



## THE FREEDOM RIDES OF 1961

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# Imagine...

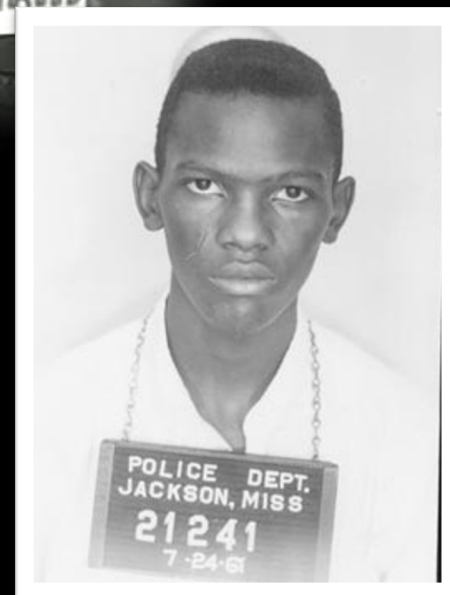
- You were accepted to your favorite college and have made it through a wonderful first semester. You've made new friends and you are keeping up with school work.
- A few weeks before your exams begin, a fellow student approaches you with a project she/he she wants you to participate in. The project would involve you leaving school for an undetermined amount of time.
- What type of project (if any) would it need to be to convince you to leave? Is there anything that would tempt you to participate to the point that you would risk your collage career?



**“They tossed their books aside, packed only essentials and finished writing their wills. With only one goal in mind—to fight racial desegregation in interstate bus travel—the young, interracial Freedom Riders accepted the prospect of death as they rode the bus into the racially divided Deep South in 1961.”**



**“The Freedom Riders were mostly students...These are 17, 18, 19-year-old students from an array of colleges around the country without regard to their own lives aiming to desegregate interstate bus travels in a nonviolent and active way.”**



## SETTING THE STAGE FOR THE 1961 FREEDOM RIDES

# The Murder of Emmett Till

## August, 1955

- In August, 1955, 14-year-old Chicagoan Emmett Till was visiting family in Mississippi was kidnapped, brutally beaten, shot, and dumped in the Tallahatchie River for allegedly whistling at a white woman.
- Two white men, J. W. Milam and Roy Bryant, are arrested for the murder and acquitted by an all-white jury.
- They later boast about committing the murder in a Look magazine interview.



# The Montgomery Bus Boycott

## December 1, 1955

- NAACP member Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her seat at the front of the "colored section" of a bus to a white passenger, defying a southern custom of the time.
- In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott, which will last for more than a year, until the buses are desegregated Dec. 21, 1956.
- As newly elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is instrumental in leading the boycott.



“People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”

*-Rosa Parks*

# The Montgomery Bus Boycott

## December 1, 1955

- Interestingly, nine months before Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin had been the first person to resist bus segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, preceding Parks.
- The court case stemming from her refusal to give up her seat on the bus, decided by the U.S. District Court, eventually declared bus segregation in Alabama unconstitutional.
- Montgomery's black leaders did not publicize Colvin's pioneering effort for long because she was a teenager and became pregnant while unmarried. The NAACP leaders worried about using her to represent their movement, given the complicated society of the time.





# The Little Rock Nine

## September, 1957

- In 1957, three years after the *Brown v. BOE* ruling, a federal court ordered schools in Little Rock, Arkansas, to comply and integrate.
- However, when nine African-American attempted to enroll at Arkansas's Little Rock High School as the first non-white students, the Governor of Arkansas, Orval Faubus, who was determined to stop integration in his state, defied the courts and sent the National Guard to stop the students from entering the school.
- Ten days later in a meeting with President Dwight Eisenhower, the President tried to persuade the Governor to obey the Supreme Court's ruling. Governor Faubus agreed to use the National Guard to instead protect the students when entering the school, but on returning to Little Rock, he instead dismissed the troops and left the nine African American students vulnerable to angry, white mobs gathered at the school to prevent their entry.
- Within hours, the jeering, brick-throwing mob had beaten several reporters and smashed many of the school's windows and doors. By noon, local police were forced to evacuate the nine students.



# The Little Rock Nine

## September, 1957



- When Faubus did not restore order, President Eisenhower dispatched 101st Airborne Division paratroopers to Little Rock and put the Arkansas National Guard under federal command. By 3 a.m., soldiers surrounded the school, bayonets fixed.
- Under federal protection, the “Little Rock Nine” finished out the school year. The following year, Faubus closed all the high schools, forcing the African American students to take correspondence courses or go to out-of-state schools.
- The school board reopened the schools in the fall of 1959, and despite more violence — for example, the bombing of one student’s house — four of the nine students returned, this time protected by local police.

# The Greensboro Sit-Ins

## February 1, 1960

- Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.
- Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South.
- Six months later the original four protesters are served lunch at the same Woolworth's counter.
- Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theaters, libraries, and other public facilities.



