

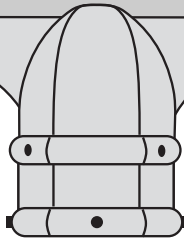


MISSISSIPPI
FREEDOM
TRAIL

MADISON COUNTY MOVEMENT

CORE activists David Dennis, Matheo Suarez, and George Raymond opened a Madison County office in 1963 to register black voters in white-controlled Canton.

Co-directors Raymond and Suarez were joined by Annie Devine and C. O. Chinn and later by Anne Moody of Tougaloo College. Along with the local Cotton and Chinn families and others, they staged a boycott, created freedom schools and voter registration clinics, and implemented three mass voter registration drives, called "Freedom Days."



30.25"

45"

The Madison County Movement, CORE's first project in the state, had its headquarters in Canton, where blacks made up more than 60 percent of the 10,000 citizens but only 121 were registered to vote. CORE (Congress of Racial Equality) activist David Dennis knew the town and county were controlled by a handful of powerful whites and that only a concerted effort by civil rights groups and local people would effect change. Dennis also noted that Canton's proximity to Tougaloo College would make it possible to involve college students in the project.

Dennis, with fellow CORE activists Matteo Suarez and George Raymond, opened a Madison County office in June 1963, and by early 1964 it was one of the most active projects in the state. Co-directors Raymond and Suarez were joined by C. O. Chinn, a local entrepreneur, who provided a meeting place. Along with Chinn, Annie Devine emerged from the local black community to work with organizers. The Rev. James F. McRee was chairman of the movement at one point and was instrumental in forming the important Head Start program, CDGM, in 1965, which exerted a positive impact on both children and adults. Ann Moody?

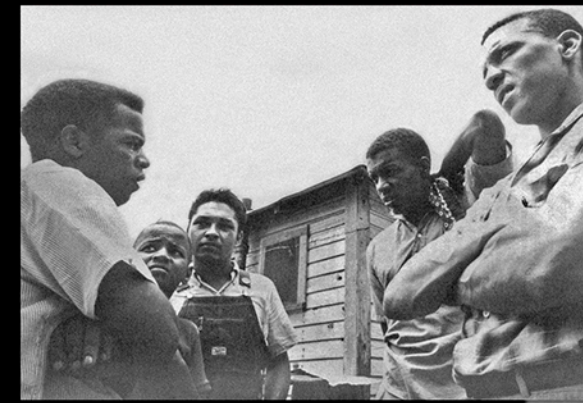
To dramatize the widespread police brutality, denial of voting rights, segregated businesses and schools, and lack of economic opportunities for black citizens, Madison County blacks staged a boycott of twenty-one stores in Canton. In response to its success, local police began arresting blacks and stopping cars entering the city. Despite the harassment, activists organized a Freedom Day to encourage voter registration, while circuit clerk Foote Campbell did his best to squelch all registration. When Dennis filed suit against Campbell, he relented a bit.

A boycott of the segregated, underfunded black schools followed, and two more Freedom Days, with mixed success but more violence. Two black senior girls enrolled at Canton High School and graduated despite threats and isolation. When six black elementary students enrolled in Canton Elementary, the family of one was immediately evicted from their home. On the night six County teenagers enrolled at Madison High, crosses were burned in their yards and threats made on their lives. Within a week they had all withdrawn. On May 29, 1964, the third Freedom Day, there was a drive-by shooting at the freedom house, and on June 8 a bomb rocked the CORE headquarters. On May 30, police stopped Otha Williams, a businessman and farmer on a back road and beat him severely. Four days later two cars loaded with armed white men pulled up in front of the COFO office in Jackson and fired away

gangland style, injuring several workers. This project was funded in part by grants from



From left: John Lewis (SNCC) and unidentified boy with CORE's Matteo Suarez, Jerome Smith, and Dave Dennis at a meeting in Greenwood



"We're demanding this time to be first-class citizens. We've got to sweat, we've got to bleed; a lot of us are going to have to die for it."

— David Dennis, mass rally address before the final Freedom Day



At left, George Raymond, Jr. was arrested in a bus terminal in Jackson on August 14, 1961, for his participation in the Freedom Rides.

C. O. Chinn, at right, goes from house to house in the Canton area speaking to residents about the importance of voter registration.



Mississippi Project 64

- 30 □ Voter Registration
- 21 + Freedom School
- 19 ○ Community Center
- 26 ◆ Project Continuing
- 7 = MCHR

A map of CORE's Southern Regional Offices from 1964 shows Canton as a base for voter registration, a Freedom School, a community center and a continuing project.

Above right, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Floyd McKissick, and Stokely Carmichael in a march in Canton, July 1, 1966



Dr. King shakes hands with local leader Annie Devine during a break in the Meredith March Against Fear in 1966.

Photo: Bob Fitch

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Canton weekly report, March 16 thru March 22, 1964

Harassments
C.O. Chinn and Scott Smith were both threatened in jail. In the dark of night someone came up to their cells and told them they were going to be killed. Nothing came of the threat. The sheriff worked hard at trying to convince them that the movement was deserting them and would not help get them out of jail.

Five new cases of people being laid off work have been reported. They seem to be related to movement activities.

A local resident of Madison was threatened for his life for wearing a FREEDOM NOW pin. The same man was told by a man to whom he had owed a bill that he would be shot if he did pay the bill and shot if he didn't.

A local high school girl was told not to return to a store and not to let any of her family return to the store if she took part in any movement activities.

Registration dates	Number attempted	Number successful
Monday, March 16	-	-
Tuesday	13	-
Wednesday	-	-
Thursday	10	-
Friday	10	-
Saturday, March 21	5	-
- means unknown		

The staff working in Canton this week was George Raymond, Richard Jewett, John Newman, Andrew Lee Green, Joe Lee Watts, Marcellus Byrd, Theodius Hewitt.



When 200 marchers of James Meredith's March Against Fear came through Canton in June

1966, a crowd of 3,500 of the black community met them to greet Martin Luther King, Floyd McKissick, Stokely Carmichael, and others. Canton officials refused to let them erect tents on the grounds of an African American school, and when the crowd was defiant, sixty-one state troopers lined up in full battle gear and fired tear gas, then gun-butted and kicked marchers, including women and children. Doctors from Jackson were recruited to set up an emergency clinic. Dr. Robert Smith and Dr. Alvin Poussaint recalled, "We were up that whole night treating the victims."

Images courtesy Mississippi Department of Archives and History Sovereignty Commission

This is marker No. 21 on the Mississippi Freedom Trail, dedicated July 23, 2016

map: Wisconsin Historical Society, Freedom Summer Collection