

Chapter 10

The Civil Rights Movement, 1960-1971

Chapter Preview

PEOPLE

John F. Kennedy, Medgar Evers, James Meredith, Harry S. Murphy, Charles Dubra, Clennon King, Clyde Kennard, Johnny Roberts, Jerry Mitchell, Constance Baker Motley, Paul B. Johnson Jr., Byron De La Beckwith, Myrlie Evers, Ronnie Agnew, Bill Waller, Ed Peters, Bobby DeLaughter, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Fannie Lou Hamer, Vernon Dahmer, John Bell Williams, Robert G. Clark

PLACES

Decatur; Kosciusko; Philadelphia; Atlantic City, New Jersey; Ebenezer

TERMS

assassination, white flight, Navy V-12 Program, College Board, demonstration, federal marshal, tear gas, sit-in, boycott, hung jury, mistrial, Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Freedom Schools, Freedom Democratic Party, loyalists, regulars, firebomb

Right: A statue of NAACP field secretary Medgar Evers, assassinated in his driveway in 1963, was erected by the city of Jackson in a park near Evers's house.



History takes time; it doesn't happen all of a sudden. Great events like the Civil War and the civil rights movement are the culmination of many lesser events over a long period of time. People living through those run-up events are usually unaware of their importance. Few Mississippians in the 1960s were aware that they were living in an historic period.

The decade of the 1950s was capped by the presidential election of John F. Kennedy in 1960. President Kennedy was as committed to the civil rights movement as Abraham Lincoln was to the abolition of slavery. In the 1860s, a violent confrontation between federal and state authorities occurred over slavery. The 1960s also witnessed a dramatic confrontation between federal and state authorities over racial segregation.

The Ole Miss riot in 1962, the **assassination** (murder of a prominent person, usually for political reasons) of Medgar Evers in 1963, and the murder of three civil rights workers in Philadelphia in 1964 were historic events. They convinced the good and decent people of Mississippi that bombing churches, killing children, and continued resistance to change was a greater danger to society than the changes they were resisting. Still, great anxiety and apprehension and the fear of white flight preceded the massive public school integration in Mississippi in 1970. **White flight** is the departure of whites from neighborhoods or schools increasingly or predominantly populated by minorities.

But that fear was unfounded: 92 percent of white students remained in the public schools, and desegregation was achieved more peacefully than almost anyone believed possible. The most sweeping change in Mississippi since emancipation worked because the classroom teachers, black and white, made it work. Like the southern judges who ordered that desegregation, they were “unlikely heroes.”

Signs of the Times

EXPANSION

In 1960, the population of Mississippi was 2,178,141, and the U.S. population was 179,323,175. In 1970, the population of Mississippi was 2,216,912, and the U.S. population was 203,211,926.

EXPLORATION

Russian Yuri Gagarin became the first man in outer space when he orbited Earth on April 12, 1961. On May 5, Alan Shepard became the first American in outer space. American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin were the first men to walk on the moon on June 20, 1969.

ENTERTAINMENT

Popular movies of the 1960s included *The Sound of Music*; *Mary Poppins*; *2001: A Space Odyssey*; *Doctor Zhivago*; and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*.

LITERATURE

Harper Lee won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Other popular novels of the 1960s include *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Catch-22*. In 1963, Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* became a favorite with children.

MUSIC

The arrival of the Beatles in the U.S. in 1964 began the "British invasion." Motown music from Detroit featured soul groups like the Supremes and Temptations. Folk music "protest songs" inspired those fighting for civil rights or against the Vietnam War.

SCIENCE

Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, about the dangers of DDT, helped set the stage for the environmental movement.

TRANSPORTATION

In the 1960s, U.S. automakers began to manufacture economy cars, like the Ford Falcon, and "muscle cars," sporty cars with powerful engines, like the Pontiac GTO.

ARCHITECTURE

The Gateway Arch in St. Louis, Missouri, opened in 1967. At 630 feet, it is the tallest man-made monument in the country.

Figure 24 Timeline: 1960-1971



1960
Ross R. Barnett began term as governor; Two white supremacy state constitutional amendments ratified

1961
James Meredith filed suit in federal court at Meridian

1962
James Meredith enrolled at Ole Miss

1963
James Meredith graduated from Ole Miss; Medgar Evers assassinated

1964
Two Byron De La Beckwith trials for Medgar Evers murder ended in hung juries
Three Meridian-based civil rights workers murdered in Philadelphia
Freedom Democratic Party established

1965
Nonagricultural employment exceeded agricultural employment for first time

1966
Vernon Dahmer killed in firebombing of his home

1967
Robert G. Clark won seat in state legislature

1970
Public schools desegregated

1960 1962 1964 1966 1968 1970 1972

1960
John F. Kennedy elected president
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) founded

1962
Congress of Federated Organizations (COFO) founded

1963
March on Washington; King's "I Had a Dream" speech
Lyndon B. Johnson became president after assassination of John F. Kennedy

1964
Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed by U.S. Congress
Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. awarded Nobel Peace Prize

1965
Voting Rights Act of 1965 passed by U.S. Congress
U.S. combat troops arrived in Vietnam

FASHION

Late 1960s hippie fashion featured bell bottoms, peasant skirts, and tie-dye.

INVENTIONS

The 1960s introduced the audio cassette, handheld calculator, ATM, and bar code.

Section 1

Mississippi and the Meredith Crisis



Above: James Meredith's integration of The University of Mississippi has been honored with a monument on the Ole Miss campus, dedicated in 2006. The monument features a life-size statue of Meredith walking toward a 17-foot portal labeled with the words "courage," "perseverance," "opportunity," and "knowledge."

As you read, look for

- the origins of the civil rights movement in Mississippi;
- early attempts to integrate Mississippi institutions of higher learning;
- the sequence of events that led to the admission of James Howard Meredith to Ole Miss in October of 1962;
- terms: **Navy V-12 Program, College Board, demonstration, federal marshal, tear gas.**

The Meredith crisis was perhaps the crucial

event in the American civil rights movement. It was a test of the federal government's resolve to enforce a Supreme Court order and a state's will to resist that order. James Howard Meredith manipulated events in such a way to pit President John F. Kennedy and the federal government against Governor Ross R. Barnett and the state of Mississippi. The Kennedy administration's willingness to use as many as thirty thousand troops dissolved massive resistance in Mississippi and removed any doubt about the federal government's

determination to enforce the Supreme Court's ruling. Although that resolve would again be tested several times, the fundamental issue of federal authority versus state sovereignty was settled in Oxford in October 1962.

Origins of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi

The civil rights movement in Mississippi began on July 2, 1946, in Decatur, the county seat of Newton County, when Medgar Evers led a small group of World War II veterans to the courthouse to vote in the first general election after the war. Medgar Evers, and several others in that group, had

served their country in combat in the European theater, and they asserted their right to vote and participate in American democracy. An armed mob of white men turned them away from the polls. During the 1946 general election, Theodore G. Bilbo was reelected to a third term in the U.S. Senate. He proclaimed that the best way to keep blacks from the polls on election day was to visit them the night before.

The civil rights movement in Mississippi received another impetus from a commencement address Hodding Carter delivered at Alcorn A&M in the spring of 1948. Carter was the Pulitzer Prize—winning editor of the Greenville *Delta-Democrat Times*. When the *Atlanta Journal* asked him to summarize his speech, Carter said this:

I had advised them not to be content with the manifold inequalities experienced by their race . . . I know that they are identical in their aspirations and their good citizenship with college graduates anywhere [and] there can be no good reason for . . . subjugating any American who dreams our common, sturdy dream of a fair chance and a place, our place, in the sun. . . That's all those Alcorn graduates want and it's the least that they deserve.