# The Friendship Nine

January 31, 1961

- Ten black students from Friendship College walked into McCrory's Five and Dime in downtown Rock Hill, SC and sit at a white-only lunch counter.
- After being denied service and refusing to leave, the group was arrested and charged with trespassing.
- In previous sit-in arrests across the South, protestors were released once they paid a fine, giving profit to the very cities enforcing such unjust laws.
- However, nine of the Friendship students went before the judge and chose to serve their time behind bars rather than pay the \$100 fine. For the first time, not only did the city not profit, it actually had to pay to house and feed the men.
- Known as the "Friendship Nine," the students completed 30 days of hard labor. Their "Jail, No Bail" strategy would be used as a tactic throughout the rest of the civil rights protest movement.

# Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896

That [the Separate Car Act] does not conflict with the Thirteenth Amendment, which abolished slavery...is too clear for argument...A statute which implies merely a legal distinction between the white and colored races -- a distinction which is founded in the color of the two races, and which must always exist so long as white men are distinguished from the other race by color -- has no tendency to destroy the legal equality of the two races...

“We consider the underlying *fallacy* of the plaintiff's argument to consist in the assumption that the enforced separation of the two races stamps the colored race with a badge of inferiority. If this be so, it is not by reason of anything found in the act, but solely because the colored race chooses to put that construction upon it.”

# A Disconnect between Rulings of the US Supreme Court & State/Local Laws

- Morgan v. Virginia, 1946
- Brown v. Board of Education, 1954
- Brown v. Board of Education II, 1955
- Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company, 1955
- Browder v. Gayle, 1956
- Cooper v. Aaron, 1958
- Boynton v. Virginia, 1960



**“I often wonder whether we do not rest our hopes too much upon constitutions, upon laws, and upon courts. These are false hopes; believe me, these are false hopes. Liberty lies in the hearts of men and women; when it dies there, no constitution, no law, no court can save it . . .”**

***~Judge Learned Hand***



## THE FREEDOM RIDES BEGIN





is available only to members of CORE, National Office

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The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.  
Washington, D. C.

My Dear Mr. President:

We expect you will be interested in our Freedom Ride, 1961. It is designed to forward the completion of integrated bus service and accommodations in the Deep South.

About fifteen CORE members will travel as inter-state passengers on Greyhound and Trailways routes. We leave Washington early in May and, travelling through Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, plan to arrive in New Orleans on Wednesday, May 17th.

The group is interracial. Two-thirds are Southerners. Three are women. We propose to challenge, en route, every form of segregation met by the bus passenger. We are experienced in, and dedicated to, the Gandhian principles of non-violence.

Our plans are entirely open. Further information is available to all. Freedom Ride is an appeal to the best in all Americans. We travel peaceably to persuade them that Jim Crow betrays democracy. It degrades democracy at home. It debases democracy abroad. We feel that there is no way to overstate the danger that denial of democratic and constitutional rights brings to our beloved country.

And so we feel it our duty to affirm our principles by asserting our rights. With the survival of democracy at stake, there is an imperative, immediate need for acts of self-determination. "Abandon your animosities and make your sons Americans," said Robert E. Lee. Freedom Ride would make that, "All your sons -- NOW."

Sincerely yours,  
*James Farmer*  
James Farmer  
National Director

JF:mn  
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GENERAL  
Afr-c

April 26, 1961

THE WHITE HOUSE  
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GENERAL FILES

# May 4, 1961

- The first Freedom Ride, led by CORE director James Farmer, left Washington, D.C. on May 4, 1961.
- The original interracial group of 7 Blacks and 6 Whites traveled south on two buses – one Greyhound and one Trailways.
- Three journalists also accompanied the group.
- Their plan was to ride through Virginia, North & South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi, ending with a rally in New Orleans, Louisiana on May 17 - the seventh anniversary of the *Brown* decision.



# May 4, 1961

- The Freedom Riders' tactics for their journey were to have at least one interracial pair sitting in adjoining seats and at least one black Rider sitting up front (in the seats usually reserved for white customers only), while the rest would sit scattered throughout the rest of the bus.
- One rider would abide by the South's segregation rules in order to avoid arrest and to contact CORE and arrange bail for those who were arrested.
- The riders were all trained and committed to non-violent, direct action. Even if attacked, they would not respond with violence in self-defense.
- The Freedom Ride met little resistance in the upper south unlike the first "Journey of Reconciliation."
- Minor trouble was encountered in Virginia and North Carolina. (Stops included Richmond and Farmville, VA, followed by **Greensboro, NC.**)



# Charlotte, NC - May 8 - 9, 1961

- In the first significant confrontation of the CORE Freedom Ride, **Joseph Perkins** is arrested for trespassing as he attempts to have his shoes shined at a whites-only shoeshine chair in Charlotte.
- Perkins refuses to post bail and spends two nights (May 8 and 9) in jail.
- On May 10, Judge Howard B. Arbuckle finds Perkins innocent of the trespassing charge based on the precedent set in ***Boyton v. Virginia***.



