

7-12-2014

Case Not Closed: Whiteness and the Rhetorical Genres of Freedom Summer

Lindsey Ives

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**CASE NOT CLOSED: WHITENESS AND THE RHETORICAL
GENRES OF FREEDOM SUMMER**

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
ENGLISH**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

MAY 2014

DEDICATION

In memory of Dad.

This dissertation is dedicated to my dad, Brian Ives, who gave me the curiosity, tenacity, and humor necessary to complete it.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks are due to my committee members for their valuable feedback on this project, and especially to Dr. Michelle Hall Kells, my advisor and dissertation chair, for the consistent encouragement, guidance, and constructive criticism that she has given me throughout my graduate career.

Additional thanks are due the UNM English Department's graduate students, faculty, and staff for creating a departmental culture that is cooperative rather than competitive. In particular, I would like to thank Dan Cryer, Christine Garcia, Janna Goodyear, Brian Hendrickson, Mellisa Huffman, Vondell Jones, Anna Knutson, Erin Murrah-Mandril, and Tom Pierce for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this project. Thanks also to my first academic mentor, Hector Torres, for teaching me how to think like a scholar.

I am grateful to UNM's Office of Graduate Studies for providing me with the funding necessary to conduct archival research in Mississippi through the Graduate Research Supplement Grant. Many thanks also to Jennifer Ford and the University of Mississippi Archives and Special Collections staff, and to Cindy Lawler and the University of Southern Mississippi Historical Manuscripts and Archives staff for their valuable assistance with my archival research.

I appreciate the support of my friends and family, especially my mom and sister, Beth and Kelly Ives.

Finally, I am most thankful for my husband, Andy Frostman. Without your unwavering love and faith in me I would not have made it through this project.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the role of whiteness and its relationship to identification in rhetorical representations of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. Texts examined at length include recruitment materials, media coverage, pamphlets, and letters produced during the project, as well as retrospective representations of Freedom Summer in popular films and literature. Drawing upon Walter Beale's pragmatic theory of rhetoric and Krista Ratcliffe's concept of rhetorical listening, it analyzes five perspectives on the hundreds of volunteers, most of whom were white college students, who traveled to black communities across Mississippi that summer in order to register voters, teach in Freedom Schools, work in community centers, and engage in other special projects. Analyzing the perspectives of white volunteers, black activists, white southerners, national media, and history, this dissertation reveals that the volunteers are variously constructed as admiring outsiders, neo-abolitionists, pseudo-scientists, community members, critical pedagogues, cherished children of the privileged

classes, communist invaders, soldiers, missionaries, inconsequential extras, and catalysts for critical reflection. It concludes by suggesting ways in which contemporary teachers of rhetoric and composition might use selected Freedom Summer texts in the classroom in order to generate conversations about topics such as community engagement, interracial advocacy, and college students' writerly agency.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Word Choices.....	4
Freedom Summer in the Humanities and Social Sciences	7
Methods	8
Chapter Summaries	16
CHAPTER 1: From Expert to Novice and Back Again: How the Volunteers Constructed Themselves.....	20
From the Ivies to the Swamps.....	20
The Volunteers’ Epistolary Rhetoric.....	22
Disoriented Newbies: Volunteer Orientation	26
Neo-Abolitionists, Pseudo-Scientists, and Expatriates of the White Middle Class: The Influence of Antecedent Genres.....	32
Soldiers for the Cause, Harried Librarians, and Critical Pedagogues: The Volunteers Find their Work in the Movement.....	54
Expatriates of the White Middle Class: The Volunteers Become Part of the Black Community	58
Subjects and Agents of an Exploitive Society: Reflections on the South, the Struggle, and the Self	63
CHAPTER 2: Cherished Children: How Black Activists Constructed the Volunteers	76
Inventing Freedom Summer: The Opportunities and Limitations of an Integrated Movement	80
Volunteer Vetting: Tools become Agents	101
Dramatizing Disidentification: Volunteer Orientation and the Infamous Film Incident	105
Actions and Outcomes: Volunteer Participation in Mississippi	112
CHAPTER 3: Outside Agitators: How White Southerners Constructed the Volunteers	119
The “Southern Way of Life”: Historical Trauma and White Supremacy	121
The Yankees Invade Again: Civil Rights Activism as Civil War.....	134
Communism: The Devil Term in Southern White Rhetoric.....	137
“Sow-Belly and Cornpone”: White Southerners Respond to the “Invasion”.....	150

Exploited Innocents: The Black Perspective According to White Mississippi	167
Behind Closed Doors: White Southerners Listen Rhetorically	171
Unexpected Identifications: Religion and Patriotism.....	174
CHAPTER 4: Eyes of the Nation: How National Media Constructed the Volunteers	178
“Into Another Country”: Mississippi as a Foreign Territory.....	181
America’s Children: Building National Support	192
The Troops: Volunteers as Soldiers for Freedom	202
Spreading the Word: Missionaries of Freedom	208
CHAPTER 5: Freedom Summer Fifty Years Later: How History Constructs the Volunteers	211
Mississippi Burning: Black Activism Takes a Back Seat	213
Murder in Mississippi: Recognizing Grassroots Resistance	221
Neshoba: The Price of Freedom.....	228
“Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells”: Case Not Closed.....	235
CHAPTER 6: Conclusion	266
What Can Contemporary Compositionists Do with These Texts?	269
Freedom Summer and Whiteness Studies in Rhetoric and Composition.....	271
Genre Theory and the Texts of Freedom Summer.....	272
Freedom Summer and Writing Across Communities	273
Student Agency	276
Service Learning and Civic Engagement	277
Rhetorical Lineage	280
Notes	282
Selected Bibliography	300

Introduction

Fifty years ago, in 1964, hundreds of mostly northern, mostly white college students traveled south to help their black counterparts in the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), with support from the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) to register voters, establish community centers, and teach in Freedom Schools. During what commentators at the time called that long, hot summer, black Mississippi residents opened up their homes to the volunteers. As Doug McAdam notes, “[t]hat meant that some of the least privileged persons in America were to play host to the offspring of some of the most privileged.”¹ The volunteers, SNCC workers, and black Mississippi citizens persevered in their unlikely partnership for racial equality despite constant taunting, harassment, and violence from Mississippi whites. The most brutal and most famous instance of violence against the movement came with the murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman, whose unknown whereabouts haunted the project until their bodies were found early that August. The murders of the three men made headlines, though more attention was paid to white New Yorkers Schwerner and Goodman than to Chaney, who was a black Mississippi resident.²

Because of the volunteers’ presence, the eyes of the nation turned to Mississippi, and thus to the racial injustice, violence, and repression that they had previously ignored. With their actions, SNCC and the volunteers told the world that the signing of the Civil Rights Bill had not done away with the nation’s racial unrest, and proved that black and white college students could come together and apply their collective knowledge to accomplish real, if minor, social changes.

Half of a century later, the Freedom Summer Project has faded from the nation’s collective memory. Before I began graduate school I had not heard of Freedom Summer.

I did, however, know about Jim Crow racism, Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Ku Klux Klan. Because of *Democracy Now!*, to which I listened religiously on my seemingly endless commutes from my house in one Washington DC suburb to my job at an insurance agency in a neighboring one, I also knew about the murders of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner. I was happy to hear that they were reopening the trial of Edgar Ray Killen, a known KKK member and one of the masterminds of the murders, in 2005, although I had not heard his name before that report. I had seen images of black and white activists marching alongside each other, but I didn't know the specifics. I knew that there was a powerful, violent group of southern white people willing to commit horrible atrocities against their fellow man in order to maintain white control of their local communities, and a less violent but no less bigoted southern majority that supported their actions. I knew that there were people who risked their lives to fight racial segregation in the south, and that the Civil Rights Movement resulted in the end of legal racial segregation and made overt racism unacceptable in mainstream society.

But for scholars and teachers of writing and rhetoric, especially those committed to social justice, there is much more to the story of Freedom Summer than these well known facts. In this story are rare instances of successful communication and cooperation across racial, cultural, and economic difference. It offers examples of college students stepping out of their ivory towers to put their knowledge and skills to use in the real world in order to create positive change. Finally, it offers an example of a multitude of rhetorical discourses circulating at a *kairotic*³ moment to create historic change. This dissertation aims to uncover what contemporary scholars can learn from the Freedom

Summer Project on the eve of its 50th anniversary through a perspectival analysis. Each chapter examines a different perspective on the Freedom Summer student volunteers. The first four chapters consider perspectives on the volunteers expressed at the time of the Freedom Summer Project by white volunteers, black activists, white southerners, and national media outlets. The fifth chapter considers a retrospective perspective on the Freedom Summer volunteers as portrayed through film and literature.

