down after service was refused.

The spontaneous movement spread from Greensboro, North Carolina, where it began on February 1, till it now covers the entire South, including Mississippi. In that notorious lynch state, however, the form of the movement is not that of the sit-down, but the more passive boycott.

At the same time there has been a deepening of the struggle, a development into mass demonstrations, the first ever seen in the Deep South since Reconstruction Days in the mid 19th century. Out of the 1,000 who marched in Columbia S.C., 400 young men and women were made to stand in a compound to await trial on "breach of peace" charges although they were the ones who had been soaked by the fire hoses and in a 40 degree cold.

"We will fill the jails if necessary" remains the guiding principle of the movement which now embraces the whole of the

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Southern Negro population with its slogan of "No Easter finery this year." Again for the first time since Reconstruction days, some whites in the South have participated both in the sit-ins and the boycott.

Having gained a momentum of its own, the movement is now being led by various organizations out "to lead." The expulsion of students by the Uncle Tom heads of the Negro colleges has created yet another problem.

The spontaneity, breadth and courage of the Southern students inspired picketing in the North of the Woolworth's, Kress's and Grant stores. For the moment it comprises all radical political tendencies, including revolutionaries as well as pacifists, Trotskyists, Socialists, Anarchists and Marxist Humanists. No doubt there are also some Communists, although they nowhere declared themselves openly. Unfortunately, red-baiting has also raised its ugly head. Under the guise of protecting "the sanctity, Christianity and peaceful nature" of the Southern movement, and disassociating it from "Communism," singled out for attack has been the April, 1960, issue of *The Young Socialist*, which is the Trotskyist youth paper.

It is true that the issue had a particularly stupid attack on pacifists. It said: "In reality the pacifists are interested in something quite apart from the Negro struggle . . . They are not interested in whether the struggle is successful, but rather as to whether it is conducted in such a way as to advance their particular creed." This is the other side of the very argument used against revolutionaries—that their "theory" makes it impossible for them to be "really" for a specific struggle. . . .

Attempts at reconstruction of society always meet with the violence of the powers that be. There is no orgy of violence in South U.S.A. such as characterizes South Africa, but there are tear gas and fire hoses by the State governments as well as the violence of the KKK.

It isn't the oppressed and persecuted who commit the violence; the guns are always in the hands of the oppressors and persecutors. Whether you are looking at South Africa or South U.S.A., whether you are looking at the present day or into history, the story is the same. Practice of non-violence does not stop terror by the en-

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troubled rulers, as was seen when Gandhi's satyagraha campaign in 1920 produced the Jallianwala Bagh massacre by the British at Amritsar in the Punjab. It is not that passive resistance has not been very effective, but it has its limitations.

To return to South U.S.A. time: the present. Let us not fall into the trap of the bourgeoisie who have degraded the word, revolution, to where it means nothing but violence and conspiracy. Nor should we lose our full awareness of how segregation came to be. It came with peace—the collusion between the militarily victorious Northern capitalists and the militarily vanquished Southern plantation owners to rob the freedmen (Negroes) of the "40 acres and a mule" and transform them instead into sharecroppers dependent on the old plantation bosses. At the same time "the gentlemen's agreement" saw to it that, except for the very lowest jobs, industrial jobs were reserved for white labor. Segregation was the inevitable concomitant of the new forms of economic enslavement.

When Marx criticized Lincoln for carrying on the Civil War by "constitutional" rather than "revolutionary" means, he was referring, not to any lack of violence, but to lack of principles. The pacifist Abolitionist leader Wendell Phillips was no less a revolutionary than Marx, it was he who predicted that unless the Negro was the basis of the reconstruction of the South, there would be no destruction of the barbaric Southern rule. We are reaping today the results of a Civil War that was bloody enough, but the blood shed and the peace won was for continued class rule. . . . Under the circumstances, to inject a discussion of "violence and non-violence" can only blind us to the needed reconstruction of society on totally new, truly human beginnings.