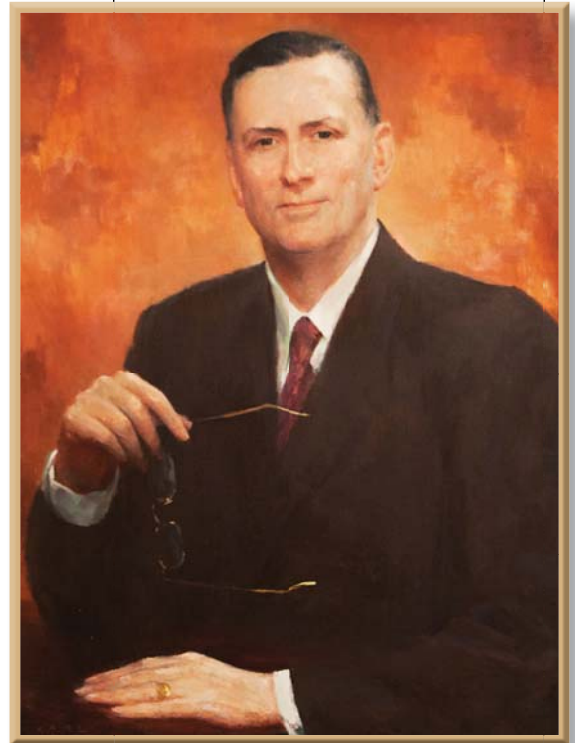
To blacks in postwar Mississippi, higher education was the avenue of upward mobility, the “yellow brick road” to the American dream. But very few white Mississippians understood the hold that dream had on young blacks and their determination to reach it. In Mississippi, as elsewhere, college students played a major role in the civil rights movement.

Administration of Ross R. Barnett, 1960-1964

In 1959, Ross R. Barnett was elected governor largely on his promise to keep the schools segregated and to maintain Mississippi’s “way of life,” which meant a racially segregated society. It was Barnett’s third run for governor. During Governor Barnett’s administration, Mississippi adopted two constitutional amendments in 1960 that were designed to maintain white supremacy. The first amendment empowered the governor to abolish any or all public schools in the state if necessary to prevent their integration. The second amendment stated that all qualified voters “shall be of good moral character.” It was generally understood that circuit clerks, who also served as voter registrars, could use this vague requirement to prevent significant numbers of blacks from registering to vote.

Presidential Election of 1960

On the same day those two constitutional amendments were ratified in Mississippi, America elected a president. Mississippians, faced with the choice of either John F. Kennedy or Richard M. Nixon, chose neither of them. Instead, they cast their votes for a slate of unpledged electors who



Above: After two unsuccessful campaigns, Ross Barnett was elected governor in 1959. His administration was a last-ditch attempt to maintain segregation and white supremacy.



Above: John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, won the 1960 presidential election on a platform supporting civil rights. His willingness to use federal troops to enforce decisions of the U.S. Supreme Court was pivotal to the outcome.

Something Extra!

Between July 1, 1943, and June 30, 1946, more than 125,000 men were enrolled in the V-12 program in 131 colleges and universities across the country.

later voted for Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia. John F. Kennedy was elected president, and his vocal support for civil rights and racial equality generated optimism among Mississippi blacks. Shortly after his election, James Howard Meredith enrolled at Jackson State University and began his long and sometimes lonely journey toward admission to The University of Mississippi in 1962.

Early Attempts to Integrate Colleges and Universities

James Meredith was the first African American admitted to a white institution of higher learning in Mississippi, but he was not the first to try to break the color barrier. Several other African Americans had attempted to enroll at the state's white colleges, but none had been successful.

Harry S. Murphy

During World War II, Harry S. Murphy, a light-skinned African American, who grew up in Atlanta and graduated from high school in Boston, attended classes at Ole Miss. He was stationed at Ole Miss under the Navy V-12 Program. The **Navy V-12 Program** allowed naval personnel to enroll in college, which would lead to their qualifying to become commissioned officers. In addition to the naval curriculum, Murphy took classes in history, English, mathematics, and economics. Because his military records incorrectly identified him as a *Caucasian* (white person), his enrollment at The University of Mississippi was without incident.

Charles Dubra

One year before the *Brown* decision, Charles Dubra, a black minister from Gulfport, applied for admission to the Ole Miss Law School. Dubra had an undergraduate degree from Claflin College in Orangeburg, South Carolina, and a master's degree from Boston University. Dubra informed Robert Farley, dean of the law school, that he did not want any trouble or publicity connected with his admission. He said that he was not an activist, not even an integrationist, and he would live quietly off campus in the Oxford black community.

Dean Farley brought Dubra's application to the attention of Chancellor John D. Williams. They decided to present the matter to the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning at its next meeting. The Board of Trustees, also called the **College Board**, was a thirteen-member board appointed by the governor that supervised the state's colleges and universities. Chancellor Williams informed the board that he had received Dubra's application and asked Dean Farley to give a full report on the situation. After explaining all the details and evaluating his application, Dean Farley recom-

mended that Dubra be admitted. The board members discussed Dubra's application intensely. H. M. Ivy, president of the board, favored the admission of Dubra. But the Board of Trustees rejected his application.

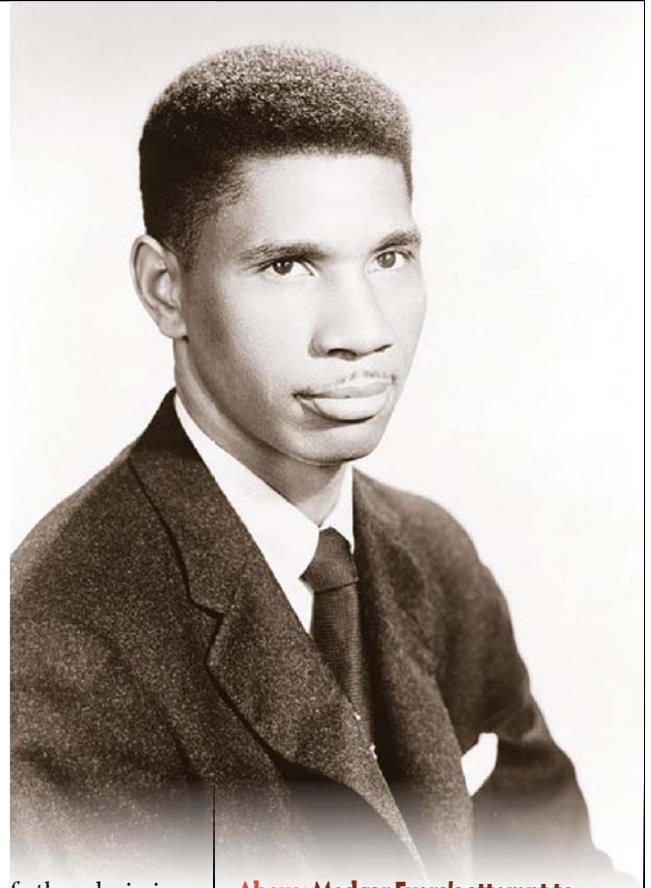
Medgar Evers's Application to Ole Miss

In the May after Dubra's rejection, the United States Supreme Court issued the *Brown* decision. Soon after that decision, Medgar Evers, a graduate of Alcorn A&M, applied for admission to the Ole Miss Law School. His application was forwarded to the Board of Trustees, which rejected his application because Evers had not included two letters of recommendation. In 1954, admission to any state-supported college required two letters from alumni attesting to the applicant's good moral character. Evers was advised that he must submit the two letters of recommendation before his application could be processed.

A short time later, Evers submitted two letters from Ole Miss alumni in Newton County recommending his admission. Somewhat surprised that Evers had obtained the letters, the board reinterpreted the requirement and advised Evers that those letters did not satisfy the admission standards. Evers was told that he must have two letters from alumni in the county where he was currently living, not his home county. At the time of his application, Evers was living in Bolivar County and was employed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). While Evers was in the process of responding to that interpretation, the College Board increased the number of recommendation letters from two to five. As he was seeking additional letters of recommendation, Evers was offered the position of state field secretary of the NAACP. Rather than pursue his admission to Ole Miss, Evers decided to accept the NAACP position.

Professor Clennon King's Application to Ole Miss

In May 1958, Clennon King, a professor at Alcorn A&M, called the College Board office and said he wanted to pursue a PhD in history at Ole Miss. He was advised to write for an application, provide all the documents required in the application, and submit his papers to the registrar at the university. King did not want to seek admission under the normal procedure, however, because he believed university officials would find some technicality on which to deny his admission. His application would have been denied because The University of Mississippi did not offer a PhD in history in 1958. Rather than submit a formal application, Professor King decided to go to Oxford and make a personal application for admission. The College Board informed Governor James P. Coleman that King would apply in person for admission to the university on May 16.



Above: Medgar Evers's attempt to enroll in the Ole Miss law school was stymied by ever-changing application requirements. Instead, he decided to accept the position of state field secretary of the NAACP.

Something Extra!