My analysis of these perspectives illustrates that college students' writing can have far reaching rhetorical efficacy. In responding to the call of SNCC and COFO activists, trusting their expertise and their plans, and writing about their experiences for various audiences, the student volunteers moved public opinion and contributed to a historic change in the state of race relations in America. My analysis also shows that the rhetorical story of Freedom Summer is a story of identifications leveraged strategically and engaged reflectively. It reveals that Freedom Summer organizers relied upon widespread but subtle white supremacist attitudes nationwide in order to challenge the acute, violent version of white supremacy in Mississippi. The rhetorical reach of the student volunteers' presence in Mississippi was due in large part to their subject positions as young, white, and connected to influential circles, and to Freedom Summer organizers' ability to recognize and build upon the nation's identification with them. It shows, also, that the lack of identification with impoverished black Mississippi residents among national media outlets and their audiences led to a silencing of these residents' voices that remains consistent in retrospective representations of Freedom Summer. Finally, it shows that the white volunteers acknowledged and resisted identifications with the discourses of

white privilege at the same time that they uncritically reproduced discourses that functioned to uphold white privilege in previous generations.

Word Choices

The plan to bring hundreds of college students into Mississippi during the summer of 1964 was originally entitled the “Mississippi Summer Project,” often shortened to the “Summer Project.” As the national media began to report on the project, some sources began to refer to it as “Freedom Summer,” and this is the label that has become most prominent. Sally Belfrage’s 1965 memoir about her experience as a volunteer with the Summer Project is titled *Freedom Summer*, as is Doug McAdam’s 1988 sociological study of the project, as is Bruce Watson’s 2010 historical account of the same topic. Throughout my discussion I use the labels “Freedom Summer,” “Summer Project,” and, occasionally “Mississippi Summer Project” interchangeably.

The two civil rights organizations primarily responsible for the Summer Project were the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). SNCC formed during a conference organized by veteran activist Ella Baker in the spring of 1960 in Raleigh, North Carolina. The purpose of the conference was to give college students who had been staging sit-ins across the country in order to challenge segregation the chance to talk with each other, strategize, and organize more formally. Under the guidance of Baker, the students at the conference formed SNCC. The group became well known for its participation in the 1961 Freedom Rides, and, under the leadership of field secretary Bob Moses, began concentrating on voter registration in impoverished southern black communities. COFO was a loose coalition of civil rights groups, including SNCC, the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP),

and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). While COFO was officially responsible for the Summer Project, SNCC was the COFO member organization most involved in organizing and carrying it out.

The members of SNCC and COFO at the time were most commonly young and black, and frequently southern. These organizations offered paid positions, although their salaries were barely enough to pay for meager food and shelter. I refer to them as “workers” for this reason. I also refer to them as “activists” and “organizers,” because of their role in organizing the Summer Project, and as “recruiters” in relation to the Freedom Summer volunteers, whom they recruited.

I refer to the college students and others who were not previously members of COFO affiliated organizations but who traveled to Mississippi in the summer of 1964 primarily as “volunteers.” I recognize that this term may seem minimizing, conjuring images of bake sales, canned-goods drives, and chaperoning elementary school field trips, as opposed to risking life and limb in order to fight for racial justice. But in using it I do not mean to downplay the risks that the Freedom Summer volunteers took or the work that they did. I use this term largely because that is how COFO workers referred to the volunteers, and how the volunteers referred to themselves. As opposed to the activists whose involvement with COFO predated Freedom Summer, the volunteers were not being paid for their work in Mississippi, and traveled there at their own expense. Elizabeth Martínez, who was herself a Freedom Summer volunteer, titled her collection of letter excerpts *Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers & Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer*. This term is preferable to one like “freedom fighter,” which is rarely if ever used by the Freedom Summer participants themselves. While I

sometimes refer to the volunteers as “activists” or “civil rights activists,” especially when grouping them together with SNCC and COFO workers, because they were positioned so differently from the workers in relation to the Summer Project and larger American society, it is usually necessary to distinguish them from the workers in my analysis. At the time of the project, the national media frequently referred to the volunteers as “students,” while white Mississippians referred to them by a number of derogatory terms, most frequently as “invaders.” In order to reflect these perspectives, I occasionally adopt the sources’ labels for the volunteers.

Drawing from the field of whiteness studies, I use the terms “whiteness,” “white privilege,” and “white” more or less interchangeably in this dissertation. The editors of *Race Traitor* magazine, whose aim is to abolish whiteness as a reliable predictor of identity, define whiteness this way: “The white race is a historically constructed social formation. It consists of all those who partake of the privileges of white skin in this society. Its most wretched members share a status higher, in certain respects, than that of the most exalted persons excluded from it, in return for which they give their support to a system that degrades them.”⁴ Building on this definition, I argue that a central privilege of whiteness is the “unmarkedness” that comes with it. Appearance, language, values, and assumptions coded as white, such as Standardized English, individualism, and a patriarchal family structure, for the most part go unnoticed in the United States because they are considered to be “just normal,” whereas anything that deviates from the unmarked white norm is racially/ ethnically marked as inferior, consciously or unconsciously.

According to Toni Morrison, the white norm is dependent upon the construction and maintenance of a nonwhite “Other.” In *Playing in the Dark*, a foundational text in whiteness studies, Morrison enumerates the defining characteristics of American identity as “autonomy, authority, newness and difference, absolute power,” as well as freedom and innocence, and argues that “each one is made possible by, shaped by, activated by a complex awareness and employment of a constituted Africanism. It was this Africanism, deployed as rawness and savagery, that provided the staging ground and arena for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity.”⁵ Morrison shows that American identity is coded as white and is inextricable from a discursive constitution of a racial Other onto whom the characteristics white America denies in itself are projected. My primary texts show that this myth is ever present and repeated in the writing of even those individuals who are intellectually and morally opposed to racism.

Freedom Summer in the Humanities and Social Sciences

In the era of Obama, when race relations in the United States might be best characterized by the old saying, “the more things change the more they stay the same,” there has been a recently renewed interest in civil rights-era race relations. This interest is reflected in the 2010 release of Bruce Watson’s *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season That Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy*, a historical account of the events and interactions that took place during Freedom Summer.⁶ *Freedom Summer* by Doug McAdam provides a sociological study of the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project volunteers.⁷ *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* by Mary Aikin Rothschild also discusses the 1964 summer project in Mississippi, but this text has a broader focus, as it aims to describe the experiences of northern white volunteers in similar projects in Mississippi and other southern states over

two summers.⁸ Finally, *Lessons From Freedom Summer: Ordinary People Building Extraordinary Movements*, an anthology intended for use in high school classrooms, situates the Freedom Summer project within the larger history of African American resistance to oppression. It provides questions at the end of each chapter designed to help students analyze the wide range of primary texts featured in the volume.⁹

Other published works focusing solely on Freedom Summer include *Letters From Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers & Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer*, Elizabeth Martínez's edited collection of letters written by white volunteers;¹⁰ *Freedom Summer*, Sally Belfrage's narrative of her own experience as a volunteer,¹¹ and *Stranger at the Gates: A Summer in Mississippi*, Tracy Sugarman's illustrated account of his time in Mississippi as a journalist covering the summer project.¹² These three works, each published shortly after the Summer Project, serve as primary texts in this dissertation.

While all of the texts described in this section provide accounts of Freedom Summer, none of them focus on rhetorical aspects of the texts produced during Freedom Summer, nor do they relate the Freedom Summer project to current issues in rhetoric and composition studies. My dissertation fills this gap in the scholarship on Freedom Summer.

Methods

While many scholars have investigated the rhetoric of civil rights,¹³ few have conducted sustained analyses of the work of white civil rights activists, focusing on the tension between those activists' commitment to their cause and their own investment in and complicity with white privilege. In a 1998 article, Catherine Prendergast argues that the gap between critical race theory and composition studies is one that needs to be filled.

Race, she says, is the “absent presence” in composition studies, while racism is the “absent *absence*.”¹⁴ As one of its major goals is to consider the ways in which various Freedom Summer participants’ relationship to and view of whiteness impacted the Summer Project, this dissertation contributes to a growing conversation about issues of race, whiteness, and racism in rhetoric and composition that aims to fill the gap Prendergast identifies.¹⁵

Since I, like many white people, sometimes have a hard time articulating exactly how the rhetorics of whiteness work around and through me, I have turned to critical and rhetorical theory as a way to better understand it, and found Krista Ratcliffe’s theory of rhetorical listening particularly useful. Conceived as a way to articulate “intersecting identifications of gender and race [and] for promoting cross-cultural dialogues,”¹⁶ rhetorical listening, “as a trope for interpretive invention, [. . .] signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to *any* person, text, or culture.”¹⁷ Ratcliffe does not distinguish listening from reading in the traditional aural vs. visual sense. Instead she argues that listening rhetorically to any text differs from academic reading in its purpose and outcome. She explains that “listening within a stance of openness maps out an entirely different space in which to relate to discourse [. . .]. For when listening within an undivided *logos*, we do not read simply for what we can agree with or challenge, as is the habit of academic reading (in its multiple guises). Instead, we choose to listen also for the exiled excess and contemplate its relation to our culture and our selves.”¹⁸ The four stated moves in rhetorical listening are: First, “Promoting an *understanding* of self and other.”¹⁹ Understanding in rhetorical listening means:

Listening to discourses not *for* intent but *with* intent—with the intent to understand not just the claims but the rhetorical negotiations of understanding as well. To clarify this process of understanding, rhetorical listeners might best invert the term *understanding* and define it as *standing under*, that is, consciously standing under discourses that surround us and others while consciously acknowledging all our particular—and very fluid—standpoints.²⁰

The second move in rhetorical listening is “Proceeding within an *accountability* logic,” as opposed to a guilt/ blame logic. “A logic of accountability,” according to Ratcliffe, “tries to interrupt our excuses of not being personally accountable *at present* for existing cultural situations that originated *in the past*.”²¹ The stance necessary to proceed from an accountability logic is clearly explained in Ratcliffe’s 1999 article on rhetorical listening: “We may not always choose or control the discourses that socialize us; neither may we choose or control our unconscious responses to them. But once we consciously articulate our socializations and choose to respond to them, we become responsible for our words, our attitudes, our actions.”²²

The third move is “Locating identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*.” Rhetorical listening, according to Ratcliffe, seeks neither “a Burkean sharing of substance, a place that leads to persuasion” or, as in postmodern theory, perceive commonalities to be “impossible or as impossibly naïve.” Instead, “rhetorical listening interrupts this modern/ postmodern binary opposition by theorizing identification as metonymic places of commonalities and differences. In such identifications, discourses (not substances) converge and diverge.”²³

The fourth move in rhetorical listening is “Analyzing *claims* as well as the *cultural logics* within which these claims function. If a claim is an assertion of a person’s thinking, then a cultural logic is a belief system or shared way of reasoning within which a claim may function.” As an example, a claim that it was best for George W. Bush to have been elected over John Kerry in the 2004 presidential election “might be functioning within a conservative religious logic, a Republican logic, a neoconservative logic, a military-hawk logic, or some combination of these and other logics.”²⁴

All of the moves that Ratcliffe defines are central to this dissertation. I aim to better understand how whiteness is perpetuated through socializing discourses in order to better understand my own relationship to those discourses. In doing so, I am attempting to proceed from an accountability logic, to acknowledge that I have been socialized into and inevitably perpetuate the discourses of whiteness. Since part of proceeding from an accountability logic is resisting the urge to deny responsibility for the past, I am looking to figures from the past with whom I identify—white, progressive, antiracists, and who fought racism at a critical time. In considering ways in which the rhetoric of Freedom Summer reproduces, challenges, and/ or alters foundational stories, tropes, and rhetorical strategies, and how this relates to contemporary arguments upholding whiteness, I am holding myself as a white progressive accountable for the drawbacks of a celebrated moment in white advocacy for people of color. In looking at a key moment in intercultural contact and cooperation, I am hoping to learn more about how the Freedom Summer volunteers established identification with each other, with the full time civil rights workers, and with the black Mississippians who were their hosts, students, and allies across commonalities and differences. Finally, I aim to articulate the cultural logics

at work in my primary texts by reading them not for intent, but with intent. I am not looking to make a claim about any individual's investment in the white supremacist system. Instead, I am looking to see whether and how white socializing discourses work in the rhetorics of Freedom Summer.

To articulate how my primary texts function as units of analysis in my dissertation, I am using the categories of discourse established in Walter Beale's *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*. Beale separates written discourse types into four categories: *instrumental*, "whose primary aim is the governance, guidance, control, or execution of human activities," *scientific*, "whose primary aim is the discovery, construction, and organization of knowledge, particularly in those areas or subareas in which facts, classifications, and general laws can be verified by rational and empirical procedures, as opposed to the values and loyalties of communities," *poetic*, "whose primary aim is the construction of an object of enjoyment and reflection, using the materials and resources of language," and *rhetorical*, "whose primary aim is to influence the understanding and conduct of human affairs. It operates typically in matters of action that involve the well-being and destiny of communities (and of individuals within them); and in matters of value and understanding which involve the communal or competing values of communities."²⁵

All of my primary texts fall under the realm of rhetorical discourse in that they all aim to influence their readers' views of race, freedom, and the national community. While they use a variety of means and imagine a variety of readers, most of my primary texts aim to influence readers' views regarding the urgent matters of racial oppression, violence, inequality, and exploitation and the movement that formed to resist these

conditions. Discourses produced by white southerners, which are the subject of this dissertation's third chapter, also aim to influence readers' views on these matters, but in the opposite direction.

Beale breaks rhetorical discourse into categories that help to further articulate the ways in which my primary texts work to influence their readers' understanding. He explains that:

If deliberation is the paradigmatic "rhetorical" art, then the other branches of rhetoric distinguish themselves by movements of specialization toward the other aims of discourse. Rhetorical information, by this account, involves a specialization in the direction of scientific discourse; performative (epideictic) rhetoric involves a specialization toward instrumental discourse, and reflective/exploratory rhetoric involves a specialization toward poetic.²⁶

Flyers recruiting volunteers to the Mississippi Summer Project as well as those urging white southerners as to how to respond to their arrival should be classified under the *instrumental* category of discourse because their "principal motive is direction and control of human activities."²⁷ However, the focus of these materials still places them within the realm of rhetoric, as Beale argues that "To the extent that discourses amount to *recommendations* of the activities themselves, or recommendations of procedures in competition with other procedures, they move in the direction of rhetoric."²⁸ Because volunteering to work with the movement was certainly an option among many, the materials that aim to generate participation in Freedom Summer are clearly rhetorical as well as instrumental. Media reports of Freedom Summer and the documentary, *Neshoba*, fall mostly into the category of *informative rhetoric*, which Beale describes as "the kind

of rhetoric whose purpose is to form and inform public opinion through the nontechnical (and even entertaining) presentation of subject matter.”²⁹ The popular films, autobiographies, and literary work that I will analyze fall mostly into the category of *reflective/ exploratory rhetoric*, which Beale describes as “the kind of rhetoric whose purpose is to share, explore, and reflect upon human experiences, usually in a highly individualistic and entertaining way.”³⁰ Autobiographies focusing on Freedom Summer serve not only as reflective/ exploratory rhetoric, but also *deliberative rhetoric*, which Beale describes as “the kind of rhetoric whose purpose is to support opinions or theses about specific problems of policy, value, or understanding in human communities.”³¹ Summer Project recruitment materials and speeches at the volunteer orientation also fall under the category of deliberative rhetoric. The white volunteers’ letters home are the most diverse in terms of rhetorical category. While they function primarily as informative rhetoric, they also at times shift into each other category.

A significant portion of my analysis will focus on texts that fall under the label of informative rhetoric. Beale’s discussion of this category offers a useful way to approach informative rhetorical texts as units of analysis:

Framing generalizations, unifying tone, and unifying metaphor are required not merely by the needs of specific audiences or by the covert motives of authors and publishers but also by the demands of coherence and readability in discourse itself. What distinguishes informative from deliberative rhetoric is not at all the absence of such devices but rather their lack of argumentative function (within context) and the characteristic relationships that they form with the facts and information being presented.³²

In my analysis of media coverage of and letters written during Freedom Summer I focus on their framing generalizations, unifying tones, and unifying metaphors and consider what they reveal about the relationship between the writers, readers, subject, and the socio-historical context framing them.

My analysis of the reflective/ exploratory rhetorical texts hinges on what Beale describes as “particularly congenial conceptual patterns” for comprehending texts falling into this category: paradox, enigma, and emblem. “*Paradoxes*,” Beale explains, “are wonderful reflective instruments, startling writers and readers into discoveries of new truths and rediscoveries of old ones. [. . .] Closely related to the paradox is the *enigma*—the situation that resists explanation and is out of line with the orderly flow of things. [. . . and t]he *emblem*, finally, is the object, scene, or action which symbolizes or suggests some larger idea or experience.”³³ Because they are considering Freedom Summer from a temporal distance and in most cases make no claims to absolute truth, the reflective/ exploratory rhetorical texts that I analyze in the final chapter employ literary devices like those described above in a way that help to make sense of the summer in relation American history and social developments that happened before and after. In my analysis I articulate how the writer and filmmakers discussed in chapter five use Beale’s three conceptual patterns to achieve this end.

Chapter Summaries

In order to gauge the impact that the student volunteers had on rhetorical discourse in 1964 and continue to have in the present, each chapter examines the rhetorical construction of the Freedom Summer volunteers from a different perspective.

Chapter 1: From Expert to Novice and Back Again: How the Volunteers Constructed Themselves

Participation in the Freedom Summer Project prompted intense reflection on identity among the volunteers. This chapter draws from Kathleen Jamieson's³⁴ concept of antecedent genres in order to analyze ways in which the volunteers positioned themselves in their letters written home to friends and family during their time in Mississippi, and in memoirs written shortly after the project. I argue that the volunteers' constructions of themselves were very fluid as well as responsive to and reflective of their physical, social, and historical contexts. In their letters, the volunteers depict themselves as admiring outsiders, neo-abolitionists, pseudo-scientists, community members, critical pedagogues, and weak traitors.