## May 10, 1961 – Rock Hill, SC

- Several white men attack a group of CORE Freedom Riders at the Greyhound bus terminal on May 10 as they attempt to enter the whites-only waiting room. John Lewis, Al Bigelow and Genevieve Hughes sustain injuries in the attack, which is broken up by local police.



## May 13-14, 1961 – Atlanta, GA

- The Freedom Riders arrive in Atlanta on May 13 and attend a reception with the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- They have high hopes that he might join them on the buses, perhaps becoming a Freedom Rider himself.
- For safety reasons, King does not join them. He warns them of the pending danger, since they have been told that the Klan has "quite a welcome" prepared for the Riders in Alabama. He urges them to reconsider traveling through the Deep South.
- Despite the warning, the CORE Freedom Riders leave Atlanta on May 14, bound for Alabama.



# May 14, 1961 – Anniston, AL

- On **May 14, 1961**, Mother's Day, the Freedom Riders divide into 2 groups (one on a Trailways bus, the other on a Greyhound bus) as they depart Atlanta, GA for Alabama. The buses left an hour apart from each other.
- An angry mob of approximately 200 gather at the Greyhound bus terminal to protest the first bus as it arrives in Anniston on May 14.
- The violent protesters smash windows, slash tires and threaten the Riders before local police escort the bus out of town.
- The bus, followed by a long line of cars and trucks, is forced to pull over as the tires go flat.
- The mob resumes its attack, throwing a firebomb through a broken window on the bus.
- The Riders escape but many suffer smoke inhalation and must be transported to a hospital.





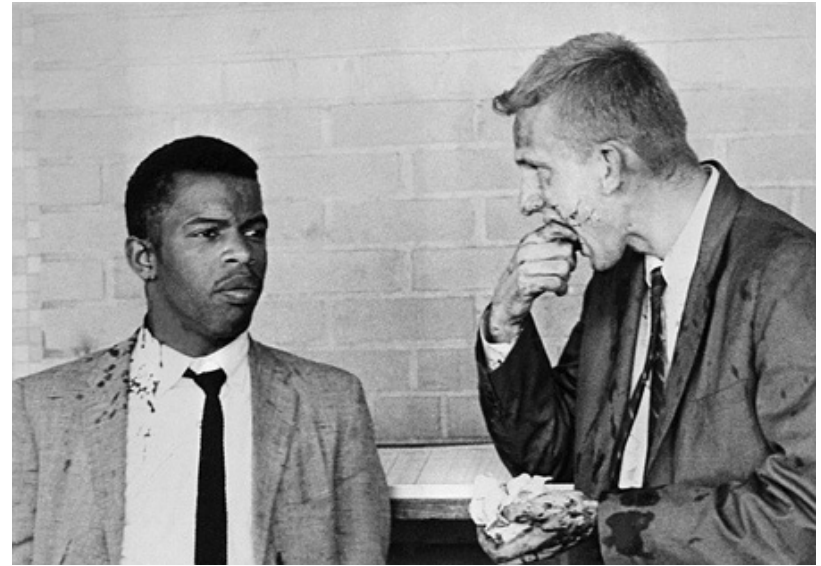


## May 14, 1961 –Birmingham, AL

- An hour later that same day, the Trailways bus leaves Atlanta with seven Freedom Riders scattered throughout the bus. Two reporters and a handful of other passengers are also on board. Unfortunately, eight of the other people on the bus turned out to be Klansmen.
- Before the bus is barely out of the Atlanta terminal, the Klansman begin to threaten the Freedom Riders on board.
- The bus makes a scheduled stop in Anniston and the Klansman become violent, gruesomely beating Freedom Riders Charles Person, James Peck, Walter Bergman, and Herman Harris and dumping their bleeding bodies in the back of the bus.
- The Klansmen sit in the middle of the bus from Anniston to Birmingham, daring any of the Freedom Riders to again try to “break the color line” as the bus rides on.
- The two journalists on board had a close-up view of the entire harrowing journey from Atlanta to Birmingham: *“It was a frightening experience,” one reported, “the worst encountered in almost 20 years of journalism.”*

# May 14, 1961 –Birmingham, AL

- While the beaten Freedom Riders regain consciousness by the time the bus arrives in Birmingham, more widespread violence unfortunately awaits them at the station.
- James Peck and Charles Person, who had already been severely beaten by the Klansmen on board the bus, are the first to get off the bus.
- Surrounded by yet another hostile group of whites, mob violence ensues and the riders, as well as bystanders, are severely beaten.
- No police protection is provided and the violence goes unchecked.