A male who has attended or graduated from a school, college, or university is called an *alumnus*; a female is called an *alumna*. The plural forms of those terms are *alumni* (for males) and *alumnae* (for females).



Above: Clyde Kennard was sentenced to seven years in Parchman Prison for receiving \$25 worth of stolen chicken feed, his conviction based on false testimony. He was given an early release when he was diagnosed with cancer. Here, he is greeted by his sister in Chicago, where he went for medical treatment. He died later that year.

Governor Coleman decided that he must be prepared to prevent any violence that might result from King's attempt to register, so he sent several highway patrolmen to Oxford. When King arrived at the Lyceum to register, he was led into a room where he was left alone for quite some time. Fearing that he was in physical danger, King began shouting for help and pleading for someone to save him. Governor Coleman decided that King was mentally unstable and secured an order from a judicial official to commit him to the state mental hospital at Whitfield, where he remained for several days. After his release, King left the state.

Clyde Kennard and the University of Southern Mississippi

The Clyde Kennard story is a dark and sorry episode in Mississippi history. Clyde Kennard owned a small poultry farm in rural Forrest County near Hattiesburg. He was honorably discharged from the United States Army in 1952 with the rank of sergeant. Clyde Kennard submitted an application to the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) in September 1959. After he filed his application, the Forrest County Cooperative foreclosed on his poultry farm and confiscated his stock. The Southern Farm Bureau Insurance Company canceled his automobile insurance. The State Sovereignty Commission tried to get his banking records, but the local bank refused its request.

On September 25, 1960, twenty-five dollars worth of chicken feed was stolen from the Forrest County Cooperative. Johnny Roberts, a nineteen-year-old black youth, admitted that he had stolen the feed and sold it to Kennard, who knew that it was stolen property. Kennard was arrested, and, on the basis of Johnny Roberts's testimony, Kennard was convicted by an all-white jury that deliberated only ten minutes. The judge sentenced Kennard to seven years in prison.

Soon after he was sent to Parchman, Kennard developed intestinal cancer. When Governor Barnett was advised of Kennard's condition and told that he might soon die in Parchman, the governor gave him an early release. Kennard was rushed to Chicago for emergency surgery, but he was beyond recovery and died on July 4, 1963.

On December 31, 2005, *The Clarion-Ledger* reporter Jerry Mitchell interviewed Johnny Roberts, who admitted that his testimony against Kennard was false and that he had been pressured by local officials to *implicate* (incriminate, show evidence of involvement) Kennard. Following this article, there was a groundswell of support for the *exoneration* (clearing from accusation) of Clyde Kennard. In 1993, the University of Southern Mississippi had begun that process by naming its student services building for Clyde Kennard and Dr. Walter Washington, a former student at USM and former president of Alcorn State University. On May 17, 2006, Circuit Judge Bob Helfrich threw out the 1960 conviction of Clyde Kennard.



Left: James Meredith (center) pauses to speak to reporters outside the federal courthouse in New Orleans, in September 1962, with his attorneys Constance Baker Motley and Jack Greenburg. Meredith and his attorneys waged an eighteen-month legal battle to gain his admission to Ole Miss.

The Meredith Crisis

On March 28, 1961, Governor Ross Barnett, dressed in a Confederate uniform and standing in front of Mississippi's antebellum governor's mansion, reviewed 6,000 Confederate reenactors in a typical Civil War parade of troops. The two-hour parade drew thousands of excited and cheering spectators. In the midst of the most serious and dramatic challenge to the state's racial and social customs since the 1860s, some Mississippians paused to recall the glories of former times.

The day before Governor Barnett reviewed the troops, and just a block away, there had been another parade. But, in the language of the 1960s, that parade was called a **demonstration**. A group of Jackson State University students were demonstrating against the jailing of several black Tougaloo students who had been arrested for attempting to use the Jackson public library. Among the students then enrolled at Jackson State was James Howard Meredith. Two months after Governor Barnett "reviewed the troops," Meredith filed suit in federal court seeking admission to The University of Mississippi.

James Meredith's Master Plan

James Howard Meredith was born in Kosciusko on June 25, 1933. When he was sixteen years old, he moved to St. Petersburg, Florida. After graduating from high school in 1951, he enlisted in the United States Air Force and served until 1960. In September 1960, Meredith returned to his native state. He enrolled at Jackson State University and began making plans for his enrollment at The University of Mississippi. In his book, *Three Years in Mississippi*, Meredith explained why he was seeking admission to Ole Miss.

I had returned to Mississippi because I had developed a master plan to replace what I considered the Negro's worst enemy: The principles and doctrines of "White Supremacy" . . . I intend to build a better system and to replace the old unsuitable customs with more desirable ones.

Something Extra!

In 1966, President Lyndon B. Johnson nominated Constance Baker Motley to the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, making her the first black woman to be appointed to a federal judgeship. She became chief judge in 1982 and senior judge in 1986, serving in that capacity until her death in 2005.

After his application for admission to The University of Mississippi was denied, Meredith filed suit on May 31, 1961, in the federal court at Meridian. Meredith's lawyer, Constance Baker Motley, claimed that Meredith had been denied admission to the university solely on the grounds of racial discrimination. For the next eighteen months, the Meredith case was the subject of a major judicial confrontation between federal and state authorities.

After a long series of judicial delays and postponements, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decree on September 10, 1962, ordering the university to admit James Meredith as a regular undergraduate student. Three days after the Supreme Court's order, Governor Barnett addressed the people of Mississippi on statewide television. In his address, Governor Barnett promised to go to jail before he would allow Meredith to be enrolled at Ole Miss. He hinted that he would close the university if that was necessary to prevent its integration.

During the two weeks following this address, the College Board appointed Governor Barnett registrar of the university. On two occasions, September 20 and September 25, the governor personally and physically barred Meredith's admission to Ole Miss. On September 26, Lieutenant Governor Paul B. Johnson Jr. also personally blocked Meredith's admission.

The Graduation of James Meredith

By September 27, Mississippi officials had reached the limits of legal resistance. Emotion was running high in both the white and the black communities. In the black community, support for Meredith and his cause was solid and undivided. In the white community, support for continued resistance

Below: Following a campus riot that left two people dead, James Meredith, flanked by U.S. marshals, was finally admitted as a student at The University of Mississippi on October 1, 1962.



was eroding fast. Many educational and business leaders and some state officials realized that any further resistance might provoke widespread violence.

After both were charged with contempt of court for blocking the court-ordered admission of Meredith, Governor Barnett and Lieutenant Governor Johnson began looking for an alternative to a possible confrontation between federal troops and state law enforcement officials. A secret plan was finally devised by which Meredith would be brought to the university campus on Sunday afternoon, September 30. It was agreed that Meredith would register on Monday morning, October 1, 1962.

As these plans were set in motion, large numbers of students and non-students gathered on the Ole Miss campus. Meredith arrived on campus about 5:30 on Sunday afternoon and moved into his dormitory room in Baxter Hall. A few of the **federal marshals** (law enforcement officers of a federal judicial district who carry out court orders) who had accompanied Meredith remained at Baxter Hall. Other marshals surrounded the Lyceum where the registration would take place the next morning. The appearance of the marshals around the Lyceum attracted a large crowd to the small grove known as The Circle that is directly in front of the Lyceum. The unruly crowd slowly and gradually turned into a mob. By 8:00 p.m., a full-scale riot was in progress. **Tear gas** (a substance that blinds the eyes with tears and is used for dispelling mobs) was fired into the rioters, and the sound of gunshots echoed across the campus.

At 11:00 p.m., about sixty Mississippi national guardsmen were rushed to the campus to quell the riot. By 2:00 a.m., the first detachment of federal troops arrived on campus, just in time to reinforce the guardsmen, who were in grave danger because they had exhausted their supply of tear gas. On Monday, October 1, 1962, at 6:15 a.m., General Charles Billingslea, the commanding officer of the federal troops, advised President Kennedy that the riot was over and that the campus was secure. During the riot, two people were killed and many others were wounded.

Later that morning, federal marshals escorted James Meredith to the Lyceum. At 8:00 a.m., Meredith registered as an undergraduate student. As Meredith came out of the Lyceum, a reporter asked him if he was happy now that he was a student at The University of Mississippi. Standing on the Lyceum steps, Meredith looked around at the debris left over from a night of rioting and responded sadly, "This is not a happy occasion." But the color barrier was broken in Mississippi.