Chapter 2: Cherished Children: How Black Activists Constructed the Volunteers

This chapter examines rhetoric directed toward the Freedom Summer volunteers in order to paint a picture of the Summer Project as a pre-existing rhetorical construct into which the volunteers were drawn. Specifically, I am interested in how the Summer Project fits within larger narratives of black stakeholders and civil rights activists. I use David Russell's³⁵ discussion of activity systems in order to examine ways in which the black activists who recruited the volunteers deploy the trope of whiteness. I consider SNCC's construction of the volunteers through analysis of original recruitment materials as well as autobiographies and biographies describing the project. I argue that the

volunteers' white privilege in the form of their connection to powerful social circles, their appeal for the mass media, their wealth, and their education, made their presence in the Summer Project simultaneously appealing and problematic in the eyes of the full-time civil rights workers.

Chapter 3: Outside Agitators: How White Southerners Constructed the Volunteers

White southerners were the most immediate and most resistant audience for the Freedom Summer Project, even though the need to garner attention and support from the federal government and potentially sympathetic Americans outside the south motivated SNCC workers to take on the project. This chapter applies Richard Weaver's concepts of ultimate terms³⁶ and tyrannizing image³⁷ in order to elucidate the strategies through which white southerners constructed the volunteers as their enemies. The primary texts examined in this chapter include original pamphlets and newspaper clippings produced by racist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan and White Citizens' Council, as well as articles from a prominent Mississippi newspaper, the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*. I argue that white Mississippians held the "Southern Way of Life" as their tyrannizing image and employed related ultimate terms such as "communist," "Christian," and "outsider" in order to vilify the volunteers. I conclude that while white southerners and the Freedom Summer volunteers stood in direct opposition to each other on questions of human rights and racial justice, each group aligned its perspective with the same patriotic values: freedom, peace, democracy, and Judeo-Christian religious faith.

Chapter 4: Eyes of the Nation: How National Media Constructed the Volunteers

One of the main reasons that the white, northern volunteers were invited to go south for the summer was because the SNCC workers who organized the project

anticipated that with them would come attention from the media and from the federal government. They were right. Because of the privileged, northern, white volunteers' presence in Mississippi, oppression in the state received consistent media attention for the first time. This chapter examines national media constructions of the volunteers. Specifically, I analyze original newspaper and magazine coverage of the project and identify common metaphors used to construct the volunteers for a nationwide audience. I argue that the press characterized the volunteers as mature, intelligent, and promising young people in grave danger. Specifically, they were constructed as soldiers marching into battle and missionaries in a foreign land. National publications helped to carry out the rhetorical aim that SNCC organizers had in mind for Freedom Summer by suggesting that the volunteers' welfare was the responsibility of the president and the federal government.

Chapter 5: Freedom Summer Fifty Years Later: How History Constructs the Volunteers

This chapter examines retrospective depictions and appropriations of the Freedom Summer Project in literature, film, and other texts in order to understand the project's impact on discourse and memory in our current moment. I argue that while some films, like *Mississippi Burning*,³⁸ obscure the struggles and successes of Freedom Summer, other films like *Murder in Mississippi*,³⁹ as well as Alice Walker's short story "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,"⁴⁰ extend the project's legacy by reflecting critically on the project and its social implications. Walker's story, in particular, demonstrates effective rhetorical strategies for thinking about attempts at identification across difference upon which educators in rhetoric and composition can build.

I conclude my analysis by suggesting ways that contemporary scholars and teachers of rhetoric and composition might draw upon the discourses of Freedom Summer in their own work.

Chapter 1:
From Expert to Novice and Back Again: How the Volunteers Constructed Themselves

From the Ivies to the Swamps

She grew up in a comfortable, climate-controlled home in New York or Massachusetts or Pennsylvania. She had her own bedroom, furnished with a canopy bed, a doll house, and later a record player that played Beethoven, Mozart, and occasionally her guilty pleasure, Elvis. In the privacy of that room she avidly read literature, philosophy, and history. Exposed to the kind of training at school and encouragement at home that promoted confidence in her academic abilities, she always excelled in school. She applied and was admitted to Princeton, and her proud parents were prepared to foot the bill. At Princeton, reading authors like Richard Wright and James Baldwin amidst exciting current events like the Woolworth's sit ins and the Freedom Rides, she began to feel the need to break free of her ivory tower and engage with the country's pressing problems that were all over the news but not evident anywhere on her neatly manicured campus.

Then the young, brilliant, and charismatic president, to whom she and her generation related so well, encouraged citizens to "ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country," further validating her activist impulse. In November, that president was assassinated, sending cold waves shock and disbelief across the nation, and a whole generation was motivated to carry out his legacy. So when recruiters from the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee visited her campus, speaking philosophically and charismatically about their ongoing struggle and their great need for support, she was eager to spend the summer helping them to fight against racial

and economic oppression in the south. This was a chance to apply her skills in a place where they were really needed, rather than dwelling safely in the abstract, as she was so accustomed to doing.

When she told her parents about her desire to go to Mississippi, they were not entirely supportive at first. It was dangerous there. She'd never been so far from home before. Couldn't she rally support for the Summer Project from up north? But in the end they could not convince her to stay home, and they could not help but be proud of her bravery and idealism despite their lasting fears for her safety. Reluctantly, they agreed to provide financial and moral support for her participation in the Mississippi Summer Project.

She drove to Oxford, Ohio for training with two other students from Princeton. The excited, joking mood shifted to one of silent, nervous anxiety as they neared the rural campus of Western College for Women. They parked and hauled their bags across the sprawling grounds, past groups of other students talking earnestly and singing folk songs, and settled into their dorm rooms. Entering the swarming main hall for dinner, her body stiffened with awkwardness. She didn't know anyone, and the black SNCC kids scattered throughout the hall did not seem interested in welcoming her to the project or showing her the ropes. In fact, no one even acknowledged her when she walked into the room. Her battle-scarred black hosts continued talking to each other as she walked past them around the cafeteria. She was suddenly conscious of her crisply pressed shirt and skirt, purchased new for the season, and of her pale skin and impossibly straight hair. These things immediately separated her from the self-assured, battle-scarred kids by whom she so desperately wanted to be accepted. Holding her tray of food, she spotted a group of

Princeton students sitting at a table and joined them, dwelling in the little bit of familiarity she had left to cling to. This, too, would likely be taken away when the mass of volunteers split up to go to their various assignments in Mississippi. She knew that her parents and her best friend back home were probably thinking about her, wondering what she was up to in her historic fight for social justice. She suddenly missed them acutely in her heightened state of vulnerability, and decided to write them immediately after dinner.

The Volunteers' Epistolary Rhetoric

My analysis of the white Freedom Summer volunteers' letters reveals an ambivalent relationship to the discourses of white America. While the volunteers level critiques of white privilege and white complacency that they have observed in their home communities after witnessing the adverse effects that these phenomena have on their new colleagues of color, they also reproduce rhetorical strategies that served to uphold white normativity in previous eras.

According to William Merrill Decker, letters function as “a literature that serves to mediate and embody community metonymically. And it concerns a form of writing that, perhaps for more persons than any other, has provided the occasion for autobiographical acts.”⁴¹ Originally written to small, intimate groups of readers, the letters that I examine here were published together in Elizabeth Martínez's 1965 collection, *Letters from Mississippi*.⁴² Through this publication the letters came to embody the community of white Freedom Summer volunteers, offering an autobiographical account of their collective joys, struggles, and inward journeys. Viewed as a collection, the letters depict a community of young rhetors who occupy a unique position in American rhetorical history.

The letter, originally codified as a rhetorical art during the medieval period⁴³, has long served as a means through which expression generally relegated to the private sphere can gain public notice. Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald show that in the twelfth and eighteenth centuries, respectively, Heloise and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu were able to expose their revolutionary views on marriage and the roles of women to the public through originally private letters.⁴⁴ In antebellum America, the letter allowed women abolitionists like Sarah Grimké, whose voices may otherwise have been suppressed, to speak out against slavery for a wide readership. As Jami Carlacio argues, “The ‘personal’ nature of the letter allowed Grimké the freedom to say in an ostensibly private communication what she might not be able to say freely in a public one.”⁴⁵ More recently, scholars in critical race theory⁴⁶ are turning to the epistolary form in academic conversations in order to convey embodied experience in ways that are not traditionally encouraged by conventional academic genres.

That critical race theory, whose original purpose was to give voice to experiential understanding in legal contexts, has adapted the letter to further these aims in academic contexts is fitting. Because letters are traditionally exchanged between intimates, the genre allows for freer, more personal expression than other academic or public genres. This was also the case during the Civil Rights Movement. The most famous and enduring letter from the movement is Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail,” which responds to an open letter from Alabama clergy accusing King of extremism. According to Jonathan Rieder, the letter “reveals much about its often elusive author. It is a supremely personal work [which is unusual for King, who] often hid his passion behind a mask of dignity.”⁴⁷ Despite its public audience, the genre conventions of the letter

permitted King to provide more details about his feelings and experiences than he would in speeches or articles.

While intimate in tone, the “Letter from Birmingham Jail” was meticulously crafted for a public readership. In contrast, the letters examined here are unrevised and intended for private audiences. Although they have since been made public through archives and published collections, the volunteers’ letters were originally written in intimate contexts for the purposes of communicating the writers’ situated experiences to family and friends. For this reason, the letters provide rich sites for rhetorical listening and insight into the rhetorical imagination of the volunteers.