# May 14, 1961 –Birmingham, AL

- Birmingham's Public Safety Commissioner, Bull Connor, claimed he posted no officers at the bus depot because of the holiday (Mothers Day).
- However, it was discovered that before the Riders' pending arrival, Bull Connor's police department had struck a deal with the Ku Klux Klan: They had agreed that upon the arrival of the bus, the mob would have 15 minutes to burn, bomb, kill and maim without police intervention or arrests.
- It was also later discovered that the FBI knew of the planned attack and that the city police stayed away on purpose.

*Ku Klux Klansmen beat black bystander George Webb in the Birmingham Trailways bus station, May 14, 1961. The man with his back to the camera (center right) is FBI undercover agent Gary Thomas Rowe.*



## May 14, 1961 – Birmingham, AL

- Howard K. Smith, a CBS reporter, described the violence on the radio:  
*"Toughs grabbed the passengers into alleys and corridors, pounding them with pipes, with key rings, and with fists. One passenger was knocked down at my feet by twelve of the hoodlums, and his face was beaten and kicked until it was a bloody pulp."*
- The man attacked at the reporter's feet was James Peck, severely beaten for the second time that day.
- Peck was taken to Carraway Methodist Medical Center, a segregated hospital, which refused to treat him; he was later treated at Jefferson Hillman Hospital where he needed 53 stitches in his head.



# May 14, 1961 – Birmingham, AL

- Alabama governor John Patterson offered no apologies, explaining:  
*"When you go somewhere looking for trouble, you usually find it . . . . You just can't guarantee the safety of a fool and that's what these folks are, just fools."*
- The CORE Freedom Riders attempt to finish their rides, but bus drivers refuse to leave the station for fear of their lives.
- Eventually, the original CORE Freedom Riders are transported to the Birmingham airport, in hopes of flying to their original destination, New Orleans.



# May 15, 1961 – Flight to New Orleans, LA

- The Freedom Riders again find themselves trapped at the airport. Due to a bomb scare, no plane can leave.
- The Kennedy Administration dispatches John Seigenthaler, assistant to the attorney general, to Birmingham to ensure the safe departure of the Riders.
- Seigenthaler is able to get a flight off the ground for the Riders, and a plane transports them to New Orleans.
- On the evening of May 15, the CORE Freedom Riders finally arrive in New Orleans.
- On the airport tarmac, they are met by a crowd of white police officers in riot gear who shout racial epithets at the Riders as they make their way to the terminal and a small, welcoming group of CORE volunteers



*Jim Peck, seated, talks with a Justice Dept. representative and Ben Cox on the "freedom plane" to New Orleans, May 15, 1961.*



## THE SECOND WAVE OF FREEDOM RIDES

## May 17, 1961 – Nashville, TN

- Nashville student and Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) leader Diane Nash felt that if violence were allowed to halt the Freedom Rides, the movement would be set back years.
- She decides to recruit and train "fresh troops" of Freedom Riders to continue the cause.
- Even though these students have seen that their lives would be in danger, 10 students from Fisk University, Tennessee State University and the American Baptist Theological Seminary board buses to Birmingham, Alabama on May 17.
- The Freedom Rides continue.
- The Nashville movement would supply many waves of Freedom Riders in the weeks to come.





## May 17-18, 1961 – Ardmore, AL

- Immediately on May 17, seven of the new Nashville Freedom Riders are arrested in Birmingham by Bull Connor and thrown in jail.
- To keep their spirits up in jail, the students sang freedom songs.
- Out of frustration, early in the morning of May 18, Bull Connor and other police officers drive the Riders under cover of darkness to Ardmore, Alabama and left the riders on the side of a road. They were told to make their way back to Nashville.
- Instead, the Riders find refuge in the home of an elderly black couple.
- From Nashville, Diane Nash makes arrangements for a car to transport the Riders back to Birmingham the following day, May 19.
- On May 19<sup>th</sup>, the Nashville Riders attempt to resume their rides.
- Bus drivers again refuse to drive the buses, afraid of violent mobs gathered outside.

# May 19-20, 1961 – Montgomery, AL

- On May 19, the new SNCC riders meet up with two original riders - John Lewis and Hank Thomas - who had remained in Birmingham after the first wave of rides.
- They all attempted to resume the ride, but bus drivers again refused to drive, terrified by the howling mob surrounding the bus depot.
- Harassed and besieged by a KKK mob, the riders waited all night for a bus.
- Under pressure from the Kennedy administration, Greyhound was forced to provide a driver, and Governor Patterson reluctantly promised to protect the bus from KKK mobs and snipers on the road between Birmingham and Montgomery.
- On the morning of May 20, the Freedom Ride resumed, with the bus carrying the riders traveling toward Montgomery at 90 miles an hour protected by a contingent of the Alabama State Highway Patrol.