Meredith majored in public administration and completed the requirements for a bachelor's degree during the summer term of 1963. He graduated from The University of Mississippi on August 18, 1963. Mr. Meredith is now a loyal and active alumnus of Ole Miss.



Above: James Meredith's walk through the doors of Ole Miss has been memorialized by this statue, part of the university's civil rights monument. Meredith is still an active alumnus.

Reviewing the Section

- 1. Define in sentence form: Navy V-12 Program, federal marshal, tear gas.**
- 2. When and why was Ross Barnett elected governor?**
- 3. How did the U.S. Supreme Court become involved in James Meredith's application for admission to Ole Miss?**

Section 2

The Assassination of Medgar Evers

Something Extra!

The term *boycott* comes from the name of an English land agent in Ireland in the late 1800s—Charles C. Boycott. He was *ostracized* (avoided deliberately) for refusing to reduce rents.

As you read, look for

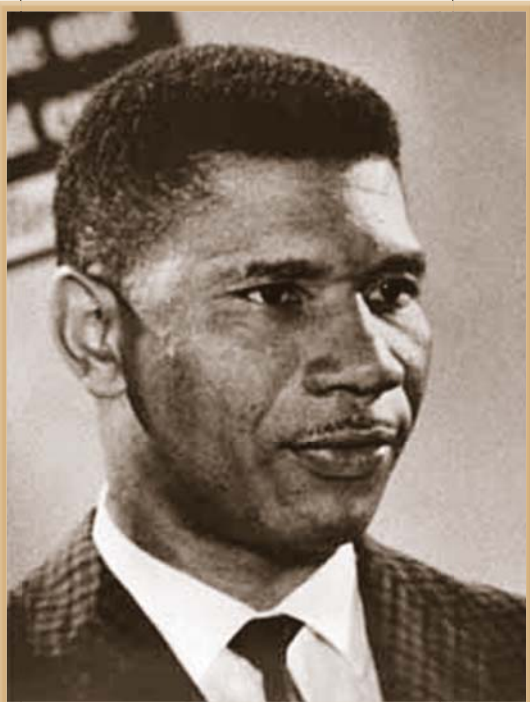
- the events leading to the assassination of Medgar Evers;
- the arrest and three trials of Byron De La Beckwith;
- the changing role of *The Clarion-Ledger* in the events surrounding the Evers murder;
- terms: **sit-in**, **boycott**, **hung jury**, **mistrial**.

As James Meredith was preparing for his final exams at Ole Miss, Medgar Evers, his old and good friend, was organizing sit-ins, demonstrations, and boycotts in Jackson. A **sit-in** is a protest where people enter a public facility and refuse to leave until their demands are heard. A **boycott** is a protest in which people refuse to buy certain items until specific conditions are met.

In a May 20, 1963, television address, Evers announced that the NAACP and its allies, especially young blacks and college students, would use every legal means available to bring about racial and social justice in Mississippi. It was not a rabble-rousing speech, but a calm and deliberate statement that African Americans in Mississippi were determined, as Meredith had said, “to replace the old unsuitable customs with more desirable ones.” With that television speech, Medgar Evers became the face of the civil rights movement in Mississippi, and he was a marked man.

Assassination and Arrest

Three weeks after the May 20 television address, Byron De La Beckwith assassinated Medgar Evers. Following a late night meeting at New Jerusalem Baptist Church, Evers pulled into his carport. When he got out of his car, Beckwith, who was hiding in some honeysuckle bushes across the street, shot him in the back with a high-powered rifle that had a telescopic sight. When she





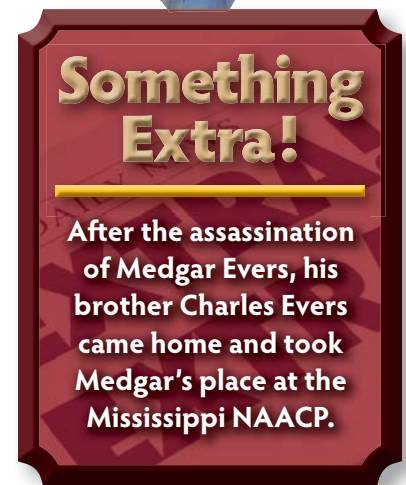
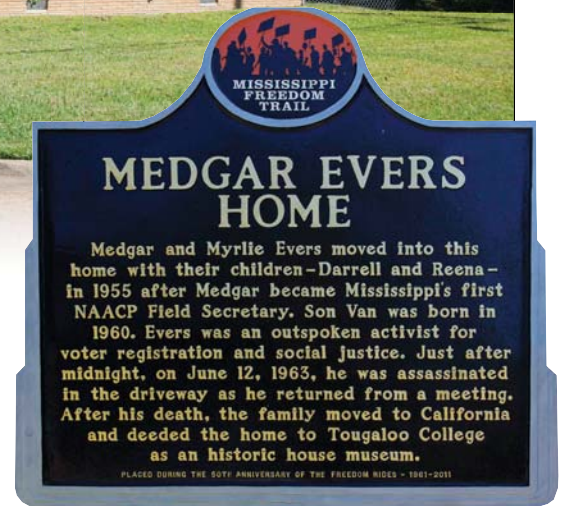
heard the gunshot, Myrlie Evers ran out onto the carport and found her husband lying in a pool of blood. Evers was taken to University Hospital, where he died shortly after midnight on June 12, 1963.

After firing the fatal shot, Beckwith hid his Enfield rifle in the honeysuckle and walked to his car that was parked nearby. The next day, Jackson police officials found the rifle and, with the help of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), traced it and the telescopic sight to Beckwith. Ten days after Beckwith assassinated Evers, FBI agent Walser Prospero arrested him at his home in Greenwood. Two weeks later, a Hinds County grand jury indicted Byron De La Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers. Beckwith was a member of the Citizens' Council, and his ancestry was steeped in southern traditions. Among his most prized possessions were some memorabilia that once belonged to Jefferson Davis.

The arrest was made late on Saturday night because Beckwith had been working at his job as a fertilizer salesman, and he wanted to go home, take a bath, and put on a nice suit with a white shirt and a bright tie before any pictures were taken. After his indictment, Beckwith distributed his favorite picture of himself to reporters and asked them to use it in their coverage of his trial. Several reporters who covered the trials commented on Beckwith's *dapper* (stylish) attire, as well as his intense desire to be quoted in the media.

The Clarion-Ledger of Jackson

The editorial policy of Jackson's *The Clarion-Ledger* was extremely hostile to any political, social, or racial changes in Mississippi. Two days after Medgar Evers was murdered, a columnist of *The Clarion-Ledger* insinuated that civil rights leaders may have killed Evers "as a sacrificial offering to rekindle the flames of unrest here and spur the drive for 'victory' elsewhere." After



Opposite page: Medgar Evers was shot in the carport of his Jackson home (above) on June 11, 1963. He died shortly after midnight on June 12, 1963.



Above: The first two trials of Byron De La Beckwith (left) ended in hung juries. Because he had not been acquitted, there was no double jeopardy when he was tried for a third time in 1994, convicted, and sentenced to life in prison.

Something Extra!

A 1996 movie *Ghosts of Mississippi* recounted the events of Byron De La Beckwith's third trial and subsequent conviction.

the FBI arrested Byron De La Beckwith for the murder of Medgar Evers, *The Clarion-Ledger* carried a bizarre front page headline. Beckwith was born in California. After his father died, his mother moved back to Mississippi when Beckwith was five years old, and he grew up in Greenwood. Announcing the arrest of Byron De La Beckwith, the headline in *The Clarion-Ledger* blared: "Californian Is Charged With Murder of Evers." Like modern Mississippi, which few people who lived in the state in the 1960s would recognize, *The Clarion Ledger* is also different today. Ronnie Agnew, an African American and an Ole Miss graduate, served as its executive editor from 2002 to 2011.