According to Krista Ratcliffe, rhetorical listening “as a trope for interpretive invention, [. . .] signifies a stance of openness that a person may choose to assume in relation to *any* person, text, or culture.”⁴⁸ Ratcliffe offers the interpretive lens of rhetorical listening as a way to, first, “expose troubled identifications with gender and whiteness in both our culture and our lives and, second, to conceptualize tactics for negotiating such troubled identifications.”⁴⁹ She distinguishes rhetorical listening from academic reading by arguing that, “when listening within an undivided *logos* [a stance key to rhetorical listening], we do not read simply for what we can agree with or challenge, as is the habit of academic reading (in its multiple guises). Instead, we choose to listen also for the exiled excess and contemplate its relation to our culture and our selves.”⁵⁰

Freedom Summer stands at the transition point between two dominant racial ideologies: Jim Crow racism, which the Civil Rights Movement worked to overturn, and colorblind racism,⁵¹ which sprung up in its place and remains dominant today. The

approaching 50-year anniversary of Freedom Summer at a time commonly perceived as post-racial despite continued racial stratification presents an occasion to turn back to the archive of this momentous summer when hundreds of white students came to recognize their own troubled identifications as privileged subjects in a racist nation. Listening rhetorically for the exiled excess⁵²—in this case, the web of discourses surrounding the volunteers that permeates their letters but is not acknowledged there—can help to situate the Freedom Summer volunteers' epistolary reflections within the nation's history of rhetoric on race.

A key concept that drives the process of rhetorical listening is that of socializing discourses, which refers to the many discourses that surround a person from the time s/he is born, and that shape his or her views of the world. In her 1999 article on rhetorical listening, Ratcliffe argues that “[w]e may not always choose or control the discourses that socialize us; neither may we choose or control our unconscious responses to them. But once we consciously articulate our socializations and choose to respond to them, we become responsible for our words, our attitudes, our actions.”⁵³ It is what Ratcliffe calls the “doubled function of discourse” that allows individuals to become responsible agents with respect to their socializing discourses. “That is, discourse both socializes us and enables us to talk back to our socialization.”⁵⁴

As they recount attempts to identify across racial borders in their letters, most noticeably those written during orientation, the volunteers consciously articulate and talk back to what I call their immediate socializing discourses. The term “immediate socializing discourses” includes recent or very memorable interactions whose source the writer can immediately identify. Examples include conversations with family, friends and

classmates. That the volunteers identify and question these immediate socializing discourses reveals that they were honestly committed to antiracism and willing to take responsibility for their socialization by acknowledging the negative implications that come with the white privilege evident in such discourses, both for themselves and for others. At the same time, in their attempts to convey their interracial experiences to their readers, the volunteers unconsciously reproduce what I call their distant socializing discourses. The term “distant socializing discourses” refers to texts originating throughout history that come to shape a society’s ideology, but whose influence may not be immediately recognizable to the individuals whose perspectives and discourses they pervade. These include influential books, speeches, essays, reports, and the like. Through rhetorical tropes and strategies employed in their letters, the Freedom Summer volunteers identify themselves with the distant socializing discourses of their predecessors, white Americans from the antebellum and modern eras who also crossed racial borders and tried to convey the black experience for white readers. That the volunteers drew from the racially problematic rhetorics of previous generations in their fight for racial justice suggests the staying power of raced tropes, and those tropes’ insidious influence on American discourse and social identity.

Disoriented Newbies: Volunteer Orientation

When SNCC representatives visited their campuses and distributed recruitment materials for the upcoming Mississippi Summer Project, the college students who would become Freedom Summer volunteers recognized the opportunity to escape their ivory towers and enact a Deweyan vision for pragmatic education. Cornel West explains that in Dewey’s view of education, “What was needed was not academic complacency but active engagement in the events and affairs of the world. In short, Dewey wanted a

worldly philosophy and a more philosophical world, i.e., a world guided by intelligence.”⁵⁵ During the summer of 1964, the volunteers removed themselves from the familiar settings of their university campuses and headed to a new campus, the Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio. There they got a crash course in civic activism and southern culture, and then moved on to unknown rural communities in Mississippi. In so doing, the Freedom Summer volunteers took the opportunity to apply the abstract philosophical knowledge they had learned in school to pressing problems in the world outside their classroom walls. Upon their arrival in Oxford, however, many of the volunteers realized that their college classes had not adequately prepared them for the jarring realities of public life. Linda Flower says of university/ community engagement that, “Once one steps beyond academic analysis and critique, perhaps the most significant aspiration and dilemma is how to relate to others- especially to marginalized or culturally diverse ‘Others’- across chasms of difference. For educators, the problem is not merely theoretical; it means figuring out how to construct a rhetorical space that can support transformative relationships.”⁵⁶

The chasms of difference were immediately clear to the Freedom Summer volunteers upon their arrival in Oxford. The volunteers may have expected to be greeted at orientation as instant insiders and to have their contributions celebrated, as Tracy Sugarman describes in his memoir about his role as a reporter during the summer. Sugarman quotes Jack Preiss, whose job was to work with group dynamics during the orientation, saying “They’re coming to Oxford with their gift of a summer in their hands, and they want it to be an appreciated gift.”⁵⁷ However, as one volunteer explains in a letter home, what they experienced was just the opposite: “The reception at Western

College was not warm. I was surprised at how unfriendly and unextending people were.”⁵⁸ Facing such an unenthusiastic greeting indicated to the volunteers that their first challenge would be to find a way to relate to the culturally diverse others who had recruited them. Flower warns educators and students entering disenfranchised communities against falling down “the slippery slope of philanthropy and charity that preserves the status of giver and receiver, expert and client.”⁵⁹ Along these lines, the same volunteer who points out the cold reception at orientation expresses concern about being perceived as a stereotypical philanthropic “giver” by the full time civil rights workers: “In their eyes we’re rich middle or upper-class whites who’ve taken off a summer to help the Negro.”⁶⁰ But what separates the Freedom Summer Project from many contemporary university/ community partnerships is the lack of danger that the privileged, white volunteers would fall into the role of expert.

The “expert” role clearly belonged to the full time SNCC workers, many of whom came from backgrounds far more humble than the volunteers. As Len Holt explains, “In charge of the training was a cadre of 80 Mississippi veterans, who had the task of making Freedom Fighters out of the eager, naïve and frightened students from the bowels of suburbia and some of the best schools in the country: Howard, Yale, Cornell, Harvard, Princeton, Bryn Mawr, Skidmore, Antioch.”⁶¹ Since the primary purpose of the orientation was to prepare the volunteers for the hardships they would face in Mississippi, and to emphasize the extent of the injustices to which black Mississippians were subject, as one volunteer points out, previous experience with injustice, rather than a prestigious education, was the greatest source of *ethos* in this context:

Us white kids here are in a position we've never been in before. The direction of the whole program is under Negro leadership- almost entirely. And a large part of that leadership is young people from the South – Negroes who've had experience just because they're Negroes and because they've been active in the movement. And here “we” are, for the post part never experiencing any injustice other than, “No, I won't let you see your exam paper. . .”⁶²

Although, as this volunteer emphasizes, many of them were not used to being the novices in a group or to having little authority, they accepted their positions seemingly without question. In their letters, the volunteers express desire to be accepted by the SNCC workers, and frustration at how difficult it seemed to gain that acceptance. As one volunteer puts it: “To arrive in Ohio, where there were 60 or 70 Negro kids my age – all close friends and rather cliquish at first- was a frightening experience. It was not that I looked down on them at all- quite the contrary: I was awed by them.”⁶³ What exactly was frightening about this experience is left unsaid. Perhaps the new context in which the “Negro kids,” who her friends at home might look down upon, presumably because of difference in race and class, were suddenly awe inspiring, was disorienting. Perhaps suddenly being in the position of novice when she is used to being head of the class makes her uneasy. Certainly the experience of suddenly admiring and desiring to be included by a group of people who would generally be rendered invisible by racist social practices is a disorienting reversal. Despite her fear and unease, this volunteer is determined to succeed in her new and unfamiliar social circle.

Their longing for acceptance by the SNCC workers prompted the volunteers to think about the role of racial privilege in their own lives differently than they had

previously done. Their desire to connect with the black SNCC veterans prompted the volunteers chronicled in Martínez's collection to move away from the tendency to view whiteness as the unmarked norm and to engage in a key move in rhetorical listening, which Ratcliffe terms "standing under" discourses. "Standing under our own discourses," she explains, "means identifying the various discourses embodied within each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how these discourses might affect not only ourselves but others."⁶⁴ In their quest for acceptance, some of the volunteers reflected on their own particular backgrounds, and on how those backgrounds and the socializing discourses to which they were exposed led to their roles as racialized subjects.