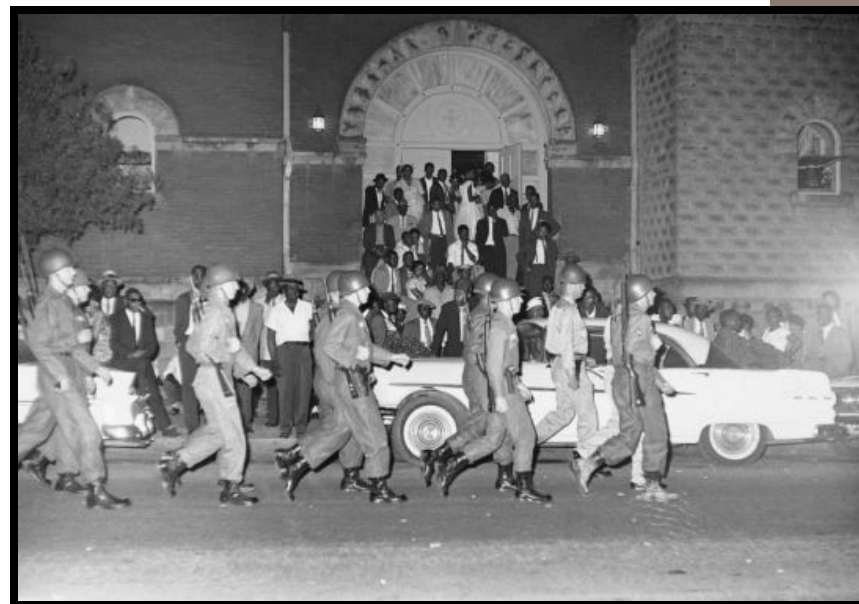
# May 20, 1961 – Montgomery, AL

- When the bus reaches the Montgomery city limits however, the Highway Patrol abandons them.
- At the bus station on South Court Street, a white mob awaits and brutally beats the Freedom Riders with baseball bats and iron pipes. The local police do nothing to stop the beatings.
- Jim Zwerg in particular receives a violent beating, and even Kennedy's representative John Seigenthaler is badly injured.
- Ambulances refuse to take the wounded to the hospital.
- Local blacks rescue the injured, and a number of the Freedom Riders are hospitalized.



# May 21, 1961 – Montgomery, AL

- On the following night, Sunday, May 21, more than 1500 people pack Reverend Ralph Abernathy's First Baptist Church to honor the Freedom Riders.
- Among the speakers were Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, and James Farmer.
- Outside, a mob of more than 3,000 whites attack blacks, with a handful of the United States Marshals Service protecting the church from assault and fire bombs.
- With city and state police making no effort to restore order, President Kennedy threatens to commit federal troops, but Governor Patterson forestalls that by ordering the Alabama National Guard to disperse the mob.



## May 23, 1961 – Jackson, MS

- The Riders board buses from Montgomery to Jackson, MS under National Guard escort.
- They are jailed upon arrival not under local or state segregation laws, but on the formal charges of incitement to riot, breach of peace and failure to obey a police officer.
- Jackson, Mississippi, is the endpoint for the vast majority of Freedom Rides during the summer of 1961.
- Hundreds of Riders are arrested throughout the summer of 1961, as Jackson police routinely arrest Freedom Riders at the local bus terminals, airport and train stations.
- Many are incarcerated first at Jackson City Jail, then at Hinds County Jail, before being transferred to the notorious Parchman State Prison Farm, beginning on June 15.



Bernard Lafayette (in aisle seat), next to Rip Patton, looking out at the green fields of Mississippi, as national guardsmen stand by. In the seat behind him is Jim Lawson. (Bruce Davidson/Magnum Photos, Inc.)

## “Jail – No Bail”

- Even though the Freedom Riders could have accepted bail to skip imprisonment, they began to refuse.
- “Jail, No Bail” had originated in February 1961, during the sit-in movement.
- The “Rock Hill Nine” — which were nine students imprisoned after a lunch counter sit-in in SC - were all sentenced to pay a \$50 fine for sitting at a whites-only lunch counter.
- Civil rights activists decided that paying bail fines only financially helped the cities that were oppressing them. The nine students refused bail.
- Nash served jail time in solidarity with the “Nine” and she was chosen to represent her fellow activists when she told the judge:

“We feel that if we pay these fines we would be contributing to and supporting the injustice and immoral practices that have been performed in the arrest and conviction of the defendants.”
- “Jail, No Bail” was then utilized by the Freedom Riders, even though it meant imprisonment and harassment in very dangerous conditions.



# June, 1961 – Parchman State Penitentiary

- By the end of June, 163 Freedom Riders had been convicted in Jackson and many jailed in Parchman. The first group sent to the farm were 45 male Freedom Riders (29 black & 16 white)
- The prison authorities were relentless in mocking and attempting to scare and intimidate the riders.
  - They were made as uncomfortable as possible.
  - The Freedom Riders were given clothing that did not fit.
  - They were not allowed items such as pencils and paper.