Beckwith's Racial Theories

Before his arrest, and when he was in jail awaiting his trial, Beckwith wrote several letters and articles expressing his racial theories and his willingness to act upon those beliefs. During the first trial, Hinds County District Attorney Bill Waller asked Beckwith if he wrote the following sentence in a letter to the National Rifle Association on January 26, 1963: "Gentlemen: For the next fifteen years we here in Mississippi are going to have to do a lot of shooting to protect our wives, children and ourselves from bad n s." Beckwith proudly admitted that he had written that letter. District Attorney Waller then asked him about his letter to the editor in a Jackson newspaper on April 16, 1957. In that letter, Beckwith wrote, "I believe in segregation like I believe

in God. I shall oppose any person, place, or thing that opposes segregation. I shall . . . bend every effort to rid the U.S. of the integrationists, whoever and wherever they may be." After Waller asked Beckwith if he wrote that letter, he said, "I sure did write that." When Waller asked him if he still felt that way, Beckwith said, "Of course I feel that way."

Beckwith's First Two Trials

Byron De La Beckwith was first tried in January 1964, but that trial ended in a **hung jury** (a jury that is unable to agree on a verdict) on February 7. He was tried again, but the second trial also ended in a hung jury on April 17, 1964. After the second hung jury, Circuit Judge Leon Hendrick declared a **mistrial** (a trial that has no legal effect because of some error in the proceedings or because of a hung jury). He dismissed Beckwith on a \$10,000 bond. Several years later, Beckwith described his performance in those first two trials:

Each morning I made a point of entering the court room dressed tastefully in the high style that was my custom Once inside, I made a point of nodding to those present, including spectators, guards, the jury, and the press, greeting them as cheerfully as though my only purpose in attending was to

especially delight each and shower goodwill and fellowship on one and all.

In his memoirs published in 2007, District Attorney Bill Waller recalled Beckwith's demeanor in the courtroom: "I think it never occurred to Beckwith that he would be found guilty. . . he did not have the demeanor of a man being tried for murder by a prosecuting attorney who was seeking the death penalty." Hardly anyone in Mississippi believed that an all-white jury would convict Beckwith of murdering Medgar Evers. Most people were surprised that Beckwith was not acquitted. Bill Waller's conscientious and determined prosecution of Beckwith won him high praise in Mississippi and around the country.

The Conviction of Byron De La Beckwith

On October 1, 1989, Jerry Mitchell, the prize-winning reporter for *The Clarion-Ledger*, reported that the State Sovereignty Commission may have tried to influence some jurors in the second Beckwith trial. After this article appeared, Myrlie Evers issued a statement calling for a new trial. Hinds County District Attorney Ed Peters ordered an investigation, and Assistant District Attorney Bobby DeLaughter began a search for new evidence that would allow the District Attorney's office to reopen the case. Ironically, Beckwith supplied the necessary evidence. In the years after Beckwith murdered Evers, he could not resist boasting about it. In January 1994, Ed Peters and Bobby DeLaughter brought Beckwith before a jury on the charge of murdering Medgar Evers. Several people testified that they heard Beckwith brag about killing Evers. The jury of eight blacks and four whites found Beckwith guilty of murdering Medgar Evers, and Judge Breland Hilburn sentenced Beckwith to life in prison. Beckwith died in 2001 at the University Hospital where Evers had died thirty-eight years earlier.

Reviewing the Section

- 1. Define in sentence form: sit-in, boycott, hung jury.**
- 2. What did Medgar Evers say in a television address that made him the face of the civil rights movement in Mississippi?**
- 3. What physical evidence linked Byron De La Beckwith to the assassination of Medgar Evers and led to his arrest?**



Above: A statue honoring Medgar Evers stands in a park in Jackson, near the house where he lived and died. The airport in Jackson was renamed Jackson-Evers International Airport in his honor, and in 2009, secretary of the Navy and former Mississippi governor Ray Mabus announced that a new cargo ship would be named the USNS *Medgar Evers* in his honor. The ship was christened by Medgar's widow, Myrlie Evers-Williams, in 2011.

Section 3

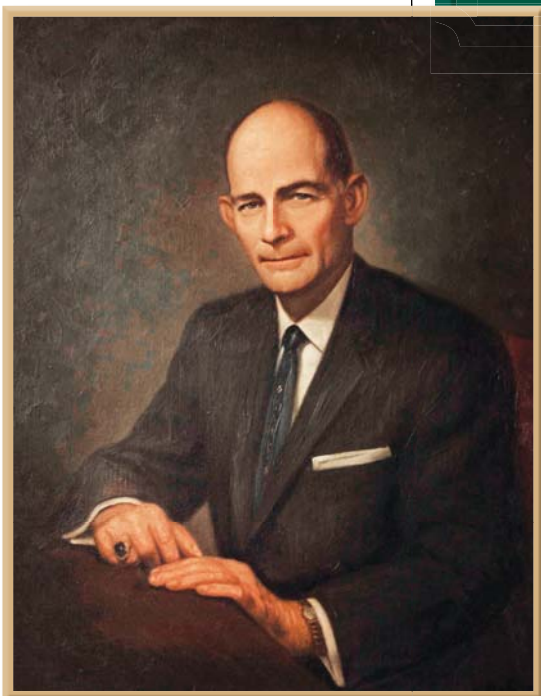
The Beginning of the End of Racial Segregation

Something Extra!

Paul B. Johnson Jr. was the only son of a Mississippi governor to follow in his father's footsteps to win the state's highest office. Paul B. Johnson Sr. had served as governor from 1940-1943.

As you read, look for

- achievements of the administration of Paul B. Johnson Jr.;
- the Philadelphia murders and other tragic events of the summer of 1964;
- the rise of the Freedom Democratic Party;
- successes and setbacks in the civil rights movement during the 1960s;
- terms: **Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), Freedom Schools, Freedom Democratic Party, loyalists, regulars, firebomb.**



Bill Waller's vigorous prosecution of Byron De La Beckwith, and the fact that an all-white jury did not allow Beckwith to go free, was the beginning of the end of white supremacy and racial segregation in Mississippi. Although the struggle for racial equality and social justice would continue throughout the 1960s, the integration of the public school system in the spring of 1970 would bring the most sweeping and significant changes to Mississippi since emancipation.

Administration of Paul B. Johnson Jr., 1964-1968

The gubernatorial election of 1963 was the first political campaign since Reconstruction in which a Republican made a serious statewide race for governor. In the general election in November, Paul B. Johnson Jr. defeated Republican Rubel Phillips, a former Democratic public service commissioner.



Phillips received 138,515 votes, which indicated that the number of Mississippi Republicans was larger than commonly believed.

Governor Johnson's Inaugural Address

In his inaugural address, Governor Johnson set the stage for the changes that were coming to Mississippi: "You and I are part of this world whether we like it or not. . . We are Americans as well as Mississippians [and] while I am governor, hate, prejudice, and ignorance will not lead Mississippi. If we must fight it will not be a rear guard defense of yesterday. It will be an all out assault of our share of tomorrow." He concluded this remarkable address by saying, "God bless everyone of you, all Mississippians, black and white, here and away from home."

Governor Johnson's inaugural address won high praise from leaders throughout Mississippi and across the nation. The address set the tone of his administration, and Governor Johnson provided the state with constructive and positive leadership that enabled Mississippi to endure those turbulent years and adjust to a new era of race relations.

Balance of Agriculture with Industry Achieved

In March of 1965, Governor Paul Johnson held a brief ceremony in the governor's office. In addition to representatives of the press and other state officials, former Governor Hugh L. White, who established the BAWI program in 1936, also attended the ceremony. Governor Johnson announced that nonagricultural employment in Mississippi exceeded agricultural employment for the first time in the state's history. Mississippi's effort to balance agriculture with industry had been achieved.

Above: Paul Johnson Jr. (in foreground, with carnation) takes the pledge of allegiance at his inauguration as governor of Mississippi in 1964. Standing next to him is outgoing governor Ross Barnett, under whom Johnson had served as lieutenant governor. Both had been involved in the effort to keep James Meredith from enrolling at Ole Miss, yet Johnson's inaugural address sounded a note of conciliation between the races. Opposite page: During the administration of Governor Paul Johnson Jr., for the first time in Mississippi's history, nonagricultural jobs exceeded agricultural jobs.

