



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection

NMAH.AC.0558

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2002

Archives Center, National Museum of American History

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection
Date:	1964-1966
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0558
Creator:	Koenig, Ruth (Creator) Reagon, Bernice Johnson, 1942-
Extent:	0.33 Cubic feet (1 box)
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

The Ruth Koenig Mississippi Summer Project Collection, 1964, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Reproduction fees for commercial use. Copyright restrictions. Contact staff for information.

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 1: CORRESPONDENCE: letters to/from Ruth Koenig, "The Gang," and other people.

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 3: EPHEMERA: two diaries written by Ruth Koenig, and transcripts of two Freedom Songs.

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

Human Rights -- 1960-1970
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

Places:

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
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Box 1, Folder 2	Holly Springs Project: Financial Documents
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Box 1, Folder 3	Holly Springs Project: Miscellaneous Documents
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Box 1, Folder 4	Holly Springs Project: Pictures
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Subseries 2.1: SNCC

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

Box 1, Folder 1 [1964 Diaries and Notes](#)

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
Box 1, Folder 5	Local Newspaper: The South Reporter, July 1964
Box 1, Folder 6	Newspaper clippings, 1964
Box 1, Folder 7	Saturday Evening Post

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