One volunteer tries to reconcile his difficulty at the orientation with his past interracial interactions: "I've gotten to know Negroes in college . . . I haven't gone out of my way to meet them but those I have met I have gotten along well with, if not intimately. What I mean to say is that I never detected a 'difference,' or an inability to communicate with one another . . . But what I am finding here is a different situation and perhaps a more honest one."⁶⁵ This volunteer's previous socializing discourses, grounded in the cultural logic of individualism, indicated to him that race does not impact communication. While he admits to never getting to know his black classmates intimately, the ease he felt in his interactions with them led him to believe that they communicated only as individuals, and that his whiteness did not impact the way his interlocutors approached him. In characterizing the racial unease at the Summer Project orientation as possibly "more honest" than the seemingly easy back and forth he previously had with his classmates, this volunteer is, in a sense, retrospectively listening rhetorically for what Ratcliffe calls the "exiled excess"⁶⁶ in his interactions with the

acquaintances whom he never really got to know. His own previously unacknowledged racial privilege, he seems to imply, may have affected his previous interactions with black people and stood as a barrier to intimacy. He may have felt at ease, in other words, because of his classmates' ability to accommodate him and put him at ease, with a distant but friendly stance toward the letter writer being a conscious stance on his interlocutors' part. Whatever unease his college classmates may have experienced was buried during their interactions with the writer at the time, only to be exhumed as the writer is forced to view those interactions from a cultural logic of systematic power inequity as opposed to individualism.

The same volunteer who describes being frightened above also reflects upon her previous socializing discourses in her letter, claiming that her arrival at orientation caused her to “[discover] a lot about my own feelings about race.”⁶⁷ She describes growing up in an upper middle class, liberal home with a black maid. “Consequently,” she realizes, “although my parents told me that Negroes were just as good as whites – I must have seen them in the role of servants. Once, my mother tells me, when I was little, we were driving along a road near our house and passed a Negro woman waiting for a bus. ‘There’s somebody’s maid,’ I said.”⁶⁸ In describing this story as a newly significant marker of her identity, this volunteer indicates that her desire to understand the barriers to identification between herself and the SNCC workers led her to depart from the tendency among whites to view whiteness as the automatic norm and specifically articulate ways in which the socializing discourses of white supremacy are embodied in her.

The volunteers' descriptions of the SNCC workers and the orientation activities in their letters indicates that during their week of training they took their role as students

with much to learn very seriously. In their discussions of orientation, the volunteer writers' interpretations of events and information presented to them at orientation are generally subordinated to the interpretations offered by the movement leaders in charge of the orientation, which the volunteers frequently quote at length. In fact, the volunteers' voices often fade into the background of their orientation narratives, acting more as means of transmitting the veteran activists' wise perspectives to the intended readers. In Belfrage's chapter about orientation in her memoir, for example, the voices of Fannie Lou Hamer, Bob Moses, James Forman, and Rita Schwerner are foregrounded, with Belfrage's narration functioning largely in order to transition between and contextualize them. The volunteers' perceptions and interpretations take on more prominence, however, when they enter the various towns to which they are assigned in Mississippi and meet their new hosts and neighbors.

Neo-Abolitionists, Pseudo-Scientists, and Expatriates of the White Middle Class: The Influence of Antecedent Genres

After finishing an emotionally and intellectually exhausting orientation week, the volunteers split off from each other and from the SNCC workers they had come to admire, and set off to register voters, run community centers, teach in Freedom Schools, and participate in other special projects in counties throughout Mississippi. As they entered the state, the searing heat and palpable oppression bore down upon them. Several groups were pulled over and questioned by policemen who ominously warned them to turn around and go home. They had the feeling of being watched in suspicion as they crossed through the white parts of town, across the railroad tracks into the black neighborhoods. As they drove down the dusty dirt roads, children playing in the streets stopped to look on in disbelief.

Gazing upon row after row of rickety shacks, with small outhouses in the back and adults sitting on the porches fanning themselves, trying to fend off the unrelenting heat, they knew that they would call one of those shacks home for the rest of the summer. The volunteers also knew that their hosts were risking their jobs and even their lives to house them. Upon their first meeting, the differences in race, class, and geography hung like a veil between the volunteers and their hosts, but they were united by a common purpose. With no previous experience to provide cues as to how to interact with each other, the volunteers and their hosts worked their way toward honest friendships often characterized by curiosity, respect, concern, and even love. The volunteers' descriptions of their relationships with their new hosts and neighbors suggest identities radically altered in response to their new contexts, as well as largely unacknowledged identifications with their white progressive predecessors who grappled similarly with the impact of race on American society and on themselves.

In their efforts to make sense for their readers back home of their experiences adjusting to life in a physical, social, and psychological landscape very different from their own, the volunteers relied on the rhetorical resources to which they had been exposed in their literature, history, and sociology classes. Kathleen M. Jamieson explains that “[i]n an unprecedented rhetorical situation, a rhetor will draw on his past experience and on the genres formed by others in response to similar situations,” which she names “antecedent genres.”⁶⁹ The antecedent genres upon which the volunteers drew in their writing include rhetorical texts from the antebellum abolitionist movement, particularly sentimental abolition literature.

That abolitionist strategies are evident in these texts is understandable, as the rhetorical situation of the letters is similar to that of various abolitionist texts in a number of ways. Both come from white writers and are directed toward white, northern readers. The purpose of each is to shed light on the horrors of racial injustice in the south, and to inspire readers to take ameliorative action. Also, both come out of time periods characterized by perceived northern apathy toward egregious southern racial injustice. In rhetorically constructing themselves as neo-abolitionists and traveling sociologists through adaptation of these antecedent genres, the volunteers' letters also reproduce two particularly problematic images of black Americans created and circulated by well-meaning whites of previous generations. Black Mississippians in the volunteers' writing are depicted first, as "natural" Christians, uncorrupted by modern society, and second, as pathologized subjects of detached, pseudo-scientific study. Also like their abolitionist ancestors, however, the volunteers depict their black neighbors as catalysts for self-critique.

Listening rhetorically to the volunteers' portrayal of the black Mississippians who were their hosts during the summer of 1964, the echo of the sentimental style characteristic of the abolitionist rhetoric to which many of them had likely been exposed is clearly audible. The sentimental style, popular in nineteenth century literature and rhetoric, is characterized by overt and exuberant emotional expression. Edwin Black argues that the most notable characteristic about "this style is the detail with which it shapes one's responses. No scintilla of reaction is left for the auditor's own creation. Every nuance of his response is suggested by the speech."⁷⁰ One of the most famous examples of this style is Harriet Beecher Stowe's influential abolitionist novel, *Uncle*

Tom's Cabin. The extent to which sentimental rhetoric directs reader response is exemplified in an early passage about Eliza, a house slave, upon learning that her master plans to sell her young son. The narrator asks:

If it were *your* Harry, mother, or your Willie, that were going to be torn from you by a brutal trader, to-morrow morning, — if you had seen the man, and heard that the papers were signed and delivered, and you had only from twelve o'clock till morning to make good your escape,— how fast could *you* walk? How many miles could you make in those few brief hours, with the darling at your bosom, —the little sleepy head on your shoulder, —the small, soft arms trustingly holding on to your neck?⁷¹

This passage insists that the reader, identified here as a mother, put herself in Eliza's position, vicariously feel her fear, love, sadness, and determination, and experience from this viewpoint the horrors of slavery. Also characteristic of sentimental rhetoric during and after the abolitionist era are characters of color that fit the "natural" mode. John R. Cooley explains that "traits that are stock-in-trade with the natural mode [include]: childlike simplicity and naiveté, a pastoral or rustic life, music, laughter, and a seemingly harmonious, natural integration of occupation and lifestyle"⁷². He continues that "[a]t the heart of all cultural primitivism," the literary frame in which the natural often appears, "is the notion that civilized man has much of value to learn from nature and from primitive people [. . .]."⁷³ While this portrayal may, to some, seem flattering to the "primitive" subject of discourse, it also Others the people portrayed as primitive in a way that reinforces social and economic inequality.

In many respects, the black Mississippians play the role of Toni Morrison's Africanistic Other⁷⁴ in the volunteers' letters, functioning as reflections of the white Self, sometimes validating the volunteers' efforts, sometimes teaching them valuable lessons about the universality of humanity, and sometimes, as the black characters are meant to do in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, shedding light on the harms of southern violence and northern middle class apathy. While their portrayals of black Mississippians for the most part read like repetitions of earlier rhetorical patterns employed by white Americans in describing the racial Other with only minor differences, there are some moments in which it may be argued that the volunteers are breaking away from familiar patterns and forging new ways for white people to think and talk about race in a new and perhaps more productive way.