Figure 25 Civil Rights Organizations

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)

- Founded in 1909; today headquartered in Baltimore, MD
- Founded by a multiracial group of political and social activists, including W. E. B. Du Bois, Ida Wells, and Mary White Ovington
- Organized to work for the abolition of segregation and discrimination, to oppose racism, and to ensure African Americans their constitutional rights

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)

- Founded in 1942; today headquartered in New York, NY
- Founded by James Farmer
- Established as a nonviolent approach to combating racial prejudice; inspired by Mahatma Gandhi; held the nation's first sit-in, in a Chicago coffee shop in 1942

Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)

- Founded in 1957; today headquartered in Atlanta, GA
- Founded by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (first president), Dr. Ralph David Abernathy, and others
- Established after the successful Montgomery bus boycott to coordinate protest activities across the South

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

- Founded in 1960; disbanded in the early 1970s
- Early leaders were Ella Baker, James Lawson, Marion Barry, John Lewis, and Robert Moses
- Started as an interracial group of students advocating nonviolence, supporting the Freedom Rides in 1961 and the March on Washington in 1963; later turned more to black activism

Council of Federated Organizations (COFO)

- Founded in 1962; disbanded in 1965
- A coalition of organizations engaged in civil rights activities in Mississippi, under the leadership of SNCC activist Robert Moses
- Founded to maximize the efforts of the SNCC, CORE, and NAACP in voter registration and education in Mississippi



The Long Hot Summer of 1964

Civil rights activity increased dramatically in the summer of 1964 as several hundred college students from across the nation came to Mississippi. Under the sponsorship of the **Council of Federated Organizations (COFO)**, the students conducted Freedom Schools and voter registration drives. COFO was an organization composed of representatives from various civil rights groups such as the NAACP, the **Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)**, the **Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)**, and the **Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)**.

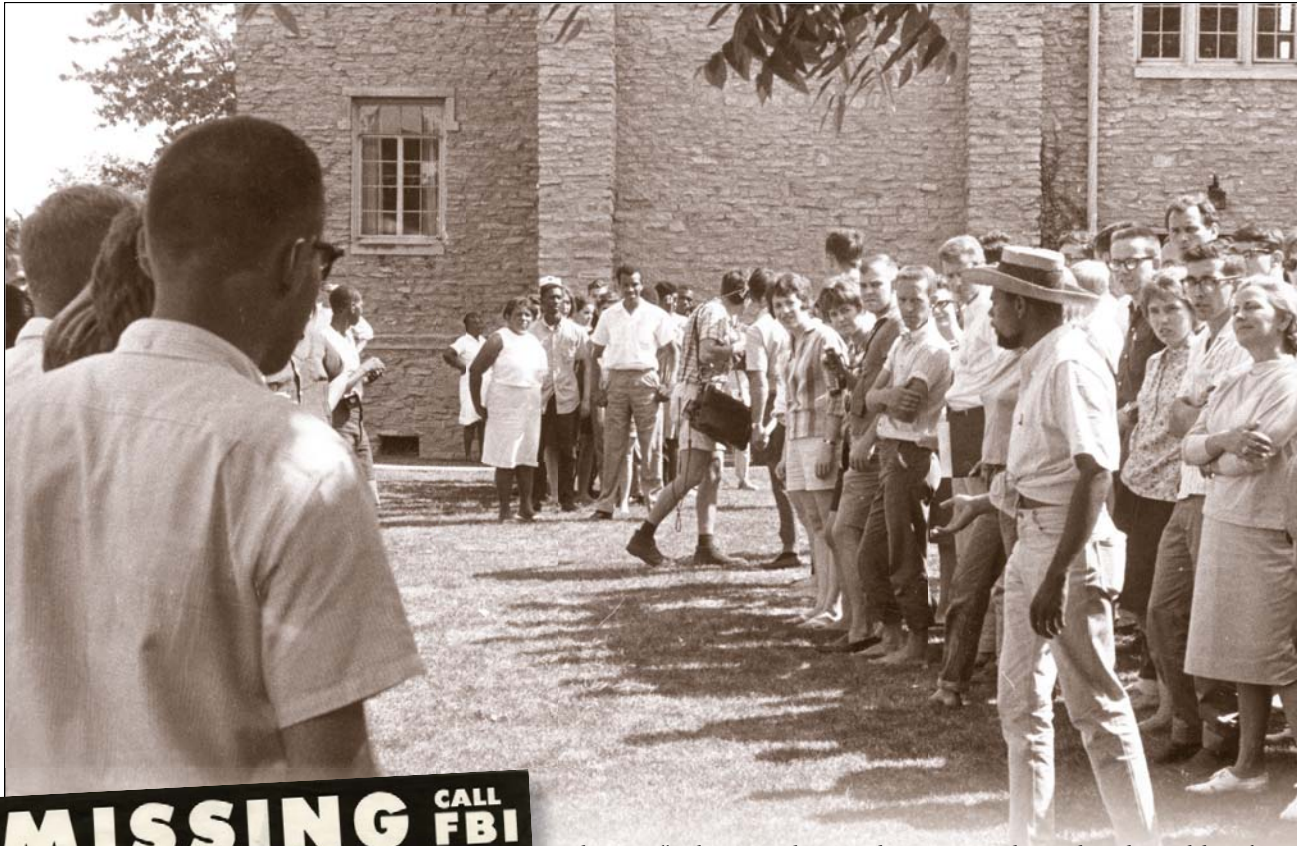
The purpose of the **Freedom Schools** was to encourage blacks to exercise their rights as American citizens. Blacks were informed about the voter registration procedure and were taught how to answer the tricky questions that had been designed to make it difficult for blacks to register. Most white Mississippians considered the northern college students as “outside agitators” in much the same way Mississippians had reacted to the carpetbaggers during Reconstruction. Some newspapers referred to an “invasion” of Mississippi by a bunch of “long-haired

Something Extra!

The civil rights activities in Mississippi in 1964 were given the name “Freedom Summer.”






Top: Participants in a Freedom School hosted by Morning Star Baptist Church in Hattiesburg enjoy an outdoor class in the summer of 1964. **Above:** These two buttons illustrate the width of the racial divide in Mississippi in 1964—a Citizens' Council button saying “Never” to integration, and a SNCC button urging equal voting rights.

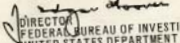


MISSING CALL FBI

THE FBI IS SEEKING INFORMATION CONCERNING THE DISAPPEARANCE AT PHILADELPHIA, MISSISSIPPI, OF THESE THREE INDIVIDUALS ON JUNE 21, 1964. EXTENSIVE INVESTIGATION IS BEING CONDUCTED TO LOCATE GOODMAN, CHANEY, AND SCHWERNER, WHO ARE DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

ANDREW GOODMAN	JAMES EARL CHANEY	MICHAEL HENRY SCHWERNER
		
RACE: White SEX: Male DOB: November 21, 1943 POB: New York City AGE: 20 years HEIGHT: 5'10" WEIGHT: 150 pounds HAIR: Dark brown; wavy EYES: Brown TEETH: SCARS AND MARKS:	RACE: Negro SEX: Male DOB: May 30, 1943 POB: Meridian, Mississippi AGE: 21 years HEIGHT: 5'7" WEIGHT: 135 to 140 pounds HAIR: Black EYES: Brown TEETH: Good; none missing SCARS AND MARKS: 1 inch cut scar, 2 inches above left ear.	RACE: White SEX: Male DOB: November 6, 1939 POB: New York City AGE: 24 years HEIGHT: 5'9" to 5'10" WEIGHT: 170 to 180 pounds HAIR: Brown EYES: Light blue TEETH: Puck mark center of forehead, slight scar on bridge of nose, appendectomy scar, broken leg scar.

SHOULD YOU HAVE OR IN THE FUTURE RECEIVE ANY INFORMATION CONCERNING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THESE INDIVIDUALS. YOU ARE REQUESTED TO NOTIFY ME OR THE NEAREST OFFICE OF THE FBI. TELEPHONE NUMBER IS LISTED BELOW.


 DIRECTOR, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
 WASHINGTON, D. C. 20535
 TELEPHONE, NATIONAL 8-7117

June 29, 1964

hippies” who were here only to stir up hatred and trouble. The Ku Klux Klan reappeared, and, during the long hot summer of 1964, numerous acts of violence and church burnings occurred throughout Mississippi. According to figures published in magazines and newspapers, the casualties civil rights workers suffered during that summer included three murders, eighty beatings, thirty-five shootings, and a thousand arrests. Thirty-five churches were burned, and thirty-one homes or other buildings were bombed. The northern college students and black Mississippians paid a heavy toll in the summer of 1964, but they launched a new force in Mississippi politics.

