

LCSTANT METHODIST & RICHLAND E U B PARISH
Rev. Robert C. Sharp, Minister

Lestant, Ill.
August 4, 1964

Dear Friends,

Many of you have inquired about the welfare of our son, Philip, and about the success of the Mississippi Summer Project, so I would like to share with you some of his letters home.

Rev. R.C. Sharp

LETTERS FROM PHILIP SHARP, Summer address, 5 Marsha Hall, 838 Lutz st.
Canton, Mississippi

Dear Mom and Dad,

June 27, 1964

I am enclosing some material on the Mississippi Summer Project. I want you to know how much your support means to me. For myself I could not stand back and see other people running risks and being hurt without accepting my share of the risks in the fight for right. So here I am in Mississippi.

I feel for the first time in my life I've made a free choice to do something really significant. And, I see how important you, my family, are to me, and in a broader sense how important the whole human family is to me. I believe in - and saw in orientation (at Oxford, Ohio) - a spirit of Truth; and this Spirit of Truth is the greatest force toward Love and Oneness that this country has ever known.

I hope this material is of some interest to you. With love, Phil.

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July 2, 1964

Dear Mom and Dad,

We all arrived safely by train in Canton, Miss. We didn't know what to expect but the negro young men turned out in style to meet us. They wore C O R E and FREEDOM NOW tee shirts. There were a few white policemen there looking rather helpless and the White Citizen Councilmen were standing back in doorways and kind of standing around by the back of the station.

We were calmly and efficiently taken to the Methodist Church. Later on the police came by and asked all of us who had just arrived to come down and register. After discussing it among ourselves, we did so. At the station we listened to a taped lecture by the city attorney, then we filled out a short information form giving the above Freedom House address.

Bombings and shootings have taken place here with the intention of terrorizing the negroes so they will not resist the status quo. The police station has a White Citizen's Council sticker on the front window. After the episode with the police they drove us back to the Methodist Church. The driver cursed under his breath when we were greeted by negroes along the street.

Finally I was settled in a negro home. The people I am staying with both lost their jobs for participating in Civil Rights. The house is very nice and they had both worked hard to have a nice home. They were ready to put in a sink and tub in the bathroom when they lost their jobs. Two of us live here. Our very presence places this house in danger of bombing. These people are very brave and are willing to sacrifice everything necessary for their children and for their community. The father's religious faith is very much alive and through it he is able to act in a very noble manner. For instance, he realizes the responsibility of the negro to be fair (Unlike the whites here) when he is given a voice and a vote. It is ironic that the white people should so much fear a man as noble, honest and kind as this man.

The white men are afraid because they know only what they would do if the tables were turned. They certainly don't want to be the object of such oppression as that which they have placed upon the negro. What the white citizens don't know is that the negro people here have learned, through their suffering, how to be kind to others - all others. They know how to fit into other people's shoes.

I'll let you know more, Love, Phil.

July 6, 1964

Dear Dad, Your package arrived today. (Portable typewriter, school supplies, pencils, pens, paper, books for 25 pupils) It made me very happy. It will make a lot of kids happy too. The people here are really great. The children have a kind of "life" about them that I've never seen before. They are children - not little creatures trying to act grown-up. They are not trying to pretend they are something they are not. The structure of most of our middle-class white society tends to put strictures on kids at a very young age. - My immediate family was an exception to what I'm talking about, I think. - Any way, these are great kids. Thanks for the mimeograph stencils which you sent.

Love, PHIL

Sun. July 19, 1964

Dear Dad, Today everyone went to various churches to talk about the Freedom Democratic party. Precinct meetings are this Thursday and Friday. The county Convention (and picnic) is Saturday. The churches I went to responded well. Not all of them do however. A few ministers are afraid of consequences or feel that it is up to "God" to deliver the people. The number of such ministers is dwindling rapidly, mainly because their flocks are becoming restless. I have not personally met any of this minority yet. Everyone that I have contacted has received me with surprising warmth. One underlying idea that we have to get rid of is that we, Civil Rights Workers, have come as Saviours to deliver them out of Egypt. In a very real sense we came only to save our own souls and, perhaps, to help others to save themselves. That's the only way things can work out.

Physically, I am fine, getting a great tan in this Mississippi sun.
Thanks, PHIL.

Dear Dad,

July 12, 1964

I was moved to the rural Madison County area without much forewarning. We are establishing a Community Center here. I will still receive my mail at the old address. We have a Ditto Machine here instead of the Mimeograph so if someone wants to donate paper and Spirit Carbons it would be of great help. The Civil Rights workers are bunking together in the Freedom House, we are sharing expenses but even so we are on pretty short rations and are all running out of money. We are trying to set up an adequate library, are buying milk for the children's lunches. We have probably gone overboard. doing things like that and left ourselves short.

The activities here are all in some way centered around getting people to attempt to register to vote in the Freedom Democratic party election. The Freedom Democratic Party is one set up by Civil Rights groups to attempt to unseat the regular Democratic party candidates from Mississippi at the National Democratic Convention. The California, New York, Michigan and at least one more delegation have voted to support the Freedom Democratic party candidates at the National Convention. The regular delegation has not supported the National party platform in the past two presidential elections. The Freedom Democratic party will support the National Democratic platform. We hope to register 2,000,000 to vote in the Freedom election in order to show that a significant number in Mississippi are not allowed to vote in a regular election either because of threat or actual job loss or because of threat to their very lives, or because whether or not they pass their registration test (which is very ambiguous) is mostly up to the registrar.

I think the collection you took for the movement was very successful. The supplies you have sent are a tremendous help. I think I can manage on what you have sent. But if anyone in the community has anything they would like to donate such as clothes, books, toys, office equipment, anything - they could send them to my Canton address and I would see that excellent use was made of them. - Money is what I need most. Again, thanks for your support. PHIL