Guide to the Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection

NMAH.AC.0558
Danielle Snyder
2002
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Collection Overview

Repository: Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title: Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection
Identifier: NMAH.AC.0558
Date: 1964-1966
Extent: 0.33 Cubic feet (1 box)
Creator: Koenig, Ruth
Reagon, Bernice Johnson, 1942-
Language: English.
Summary: Materials related to the Civil Rights struggle, voter registration drive in Holly Springs, summer 1964: includes diaries, correspondence, business records, periodical articles, newsletters, and ephemera.
Digital Content: Image(s): Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information
The Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Collection was donated to the Smithsonian Institution in 1996 by Bernice Johnson Reagon.

Provenance
The materials came to the Archives Center through Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon. The acquisition process began Jan. 1992. The contact was made through mutual friends between Dr. Reagon and Ms. Koenig, and continued because of their concurrent participation in the Civil Rights Movement. The materials arrived at the Archives Center July 1996.

Related Materials
Ruth Koenig Papers [unprocessed manuscript collection], University of Southern Mississippi, McCain Library and Archives, accession number: AM01-114.

Processing Information
Collection processed by Danielle Synder, 2002.

Preferred Citation
Biographical / Historical

In 1964, the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project was established by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), an alliance of four civil rights groups: the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC); the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE); and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). The purpose of the Freedom Summer was to develop a unified voter registration program in Mississippi to support the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP) at the National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City. Furthermore, COFO hoped to attract the government and nation's attention through the help of hundreds of predominately northern, white students.

Lasting from late June to mid-August 1964, the Freedom Summer Project was closely followed by the northern media, and grabbed the attention of the New Left. Ultimately, the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project established a black political presence in the state of Mississippi, as well as organized various programs including the Freedom Schools and Community Centers.

Ruth Koenig was a 23-year-old schoolteacher from Schenectady, New York, when she volunteered for the Mississippi Freedom Summer in Holly Springs, Mississippi. She stated that it was the 1963 Birmingham bombing which compelled her to participate in the Freedom Summer. During her three months in Mississippi, Koenig taught at the Freedom Schools, signed new members for the MFDP, and helped to organize voter registration drives. In 1966, Koenig returned to Mississippi to observe the changes she helped to generate through her participation in the Mississippi Freedom Summer. Since that time, she has worked predominately in the education field, and has continued to rally for human rights, as well as environmental and peace issues.

Scope and Contents

The Ruth Koenig collection includes personal and business correspondence, pictures, and various printed material. The collection is arranged in four series as follows:


Series 2: BUSINESS RECORDS: organizational documents pertaining to "Friends of SNCC" and the Holly Springs Project and financial records. There is also a sub-series that holds documentation concerning SNCC, which includes press releases and Mississippi incident reports from 1964.


Series 4: PRINT MEDIA: issues of various independent and local newspapers including the Student Voice and the South Reporter; also clippings pertaining to the Mississippi Summer Project from national newspapers and magazines such as the Saturday Evening Post.
Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:
- African Americans -- Civil rights
- Civil rights
- Civil rights movements -- 1960-1970 -- Mississippi
- Political rights -- 1960-1970
- Race discrimination
- State action (Civil rights) -- Mississippi
- Voter registration -- 1960-1970 -- Mississippi

Types of Materials:
- Articles -- 1950-2000
- Business records -- 1950-2000
- Correspondence -- 1960-1970
- Diaries -- 20th century
- Newsletters -- 1960-1970

Geographic Names:
- Holly Springs (Miss.) -- 1960-1970
Container Listing

Series 1: Correspondence

Box 1, Folder 1  Correspondence from Ruth
Box 1, Folder 2  Correspondence to Ruth
Box 1, Folder 3  Correspondence from "The Gang"
Box 1, Folder 4  Miscellaneous Correspondence

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Series 2: Business Records

Box 1, Folder 1  Holly Springs Project: "Freedom" Documents
Box 1, Folder 2  Holly Springs Project: Financial Documents
Box 1, Folder 3  Holly Springs Project: Miscellaneous Documents
Box 1, Folder 4  Holly Springs Project: Pictures

Subseries 2.1: SNCC

Box 1, Folder 1  SNCC Paperwork: The Hammermill Paper Company
Box 1, Folder 2  SNCC Incident Summaries -- Mississippi, 1964
Box 1, Folder 3  SNCC Press Releases, 1964-1965
Series 3: Ephemera

Box 1, Folder 1  1964 Diaries and Notes
               Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 2  1966 Diary

Box 1, Folder 3  Song Transcripts

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Series 4: Print Media

Box 1, Folder 1  Independent Newspaper: The Bearcat, 1964

Box 1, Folder 2  Independent Newspaper: Benton County Freedom Train, 1964

Box 1, Folder 3  Independent Newspaper: The Freedom News, 1964

Box 1, Folder 4  Independent Newspaper: The Student Voice, 1964-1965
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 5  Local Newspaper: The South Reporter, July 1964

Box 1, Folder 6  Newspaper clippings, 1964
Image(s)

Box 1, Folder 7  Saturday Evening Post

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