The Philadelphia Murders

The most significant act of violence in 1964 occurred in Philadelphia, the county seat of Neshoba County. On the morning of June 21, 1964, three Meridian-based COFO workers, Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman, drove up to Neshoba County to investigate reports that a black church had been burned. As they left Neshoba County later that afternoon, they were arrested and placed in the Philadelphia jail. Around midnight, they were released and began

driving back to Meridian. Somewhere between Philadelphia and Meridian, they were overtaken by a group of Ku Klux Klansman, who murdered them and buried them in an earthen dam that was being constructed for a cattle pond. Although the most thorough search in the state’s history was con-

ducted, their bodies were not found until August 5, when an FBI informant led federal officials to the dam where the bodies were buried.

After Mississippi declined to bring murder charges against any local Ku Klux Klansmen, the federal government filed charges against eighteen suspects. Seven of the eighteen were found guilty of conspiracy to commit murder. Forty years later, largely because of additional evidence uncovered by Jerry Mitchell, reporter for *The Clarion-Ledger*, the state of Mississippi indicted Edgar Ray Killen. On June 21, 2005, Killen was convicted of three charges of manslaughter and sentenced to sixty years in prison.

Freedom Democratic Party

In the spring of 1964, a group of civil rights leaders established the **Freedom Democratic Party**, referred to as the FDP, or sometimes the MFDP. At the national Democratic Convention in August at Atlantic City, the FDP challenged the right of the all-white regular Democratic Party to represent Mississippi. The biracial FDP claimed that it was loyal to the Democratic Party and that the regular Mississippi Democrats were not. The issue of seating the **loyalists** or the **regulars** was debated on national television.

After this intense and bitter debate, party leaders offered to seat any regulars who would sign a pledge to support the Democratic nominee for president. They also offered two at-large seats to the loyalists, and would allow the other FDP delegates to attend the convention as “honored guests.” This compromise also included a stipulation that future delegations from Mississippi would be biracial. Both delegations rejected the compromise,

Opposite page, above: Freedom Summer volunteers participate in a SNCC class in nonviolent self-defense taught at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, between June 22 and 27, 1964. One of the participants was Mississippi civil rights leader Fannie Lou Hamer (in white sleeveless blouse below and to the right of the window).

Opposite page, below: In one of the most notorious crimes of the civil rights era, three young COFO workers were murdered by Ku Klux Klansmen between Meridian and Philadelphia and buried in an earthen dam. Below: The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party held its first convention at the Masonic Temple in Jackson with the aim of selecting sixty-four delegates to represent Mississippi at the 1964 Democratic National Convention.





Above: Fannie Lou Hamer served as vice chairman of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

left Atlantic City, and came back home. One of the regulars said, “We did not leave the national Democratic party; they left us.” Fannie Lou Hamer expressed the sentiment of the loyalists: “We didn’t come all this way for no two seats.” In 1972, the loyalists and the regulars merged into one biracial Mississippi Democratic Party.

Fannie Lou Hamer (1917-1977)

In Atlantic City, New Jersey, at the 1964 National Democratic Party Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer became a household name across America. Born in Montgomery County, Fannie Lou Hamer was a sharecropper’s daughter and one of twenty children. In an effort to get the delegates from the Freedom Democratic Party seated at the convention, she testified before the credentials committee and told how she was beaten by policemen because she tried to register to vote. In the fall of 1964, she ran for the U.S. Congress on the Freedom Democratic Party ticket. Although she lost that election, Fannie Lou Hamer won the affection and admiration of thousands of Americans who supported racial equality and social justice. Over the next several years, Mrs. Hamer spoke at rallies and conventions throughout the country and

was best known for her saying, “I’m sick and tired of being sick and tired.” Fannie Lou Hamer was one of America’s most loved and revered civil rights advocates at the time of her death, in Mound Bayou, in 1977.

Figure 26 Major Civil Rights Legislation of the 1960s

Civil Rights Act of 1964

Prohibited discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, and gender in public facilities (restaurants, hotels, theaters, public recreational areas, schools, and libraries) and in employment; set up the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC)

Voting Rights Act of 1965

Outlawed literacy tests and poll taxes; identified counties in the South known to have kept blacks from registering to vote and sent registrars into southern states to register black voters

Civil Rights Legislation

In 1964 and 1965, the U.S. Congress passed several major civil rights laws. These laws made it illegal to discriminate against blacks in voting, hiring practices, housing, and in public restaurants, motels, swimming pools, and state parks.

After the enactment of these laws, Governor Paul Johnson advised Mississippians that the civil rights legislation was the law of the land. Whether we liked it or not, the law would be upheld. Governor Johnson’s strong position in favor of law and order was endorsed by other white public officials and the state’s business and professional leaders.



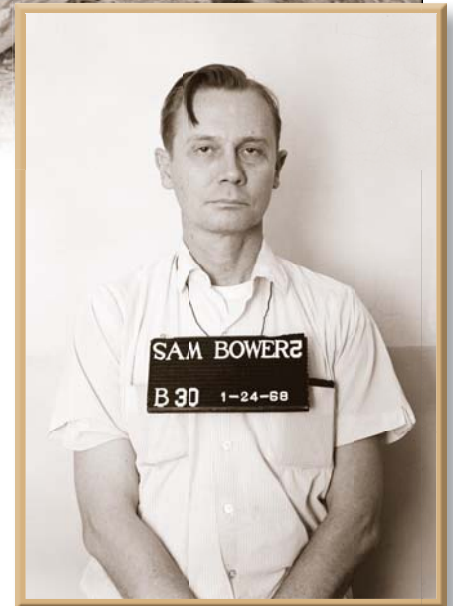
The Firebombing of Vernon Dahmer's Home

One of the most vicious civil rights murders was the murder of Vernon Dahmer. On January 10, 1966, some Ku Klux Klansmen **firebombed** (launched an attack with a bomb that could start a fire) his home in Hattiesburg. Mrs. Dahmer and the children escaped. As Vernon Dahmer was exchanging gunfire with the Klansmen, he suffered serious burns over most of his body. He died the next day. This callous assault on a man's home shocked the Hattiesburg community, and individuals and businesses joined in an effort to rebuild his home. Several Klansmen were indicted and sentenced to various terms in prison. Ku Klux Klan Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers was tried four times, but each trial ended in a mistrial.

Based on new evidence uncovered by reporter Jerry Mitchell of *The Clarion-Ledger*, the state brought new charges against Sam Bowers in August 1998. A jury found Bowers guilty of murder, and the judge sentenced him to life in prison. He died in prison on November 5, 2006.

The Election of 1967

Congressman John Bell Williams, who had held his seat in Congress for twenty years, was stripped of his seniority by the Democratic Party because he supported Republican Barry Goldwater in the 1964 presidential race. Congressman Williams resigned his seat, came back to Mississippi, and was elected governor in 1967. The 1967 campaign may have set some kind of record for the most candidates in a single election. There were seven candidates for governor, six for lieutenant governor, nine for land commissioner, and a host of others for district and local offices.



Top: Harold Dahmer contemplates the smoldering ruin of his father Vernon's house in Hattiesburg. Harold, home after being discharged from the Army, barely escaped with his life. **Above:** Ku Klux Klan Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers was tried four times for the murder of Vernon Dahmer, with each trial ending in a mistrial. New evidence resulted in a new trial in 1998, and Bowers was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

Robert G. Clark of Ebenezer

The 1967 campaign was an historic election because twenty-two blacks were elected to public office. Most of the black officials were elected to local positions in predominantly black counties. The most significant black official elected in 1967 was Robert G. Clark of Ebenezer, who won a seat in the state legislature. He was the first African American elected to the Mississippi legislature since 1894. Representative Clark held a bachelor's degree from Jackson State University and a master's degree from Michigan State University. A schoolteacher by profession, Representative Clark served for many years as chairman of the House Education Committee and was a major influence in the passage of the Education Reform Act of 1982. In January 1992, Clark was elected speaker pro tempore. When he retired in 2003, he was the senior member of the Mississippi House of Representatives. In 2004, Robert G. Clark became the first African American to have a state building named in his honor. The building located at 301 Lamar Street in Jackson is named the Robert G. Clark Building.



Above: John Bell Williams, a longtime U.S. congressman, defeated six other candidates to win the governor's race in 1967. The final integration of Mississippi's school system took place during his administration.