Photo © Bill Steber

# June, 1961 – Parchman State Penitentiary

- David Fankhauser, a Freedom Rider at Parchman, said:

*“In our cells, we were given a bible, an aluminum cup and a tooth brush. The cell measured 6 x 8 feet with a toilet and sink on the back wall, and a bunk bed. We were permitted one shower per week, and no mail was allowed. The policy in the maximum security block was to keep lights on 24 hours a day.”*

- As time wore on the Governor of Mississippi, Ross Barnett, visited the farm a few times. He would give various instructions to the guards to, "break their spirit, not their bones".
- While in prison, the students would sing songs, tell jokes and stories and read the Bible in order to encourage each other in their ongoing battle and keep their spirits up.

*“Did you know that at Parchman, to pass the time and to keep our spirits up, we ‘invented’ a radio program? I don’t recall that we named it, but ‘The Parchman Hour’ would have been a good name. Each cell had to contribute a short “act” (singing a song, telling a joke, reading from the Bible -- the only book we were allowed) and in between acts we had ‘commercials’ for the products we lived with every day, like the prison soap, the black-and-white striped skirts, the awful food, etc. We did this every evening, as I recall; it gave us something to do during the day, thinking up our cell’s act for the evening.” — Mimi Real, Freedom Rider, 1961*



# Summer, 1961 - Parchman State Penitentiary

- The prisoners also had another motive in singing songs - to irritate Tyson and the other guards.
- Tyson attempted many types of tactics to stop the singing.
  - They took their mattresses, tooth brushes, & bug screens to attempt to get the prisoners to stop singing.
  - The guards then took the extreme action of flooding the cells and blowing large fans into the cells creating a draft and freezing temperatures for the Freedom Riders.
  - After they realized these harsh methods were not working they attempted to barter with the Freedom Riders.
- The warden, emotionally wrecked, finally gave up and apologized to the riders. He returned all the belongings that had been taken in an attempt for less singing. This was already a victory for the Freedom Riders.
- Meanwhile, more riders continued the journey throughout the summer, regardless of the risks.

## Summer, 1961 -

- The Kennedys called for a "cooling off period" and condemned the Rides as unpatriotic because they embarrassed the nation on the world stage at the height of the cold war.
- Defying the Kennedys, CORE, SNCC, and SCLC rejected any "cooling off period".
- They formed a **Freedom Riders Coordinating Committee** to keep the Rides rolling through June, July, August, and September.
- During those months, more than 60 different Freedom Rides cross through the South, most of them converging on Jackson, where every Rider was arrested, more than 300 in total, plus an unknown number of riders arrested in other Southern towns.
- It is estimated that almost 450 riders participated in one or more Freedom Rides. About 75% were male, and the same percentage were under the age of 30, mostly evenly divided between black and white.

## Summer, 1961 –

- During the summer of 1961, Freedom Riders also campaigned against other forms of racial discrimination. They sat together in segregated restaurants, lunch counters and hotels. This was especially effective when it targeted large companies, which, fearing boycotts in the North, began to desegregate their businesses.
- In mid-June, a group of Freedom Riders had scheduled to end their ride in Tallahassee, Florida, with plans to fly home from the Tallahassee airport. They were provided a police escort to the airport from the city's bus facilities.
- At the airport, they decided to eat at a restaurant that was signed "For Whites Only". The owners decided to close rather than serve the Freedom Riders.
- Canceling their plane reservations, the Riders decided to wait until the restaurant re-opened so they could be served.
- They waited until 11:00 pm that night and returned the following day. During this time, hostile crowds gathered, threatening violence.

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- On June 16, 1961, the Freedom Riders were arrested for "unlawful assembly."
- That arrest became known as *Dresner v. City of Tallahassee*, which made its way to the US Supreme Court in 1963, in which a hearing was refused based on technical reasons.

## Fall, 1961 -

- On May 29, 1961, bowing to the demands of civil rights leaders as well as international outrage, Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy sent a petition to the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) to comply with a bus-desegregation ruling it had issued in November, 1955, *Sarah Keys v. Carolina Coach Company*.
- That ruling had declared separate but equal on interstate bus travel unconstitutional, but the ICC had failed to enforce its own ruling.
- After this new ICC rule took effect, passengers were permitted to sit wherever they pleased on interstate buses and trains.
- "White" and "Colored" signs came down in the terminals.
- Separate drinking fountains, toilets, and waiting rooms were consolidated.
- Lunch counters began serving people regardless of race.