What the Freedom Fighters of South U.S.A. show is that revolution is only evolution in the fullness of time and in the elemental form called forth by the needs of the moment. The form any further development of this movement will take no one can foretell, or dictate. What we can do is not to create new points of confusion in the thinking of the young freedom fighters; as their doing leads them to grapple with the foundation of a new society whose point of departure and point of return alike would center around the relation of man to man—the relation of man to man sans exploitation and discrimination.

## 4 What Next? A New Beginning, Not An End

### *Freedom Rider Louise Inghram:*

If I may, I would like here to bring the story up to date and see where we go from here. At the trial there were no spectators allowed in the courtroom except the defendants, who took up all the seats anyway, the press, and the lawyers. We integrated the courtroom for the first time. Mississippi even integrated the restrooms for that day. The sign, which was temporary and no doubt came down the next day, said simply, "Women Defendants."

It was a very routine arraignment. The first group that was ever arrested in Jackson was chosen to go on trial first. After that, everybody went in alphabetical order. The trials were to begin September 22nd and to go until January 18, 1962. They now extend to April, 1962. They are taking only two cases a day, in some instances only two a week. One trial is at 9:00 in the morning, and one at 1:00 in the afternoon.

Also, they have now raised the bail from \$500 to \$1,500. At that price, bail for 322 Freedom Riders would absolutely break CORE financially, which, of course is exactly what the Mississippi authorities want to do. On the basis of some of us pleading nolo contendere, a few others being sent back to jail, and the rest sweating it out until the cases reach the Supreme Court of the United States, it will take at least a year to win a decision that will be so narrowly legal that it will very nearly be an empty victory.

In fact, however, we have already succeeded in both the narrow legal sense and, what is a great deal more important, the continuing mass movement nationally and internationally. Here is one of the most unforgettable things I heard James Farmer say in a speech about the Freedom Riders: Before this year, the only American words almost every African knew were, "Little Rock." After this year, reports have come back that most of them know four more: "Sit-In," and "Freedom Ride."

No one is being fooled by the supposedly courageous stand of Attorney General Robert Kennedy in his demand for a new ICC

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ruling which makes it mandatory for interstate vehicles to display the sign that interstate travel is not segregated. We remember his request that we "Cool off"; and note that the injunction did not come through until after the last Rider—who did not plan to serve out his six-month sentence—was already out on bail. Everyone knows that it was the Freedom Ride Movement which compelled the ruling, and that the Freedom Riders were out for a great deal more than the ineffective federal decision by which the government hopes to whitewash itself.

Out of a total of only 322 Freedom Riders, no less than 41 were from Jackson, Mississippi, itself—the largest number of Riders to come from any one city. They are mostly young people who, when the Ride is over, must remain in that very city where the authorities who jailed them rule the roost. This is what makes me feel that with or without the ICC ruling, it is not the end of the Freedom Rides.

The reason the Freedom Rides fired the national imagination is two-fold. The first is that it is one more form of a struggle that has been continuous for many centuries. The second is that the struggle has now reached an entirely new stage. This new stage began with the self-activity of the Montgomery Negroes in the Bus-Boycott of 1956; it then deepened from the regional to the national in scope when the Sit-ins of the young college students in the South were supported by white and Negro pickets in the North; it reached its highest form so far with the Freedom Rides, when white and Negro re-entered the Deep South itself. No one will be able to bring back the old South again, and no one in the North can remain a mere by-stander.

I feel that because the Negro question has always been the most critical one in the United States, Civil Rights is the name of Freedom in this country for both black and white, and for both student and worker. Since the mid '50's there has been no other movement which has expressed such creativity and determination to be free now. This is why I think that whether the Freedom Rides continue, or whether the struggle to end segregation and discrimination once and for all takes a different form, the fight for freedom will not stop until we have torn up the old, from root to branch, and established truly new human relations based on new beginnings. I think that the Freedom Rides, and whatever may come after them, are a form of just such new beginnings!