



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Ed King Collection of Civil Rights Material

NMAH.AC.0559

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives Center, National Museum of American History |
| Title: | Ed King Collection of Civil Rights Material |
| Identifier: | NMAH.AC.0559 |
| Date: | 1961-1970. |
| Extent: | 0.5 Cubic feet |
| Creator: | King, Ed |
| Language: | English . |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Ed King on September 17, 1996.

Provenance

This small collection represents some of the materials that Reverend King acquired while active in the Movement. The Collection was transferred to the Archives Center from the Division of Community Life on July 17, 1992. It came to us from Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, who with former husband Cordell, had connections with many Movement participants. She also played a lead role in the Voices of the Civil Rights Movement project co-sponsored by the Smithsonian Institution and Howard University in the late 1980's.

Processing Information

Collection processed by Peter Lisius, August 19, 1997.

Preferred Citation

Ed King Collection of Civil Rights Material, 1961-1970, Archives Center, National Museum of American History.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research.

Conditions Governing Use

Collection items available for reproduction, but the Archives Center makes no guarantees concerning copyright restrictions. Other intellectual property rights may apply. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) arose from the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), founded in 1960 to coordinate student sit-ins in Greensboro, North Carolina and elsewhere. COFO, was organized by Robert Moses in 1961, to secure the release of Freedom Riders in Mississippi. Many COFO workers were originally members of SNCC. COFO's goal was to increase the percentage of registered African-American voters in Mississippi, from the low 7% that existed in 1964.

In the summer of 1964, COFO was a key player in the organization of the Mississippi Summer Project. Prior to the summer, many white and African-American students, primarily from the South and the Northeast, organized to lead demonstrations, and to create political awareness among the large African-American population in Mississippi. During the summer, COFO was successful in setting up "freedom schools" and community centers throughout the state. This encouraged the emergence of young leaders who would teach African-Americans to articulate their needs and discontents within the existing socio-political structure in Mississippi. This activity, however, produced a severe white backlash, and many acts of violence occurred against COFO workers. These actions, many of them police instigated, are documented in this collection through affidavits and other legal documents on civil action.

Another accomplishment of COFO was the establishment of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. The MFDP enrolled the majority of African-Americans who were systematically denied access to the delegate selection process of the regular Mississippi Democratic Party (MDP). The MFDP organized itself along the same lines, contained many of the same rules, and divided into the same Congressional districts as the MDP. MFDP's goal, however, was to contest seats in Congress traditionally held by white Mississippians, in order to create a more equal representation of the state as a whole.

Edwin King was a white Methodist minister originally from Vicksburg, MI. Although raised with a traditional Mississippi upbringing, he had the opportunity, while attending Milsap College, to work with black students from Tougaloo College. This had a profound influence on his life. When he and his wife were graduated from Milsap College in the early '50's, they attended Boston University for graduate studies in seminary and social work, respectively, and decided that they could no longer live in the South. They were conscientious objectors to the racist attitudes of their neighbors and did not want to confront them (the neighbors or the attitudes). However, this was changed by a serendipitous dinner with Reverend Abernathy. Reverend King and several others were having dinner at a black restaurant in Montgomery, Alabama when everyone in the party was arrested. From that time, Reverend King and his wife were deeply involved in the Civil Rights Movement.

Scope and Contents

The bulk of this collection contains affidavits and legal papers filed in civil action suits which document acts of violence committed against Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) workers between 1961 and 1964. All activity documented occurred in Mississippi, and much of the violence that occurred was inflicted by police and white civilians. Also contained in this collection are materials relating to COFO, and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, comprising a mission statement, and a document sent to the SNCC organization pertaining to voter registration of African-Americans living in Mississippi, all of which reflect the effort of the MFDP to have African-American Congressmen elected in Mississippi.

The last item in the half document box is a pamphlet entitled "Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story." Created in cartoon format, it appears to target a younger audience. The oversize box contains Civil Rights newspapers published in Mississippi. Included are issues of "The Kudzu," the "Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Newsletter," and the "Mississippi Free Press."

This primary source material from COFO and MFDP help document the massive, non-violent struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi in the early 1960's. The collection confirms evidence of backlash demonstrated by intolerance and violence that occurred as a result of this struggle.

Arrangement

Collection is arranged into one series.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

- Civil rights
- Civil rights movements -- 1960-1970 -- Mississippi
- Race relations -- 1960-1970 -- Mississippi
- Violence -- 1960-1970 -- Mississippi

Types of Materials:

- Affidavits
- Cartoons (humorous images) -- 20th century
- Civil court records -- 1960-1970
- Comic books

Names:

- Council of Federated Organizations.
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., 1929-1968

Geographic Names:

- Mississippi -- 1960-1970

Container Listing

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| Box 1, Folder 1 | Introduction to the legal documents concerning civil actions and COFO |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , 1961 - 1963 |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , 1964 February |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , 1964 March |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> May, 1964 |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , 1964 June |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , 1964 July |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | <i>COFO vs. Rainey: Legal Documents re: Civil Actions</i> , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Mississippi County Affidavits , 1961 - 1962 |
| Box 1, Folder 10 | Mississippi County Affidavits , 1963 |
| Box 1, Folder 11 | Mississippi County Affidavits , 1964 |
| Box 1, Folder 12 | Mississippi County Affidavits , undated |
| Box 1, Folder 13 | Papers depicting the program and goals of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party |
| Box 1, Folder 14 | Martin Luther King and the Montgomery Story" Pamphlet Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 1 | <i>The Kudzu</i> , 1970 May, 1968 September 18 |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party Newsletter , 1968 June 22 |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | Mississippi Free Press , 1961 December 16, 1963 September 7, 1963 October 12 |