In his article about Theodore Weld's popular sentimental abolitionist text, *American Slavery As It Is*, Stephen Browne points out "how rare is the slave's voice in this text,"⁷⁵ arguing that the text instead relies largely on graphic images of the horrors of slavery to persuade its audience. The letters featured in Martínez's collection contain examples of the same rhetorical technique, *enargia*, or the use of vivid visual description, when discussing the black Mississippi citizens. One volunteer uses vivid visual description to depict the poverty in which black Mississippians are forced to live:

The Negro neighborhood is literally 'on the other side of the railroad tracks.' To get over to the white and downtown area you have to either walk past several warehouses, small factories, etc., or cross the railroad tracks. The negro neighborhood hasn't got a single paved street in it. It's all dirt and gravel roads. The houses vary from really beat-up shacks to fairly good-looking cottages. The

beat-up places predominate. There are lots of smelly outhouses and many of the houses have no outside water.⁷⁶

This passage, in Beale's taxonomy, falls somewhere between informative and reflective/exploratory rhetoric. It is informative in the sense that the writer assumes shared attitude between himself and the reader when it comes to the subject being described, one of unfamiliarity, slight shock, and sympathy. To the writer and his middle class audience, the idea of living in close proximity to industrial buildings is likely unheard of. Used to well-maintained infrastructure in all directions from their own (probably northern) homes, the image of dusty dirt roads all around in an American neighborhood is likely jolting for the letter writer and his readers. The most offensive image, though, is the smelly outhouses, worlds apart from the clean toilets that empty into city pipes and luxury bathtubs to which the writer and his readers are accustomed. The passage is also reflective/exploratory in that the scene described is positioned as emblematic of "how the other half lives." The writer points out that the neighborhood in which he is currently staying is "literally" on the other side of the tracks in order to point out that he is living in a cliché. While he and his readers had probably heard this expression before, the writer now has an embodied understanding of exactly what that means.

Other instances of *enargia* also depict for their readers how the other half lives, but in an idealizing tone reminiscent of sentimental abolitionist texts as well as the "natural" trope carried on from sentimentalism into American modernist texts. Cooley explains the function of the natural concisely in his introduction of Irwin Russell's work:

Russell's narrator proffers the opinion that his culture has become artificial and decadent. The models for a simpler, more honest and expressive life are found not

so much in the past as in the lives of black people. “Christmas Night” also makes visible the chief limitations of the “natural” mode. In addition to its stereotypes and simplification, this kind of writing shows less interest in black people than in “black life” as symbolic of contrasting values and life styles. Although it may be admirable in providing a corrective tonic for white civilization, cultural primitivism runs the risk of failing to animate its subjects.⁷⁷

Despite the lamentable poverty described above, the volunteers continuously venerate the lifestyles promoted by such poverty as almost mystical in their simplicity, in contrast to the mechanized, anesthetized, depersonalized lifestyles that they and their readers live back home. The result of this approach to their subject is the same as that which Cooley describes. Instead of getting a sense of who the volunteers’ new acquaintances are as people, as individuals whose personalities evolved and continue to evolve in response to immense adversity, readers see black Mississippians more like works of visual art hanging in a museum to be gushed over by rich patrons, similar to the Sherwood Anderson that functions as an epigraph to Cooley’s “Naturals” chapter, “Paint a brown laborer’s suave flanks into the trunk of a tree. Send it to the Art Institute of Chicago.”⁷⁸ One volunteer, for example, provides her readers with a series of images that might be hung as an exhibit:

Yesterday, around 7 p.m. I marched up on the steps of a dark little falling apart house. Mrs. Brothens—the lady of the house, I later learned—invited me in. (I keep being invited in for ‘some barbecue or a cold drink or a rest on the front porch.’) Her husband was a beautiful man of about 59, great masses of

graying hair. He was crippled with arthritis and thus could not write and could not read either.

It began to rain. We sat in a small dark room, lighted only by a brief flame in the fireplace where Mrs. Brothens was cooking dinner. Their three adopted children sat on the floor and read from schoolbooks or counted bottle-tops, while the two old people looked on with love. The whole scene was from another century—especially because the little boy had a self-made bow and arrow, bent from a stick and tied with some cord. He proudly shot an arrow into the bushes across the street as I watched. . . .⁷⁹

The scene, in the volunteer's words, is from another century, a time before all of the complex distractions of modernity. Like the white protagonists in the modernist novels Cooley describes, readers can picture the white author in a freshly uncorrupted environment. Slightly out of place in her department store clothing, the writer reawakens as newly human as she experiences a more primitive lifestyle with her new black acquaintances. Sitting by a fireplace instead of a television and watching children play with homemade rather than mass-produced toys, the writer experiences beauty and love rather than commercials and the necessity to make more money and gain more status.

The letters indicate that love and beauty are consistent in black Mississippi households, as another volunteer describes an acquaintance in a similar manner. "She is a beautiful mother. My favorite picture of her is sitting peacefully in a summer chair with her 2-year-old baby girl in her lap; the baby, sucking her bottle, with one hand inside her mother's dress resting on her bosom. It is such a human sight; such love oozes from this house I can't begin to explain."⁸⁰ Instead of recounting a conversation with her new

friend that would animate her for her readers, this volunteer, also like the last, presents them with a detailed image and the adjective “beautiful.” Just like the previous volunteer does with the man of the house, this volunteer attributes to the mother she describes an intangible, sublime quality of beauty. The image she offers, also like the previous, shows a slow, loving, sensual, lifestyle that stands drastically in contrast to the prudish, overly intellectual one the volunteer left back home. Her temporary Mississippi family, she suggests, is more “human” than what she is used to, although she leaves her readers to guess at what it means to be more or less human.

In her discussion of descriptions like those above that portray black people as the “noble savage,” Jane Davis argues that “[a]lthough many readers might find these views extremely complimentary to blacks, such attitudes show that whites of this ideology do not accept blacks as humans who are flawed and have both strengths and weaknesses.”⁸¹ Sarah Smith Ducksworth echoes Davis’s argument that commentary by white people that at first seems to venerate black people actually works to dehumanize them in an analysis of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. She argues that Stowe’s rhetorical purpose with that text was to show her white audience that the system of slavery was harmful to them as well as their black slaves, explaining that:

To this end Stowe uses two strategies: 1) She presents a number of familiar white types to demonstrate how degrees of involvement in brutalizing slaves produce reciprocal and commensurate dehumanizing effects upon diverse members of the ‘master race’; and 2) she presents what Toni Morrison calls the ‘black persona,’ to define the ideal white prototype.⁸²

As with Stowe's novel, black Mississippians frequently function as reflections of the white Self in the volunteers' letters. Often, the volunteers report seeing better versions of themselves through the eyes of their new hosts and neighbors than they had seen through the eyes of their intended readers or other acquaintances back home, and express the desire to live up to those images. Unlike Stowe, the volunteers don't seem to write deformities onto the subjects of their letters, but they do retain one problematic feature common to abolitionist rhetorical texts like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. In portraying their new black friends primarily as reflections of themselves, the volunteer writers tend to obscure their humanity. In these passages, the letters about black Mississippians are not so much about them as they are about the writers themselves and the way their new acquaintances make them feel.

In one example of a writer seeing her best self through the eyes of her new host, the "beautiful mother" described above is quoted briefly in the same letter. "Mrs. H. finally paid me a great compliment," the volunteer explains. "She was introducing me to one of her Negro women friends and said, 'This is Nancy, my adopted daughter!'"⁸³. Although the letter writer says twice that she and Mrs. H. have become very close, she doesn't share anything else with her mother, the reader addressed in this letter, about what she and Mrs. H. have talked about that helped to develop their friendship. The quote reflects the message that Nancy wants to communicate to her mother: she has been accepted as part of Mrs. H's family, despite all of the barriers that may have prevented it, and is a better person for it. In order to give her mother a fuller picture of how much she is adored in her new home, the writer continues:

All evening I have little children crawling over me and big boys, 16, my buddies, combing my hair, confiding in me, appreciating me, because I will open my heart and mind to them and listen and care for them and show my concern. I may be sex-and-love-starved, as some like to picture me, but at least I have faced the problem and have found my own inner peace by being with people who have not forgotten how to love.

Really, to tell you the honest truth, I am just a little bit tired of hearing how you and others, and for a long time even myself, think, worry, discuss, write, and talk about all the deep down psychological reasons for your personal problems. When I see these simple people living lives of relative inner peace, love, honor, courage and humor, I lose patience with people who sit and ponder their belly buttons . . .⁸⁴

In a sense, Nancy is working against the interests of whiteness in this letter by naming features that define the white middle class. They are self-obsessed and overly concerned with their personal problems. They are relatively unskilled at expressing love for one another. Because white normativity and white supremacy depend on lack of recognition, by scrutinizing whiteness this letter is working to dismantle it. Certainly that seems to be the writer's rhetorical purpose, and it may very well have given her mother some valuable insight into her own lifestyle. Nancy makes clear in her letter that she prefers the version of herself that emerged in response to Mrs. H. and her family: someone who gives and accepts love and seeks inner peace, rather than the version of herself that she left at home: someone who is so pampered and self interested that she used her time and energy to continually analyze her magnified personal problems.

While Nancy seems to love and respect her new family, in positioning them as reflections of herself, her letter unwittingly reproduces some of the same problematic constructions of people of color that can be found in her letter's antecedent genres, abolitionist rhetoric and modernist literature. With the 16 year-old boys, for instance, Nancy does not go into detail about their personalities aside from all of the reasons that they appreciate her. Due to this lack of detail, the boys, like their mother, appear as emblems of the primitive southern black life that the urbanized white writer finds refreshing in comparison to the environment she left behind. Although the black lifestyle is evaluated favorably in this dichotomy, the fact that they are used in this way perpetuates the unexamined racist rhetorical frame that the writer inherited from her antecedent genres.