Administration of John Bell Williams, 1968-1972

Although Governor Williams was known as a champion of states' rights and of segregation, the most extensive integration in the state's history occurred during his administration. During the fall of 1969 and the spring of 1970, the state's dual system of public schools—one system for whites and one system for blacks—was abolished by a federal court order. There were times during those crucial months when the continuation of the public school program was in doubt. During the transition from the dual to the unified system, many white students withdrew from public schools and enrolled in the rapidly expanding private academies. However, enrollment figures for the 1970-1971 school year indicated that the public school system would survive. Public school enrollment figures showed that 92 percent of the students enrolled in public schools in 1969 had returned to the public schools in the fall of 1970.

Governor Williams, although he did not endorse the court-ordered integration of the public school system, did not attempt to prevent its implementation. Most white Mississippians, the majority of whom had opposed the abolition of the dual system, also accepted the integration of public schools. With the desegregation of the public school system in 1970 and the election of Bill Waller as governor in 1971, Mississippi moved from the horse and buggy days into the modern era. We will study those exciting times in the next chapter.

Reviewing the Section

1. Define in sentence form: Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), Freedom Schools, Freedom Democratic Party.
2. What extreme act of violence occurred in 1964 in Philadelphia?
3. What was the famous saying of Fannie Lou Hamer?

Of Special Interest

Journalist Jerry Mitchell of *The Clarion-Ledger*

During the 1960s, Jackson's *The Clarion-Ledger*, Mississippi's largest newspaper, opposed and resisted any change in the state's social and racial traditions.

The editorial policy of the paper was a major factor in maintaining white supremacy and racial segregation. *The Clarion Ledger* columnists were ruthless and demeaning in their coverage of civil rights activists and supportive of the Citizens' Council and the State Sovereignty Commission. *The Clarion Ledger* almost never condemned the violence against blacks. With twisted logic, the editors often found some way to blame the violence on the black victims. Because the leading newspaper in the state did not condemn the racial violence, it was in some way responsible for that violence.

It is one of the many ironies of Mississippi history that, a generation after the civil rights movement, Jerry Mitchell, an investigative reporter from *The Clarion Ledger*, uncovered new evidence that allowed the state to reopen several of the "cold cases" and bring those who perpetrated crimes against blacks before the bar of justice.

The 1989 movie *Mississippi Burning* was a fictionalized account of the three civil rights workers who were murdered in Philadelphia in 1964. That movie inspired Mitchell to reexamine the racial crimes of the 1960s. Mitchell interviewed several material witnesses and the original suspects who were not indicted or

convicted for those crimes. The new evidence that Mitchell uncovered allowed federal and state authorities to secure indictments and convictions of four members of the Ku Klux Klan.

Mitchell's valiant work and effort, which subjected him to threats and risk, led to the third trial and conviction of Byron De La Beckwith for the assassination of Medgar Evers in 1963. It also led to the imprisonment of Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers for the fatal firebombing of Vernon Dahmer's home in 1966. Mitchell also helped bring about the trial and conviction of Bobby Cherry for the killing of four black children in the Birmingham church bombing in 1963 and of Edgar Ray Killen for the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in Philadelphia in 1964.



Jerry Mitchell has won fame and acclaim for his work, and he has received more than thirty national awards. He has been featured in national publications and has appeared on all the major television networks. Mitchell was featured in a 2002 anthology of American journalists titled *Muckraking! The Journalism That Has Changed America*. In 2005, Mitchell was the youngest recipient of Columbia University's John Chancellor Award for Excellence in Journalism. For his distinguished reporting, Jerry Mitchell received a "genius" award from the MacArthur Foundation in 2009 and a \$500,000 grant to continue his investigative journalism.

Chapter Review

Chapter Summary

Section 1 Mississippi and the Meredith Crisis

- Mississippi's civil rights movement began in 1946 when Medgar Evers led World War II veterans to the courthouse to vote. Armed white men turned them away.
- Ross R. Barnett was elected governor in 1959 on his promise to maintain racial segregation.
- Harry S. Murphy, who was misidentified as white, attended classes at Ole Miss under a World War II Navy V-12 Program.
- Charles Dubra applied for admission to the Ole Miss Law School but was rejected.
- Medgar Evers was rejected from Ole Miss Law School because he didn't supply the required recommendation letters. He accepted an NAACP position instead.
- When Professor Clennon King of Alcorn A&M applied in person at Ole Miss, he was declared unstable and sent to a mental hospital.
- When Clyde Kennard applied to the University of Southern Mississippi, his farm was confiscated, his insurance was canceled, and he was wrongly imprisoned. He died after emergency surgery and later was exonerated.
- When James Meredith's application to Ole Miss was denied, he filed suit in federal court. In September 1962, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered his admittance.
- A secret plan brought Meredith to campus on a Sunday to register on Monday. A mob formed, tear gas was fired, and national guardsmen (and later federal troops) put down a deadly riot.
- Meredith registered at Ole Miss and graduated in 1963.

Section 2 Assassination of Medgar Evers

- Soon after he made an important speech on TV, Medgar Evers was assassinated in his carport.
- Police found Byron De La Beckwith's rifle, arrested him, and indicted him for murder.
- Beckwith's first two trials in 1964 ended in a hung jury. The judge declared a mistrial and dismissed him on bond.
- In January 1994, Beckwith was convicted and sentenced to life in prison. He died in 2001.

Section 3 The Beginning of the End of Racial Segregation

- Governor Paul B. Johnson Jr.'s inaugural address in 1964 set a tone of positive leadership.
- In the summer of 1964, college students came to Mississippi to conduct Freedom Schools and voter registration drives. The Ku Klux Klan reappeared, committing violent acts.
- In Philadelphia, in June 1964, three civil rights workers were murdered by Klansmen and buried in an earthen dam.
- Forty years later, Edgar Ray Killen was indicted in the Philadelphia murders. In 2005, he was convicted of manslaughter and sentenced to sixty years in prison.
- The Freedom Democratic Party challenged Mississippi's all-white delegation at the 1964 national Democratic Convention. Both factions refused a compromise regarding seating and returned home. In 1972, the groups merged.
- In January 1966, Klansmen firebombed Vernon Dahmer's Hattiesburg home, killing him. Several Klansmen and, later, Imperial Wizard Sam Bowers were found guilty.
- In 1967, many blacks were elected to public office. Robert G. Clark became the first African American in the Mississippi legislature since 1894.

- In 1969 and 1970, federal court order ended the state's dual public school system.

Activities for Learning

Understanding the Facts

1. What was the avenue of upward mobility for blacks in postwar Mississippi?
2. What 1960 Mississippi constitutional amendment was used to prevent many blacks from registering to vote?
3. Who supported and who opposed Charles Dubra's admission to the Ole Miss Law School?
4. In what city did Medgar Evers organize sit-ins, demonstrations, and boycotts?
5. Summarize *The Clarion-Ledger's* attempts to shift blame in the Evers murder.
6. What indiscretion by Beckwith gave the necessary evidence for conviction?
7. What words from Governor Paul B. Johnson's inaugural address signaled a change in race relations?
8. In what year did nonagricultural employment exceed agricultural employment for the first time?
9. Why were Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman driving to Neshoba County?
10. How many times was Sam Bowers tried before he was convicted of murder?

Developing Critical Thinking

1. How did local officials obstruct Clyde Kennard's attempt to attend the University of Southern Mississippi?
2. Why was Byron De La Beckwith tried three times for the murder of Medgar Evers?

Writing across the Curriculum

Assume you are the author of a biography on James Meredith. Create a title for the biography and design the book jacket. For the front cover, include the title, the author's name and an illustration. For the front inside cover, write a summary of Meredith's life using facts from this chapter. On

the back cover, list the author, title, and a quotation from James Meredith. On the rear inside cover, list your name, date, and class period.

Exploring Mississippi on the Internet

Go to www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1294360. Read the article titled "The Legacy of Medgar Evers." How did black voter registration change in Mississippi in the years following his death?

Building 21st-Century Skills: Interpreting Political Cartoons

The purpose of a political cartoon is to illuminate an "essential truth." A political cartoonist often uses a combination of individuals, objects, and words to communicate this truth. To interpret a political cartoon, begin by identifying the individuals and objects used by the cartoonist. What do they symbolize? Note any words or numbers used, especially in the caption. Finally, describe any action in the cartoon. What is the message of this combination of individuals, objects, words, and/or action?

Now look at the cartoon below. What are the children doing? What is the message of this cartoon? Why do you think it is called "Inch by Inch"?