# The Legacy of the Freedom Riders

- The Freedom Rides sent shock waves through American society.
- People worried that the Rides were evoking widespread social disorder and “problems between the races.” This attitude was often perpetuated by the press. The press in white communities would often portray the peaceful riders in a very negative light.
- Yet, the Freedom Rides established great credibility with blacks and whites throughout the United States, who became motivated to engage in direct action for civil rights based on their example.
- Freedom Riders, facing such danger, impressed blacks living in rural areas throughout the South who later formed the backbone of the civil rights movement.
- This credibility inspired many subsequent civil rights campaigns, including voter registration, freedom schools, and the black power movement.



POST – FREEDOM RIDES

## Yet, the fight was not yet over...

- **April 16, 1963** – Dr. Martin Luther King is arrested and jailed during anti-segregation protests in Birmingham, Ala.; he writes his seminal "**Letter from Birmingham Jail**," arguing that individuals have the moral duty to disobey unjust laws.
- **May, 1963** - During civil rights protests in Birmingham, Ala., Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor uses fire hoses and police dogs on black demonstrators. The violence gains the town the nickname of "Bombing-ham." These images of brutality, which are televised and published widely, are instrumental in gaining sympathy for the civil rights movement around the world.



- **June 12, 1963** - Mississippi's NAACP field secretary, 37-year-old Medgar Evers, is murdered outside his home in Jackson. Byron De La Beckwith is tried twice in 1964, both trials resulting in hung juries. It was not until 30 years later he is convicted for murdering Evers.



# Yet, the fight was not yet over...

- **Aug. 28, 1963** - 200,000 people join the *March on Washington*.



- **Sept. 1, 1963** - Four young girls (Denise McNair, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Addie Mae Collins) attending Sunday school are killed when the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, AL, is bombed for being a popular location for civil rights meetings. Riots erupt in Birmingham, leading to the deaths of two more black youths.



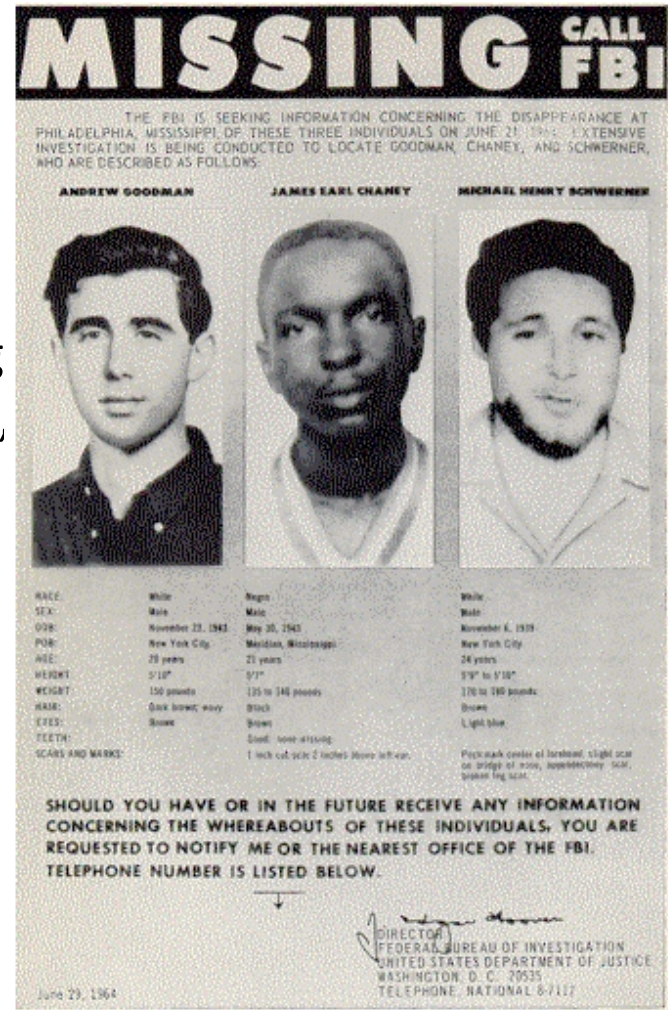
## Yet, the fight was not yet over...

- **Jan. 23, 1964** - The 24th Amendment abolishes the poll tax, which originally had been instituted in 11 southern states after Reconstruction to make it difficult for poor blacks to vote.
- **Summer, 1964** - The Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), a network of civil rights groups that includes CORE and SNCC, launches a massive effort to register black voters during what becomes known as the **Freedom Summer**. It also sends delegates to the Democratic National Convention to protest—and attempt to unseat—the official all-white Mississippi contingent.



# Yet, the fight was not yet over...

- **Aug. 4, 1964** - The bodies of 3 civil-rights workers—2 white, 1 black—are found in Neshoba, MS, six weeks into a federal investigation backed by President Johnson.
- James E. Chaney, 21; Andrew Goodman, 21; and Michael Schwerner, 24, had been working to register black voters in MS, and, on June 21, had gone to investigate the burning of a black church. They were arrested by the police on speeding charges, incarcerated for several hours, and then released after dark into the hands of the Ku Klux Klan, who murdered them.
- **Feb. 21, 1965** - Malcolm X, black nationalist and founder of the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is shot to death.



## Yet, the fight was not yet over...

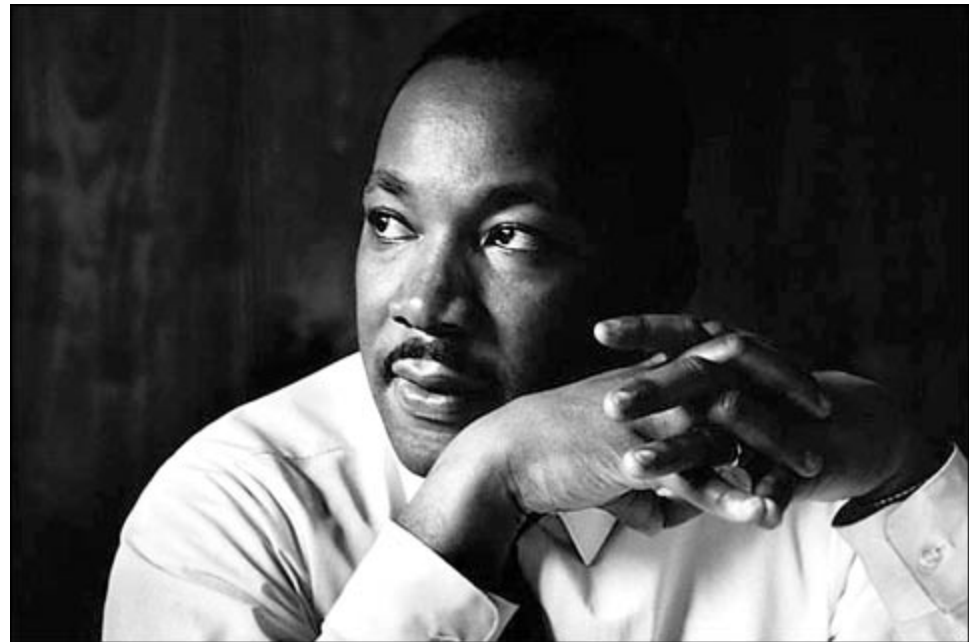
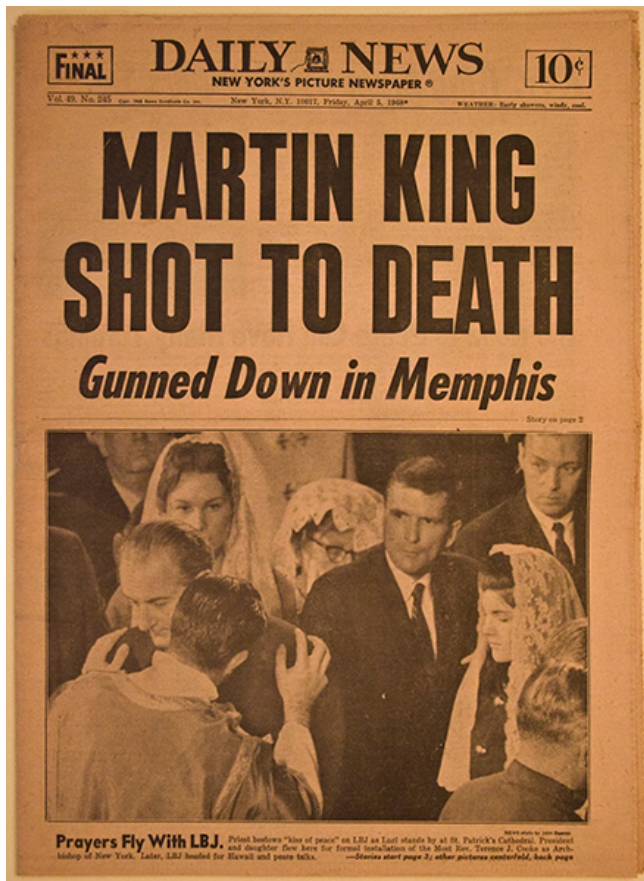
- **March 7, 1965** - Blacks begin a march from Selma to Montgomery in support of voting rights but are stopped at the Pettus Bridge by a police blockade. Fifty marchers are hospitalized after police use tear gas, whips, and clubs against them. The incident is dubbed "Bloody Sunday" by the media. The march is considered the catalyst for pushing through the voting rights act five months later.



- **Aug. 10, 1965** - Congress passes the Voting Rights Act of 1965, making it easier for Southern blacks to register to vote. Literacy tests, poll taxes, and other such requirements that were used to restrict black voting are made illegal.

# Yet, the fight was not yet over...

- **April 4, 1968** – Dr. King was shot dead in the southern US city of Memphis, Tennessee, where he was to lead a march of sanitation workers protesting against low wages and poor working conditions .



# Sources

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