Another volunteer also writes about the joys that come with seeing herself in an unusually favorable light through the eyes of a new acquaintance:

One day when I was canvassing I met Mr. Brown. I told him my name is Ann. He said yes, Miss Ann, pleased to meet you. He is a young Negro teacher in the all-Negro Temple High School and of course he had no contact with white people before, except as Mr., Mrs., "Massa", —well, I said please call me Ann—and Ran, there was nothing so beautiful as the rest of the conversation. At every opportunity he had, he said Ann—he didn't just say Ann—he rolled the name around his tongue, savored the taste and sang it, listening to the echo in the back of his mind. He played with the word as a child would play with a new and fascinating toy, as a person would delight in the ecstasy of a new-found love [. . .]

[. . .] It's so different from the North where there is the intense, bitter hatred which makes working in Harlem or Roxbury or Philadelphia so heartbreaking because there is this invisible wall [. . .] There is hope here that does not exist in the north.⁸⁵

In this passage, Ann reassures her reader that she is doing well in Mississippi, and that the personal relationships she is experiencing there are worth the dangerous journey. She constructs herself as a symbol of hope for people like Mr. Brown and expresses happiness in his apparent acceptance of her. But in her eagerness to convey Mr. Brown's appreciation of her inviting him to call her by her first name, this writer takes an overly simplistic and at times paternalistic stance toward the black people she describes, much like the antecedent genres from which her letter draws. In comparing Mr. Brown to a child with a new toy, Ann takes on a paternalistic stance characteristic of abolitionist rhetoric like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Also, she shows ignorance of black culture and of the possibility that Mr. Brown's view of her is more nuanced than he lets on by overlooking the possibility that Mr. Brown's use of "Miss Ann," was an indirect put down, or an instance of what Henry Louis Gates Jr. calls "signifyin(g)."⁸⁶ "Miss Ann," in the days of Jim Crow was the female version of "Mister Charlie," the privileged white man who exploits black men's efforts for his own gain, all the while assuming he is taking care of them. Thus, in emphasizing her acceptance into the southern black community, Ann also reveals a lack of understanding of that community.

Other volunteers also express happiness in seeing themselves through the eyes of black Mississippians. In particular, the volunteers construct themselves as heroic agents in an important historical moment. Martínez's collection includes many passages that

recount warm reception from the black community, telling how the residents did things like provide the volunteers with home-cooked meals or desserts and make efforts to protect them from white Mississippians. Such letters both ensure the readers that their loved ones are being taken care of in their new environments as well as validate the writers' efforts. Other letters go beyond this, describing scenes in which the writers are celebrated as heroes and saints. One volunteer writes, "We had been warned to expect fear and hostility, but we were immediately invited to live and eat in Negro homes and to speak in Negro churches. For many local citizens our coming was a religious event; I found it difficult to be cynical. Sometimes when we pass by, the children cheer."⁸⁷

Similarly, another volunteer writes:

There are old men and women in old clothing whom you know have little money and none to spare, who stop you as you are leaving the church after addressing the congregation and press a dollar into your hand and say, 'I've waited 80 years for you to come and I just have to give you this little bit to let you all know how much we appreciate your coming. I prays for your safety every night, son. God bless you all.' And then they move down the stone steps and disappear along the red clay road lined with tall green trees and houses tumbling down.⁸⁸

This passage departs from 19th century sentimental discourse in that it contains no directive to the reader about how she should respond to the interaction the volunteer recounts, but it is reminiscent of the style in that few readers can experience it without experiencing an upsurge of emotions such as sorrow for the old men and women who lived their entire lives in dilapidated shacks, working hard for nearly no pay, humility at their generosity toward the volunteer, shame at the fact that they had to wait 80 years for

sympathetic Americans of greater means to help address their plight, and pride in witnessing that moment finally happening. The scene elevates the writer's image and challenges readers to meet the old man's humble donation by tapping into their own comparatively cavernous pockets to contribute to the long overdue movement in which their loved one is participating. Like the protest novels of previous generations, this passage also comforts the reader and provides a sense that things are moving in the right direction. "As long as such books are being published," an American liberal once said to [Baldwin], "everything will be all right."⁸⁹ This scene indicates a feeling of validation for the author in making the commitment to travel south for the summer, and by offering his readers the opportunity to empathize with the old men and women he describes, he gives them the opportunity to feel like vicarious participants in this historic moment as well.

The danger that comes with the black Mississippians' rhetorical function as reflections of the volunteers depicted in these passages is same danger that Cooley warns about with the natural in modernist literature, and that Browne warns about with image-based abolitionist rhetoric: black people are not represented as complex individuals with voices of their own, but rather are often flattened into one dimensional caricatures. The volunteers' relatively static portrayals of the black Mississippi residents in these passages stand in sharp contrast to their representations of the SNCC workers in their letters covering the volunteer orientation, discussed in the first chapter of this dissertation. Whereas the SNCC workers are represented in the letters as strong characters with vivid personalities whose voices reach the audience through direct, often lengthy quotes, if the Mississippi residents are quoted at all in the letters, the quotes are usually short and about the writer. The fact that this sort of flattening occurs in the same passages in which the

volunteers' language aligns them with abolitionists suggests that this move is another residual effect of antecedent genres.

One volunteer writer actually acknowledges his antecedent genres when he writes about the troubling commonalities that his perceptions of black Mississippi have with abolitionist sentimentality and cultural primitivism in a letter describing his feelings about canvassing:

There is some strong ambivalence which goes with this work. I sometimes fear that I am only helping to integrate some beautiful people into modern white society with all of its depersonalization (I suppose that has something to do with its industrial nature). It isn't 19th century pastoral romanticism which I feel, but a genuine respect and admiration for a culture which, for all the trouble, still isn't as commercialized and depersonalized as our Northern mass culture.⁹⁰

The writer goes on to describe a feeling of disgust at an advertisement in "a grubby little Negro café"⁹¹ featuring an African American couple in expensive clothes barbecuing expensive food in front of an expensive house with a tray of Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer. "Let's all escape and be like the white man. . .,"⁹² the letter concludes. This writer practices rhetorical listening by reflecting on his own relationship to the many discourses through which he has been socialized with relation to his new neighbors' socializing discourses. In contrasting black Mississippians' lifestyles with "modern society" the writer recognizes in his own letter the echo of antebellum sentimentality and its tendency to contrast the untainted, "natural" person of color to the corruption of industrial white society. In acknowledging this and distancing himself from "pastoral romanticism," this writer alludes to the problems with the sentimental stance toward the Other, and also the

difficulty of escaping this rhetorical frame, considering its stronghold on the American discursive formation into which the writer was born. He acknowledges that white Americans traditionally interpret Americans of color through this terministic screen and declares that, although he is among that group, he refuses to use the screen uncritically.

This volunteer's favorable comparison of southern black culture to his own northern white culture suggests a complicated relationship to texts on both ends. On the one hand, northern whites are privileged with access to texts with the potential to liberate them and strengthen their communities: philosophical, scientific, and literary texts, for instance, allow northern whites to understand their own experiences in a broader context and make decisions accordingly. However, with this advantage also comes exposure to the texts of mass culture, which, in this volunteer's view, lead to depersonalization, which is damaging to society. His description of the advertisement suggests that the seductiveness of advertising imagery- carefully constructed images of wealth, beauty, enjoyment, and the like, lead unsuspecting viewers to define themselves, their aspirations, and their desires by the standards of mass culture, constructing them as consumers whose identities are tied to marketing rather than as people whose identities are tied to their interpersonal relationships. In contrast, black Mississippi's lack of exposure to texts both results from and perpetuates their oppression, but what this volunteer perceives as the silver lining to such deprivation is a society whose members' identities are defined more by their relationships to their local communities than by manufactured desire to fit images and buy products dictated by nameless, faceless men in suits trying to make a profit. While this volunteer self-consciously employs a cultural primitivist, sentimental frame in order to describe his conflicted view of what he saw as

favorable effects of a deplorable situation, other volunteers struggled for appropriate ways to convey the deplorable outcomes of a deplorable situation.

Antebellum rhetoric provided an alternative antecedent genre to sentimentalist rhetoric also used by a few of the volunteers in Martínez's collection, which functioned to convey a strong sense of interpersonal distance between the writer and his subject: detached analysis. Letters in one section of the collection, prefaced by the subheading "*But this new identity* [as members of Mississippi black communities] *wasn't always so simple . . .*"⁹³ describe the troubling aspects of life in black Mississippi for readers back home. These letters assume what Beale calls objective direction toward the people they describe. "*Objective* direction," he explains:

constitutes what most readers consider the normal form of scientific and instrumental discourse. It is distinguished by a relative paucity of self-referring expressions; by referential vocabulary; by a persona who, if he or she intrudes into the discourse at all, does so in a way that is largely incidental to the subject or argument of the discourse; and by an overall pattern of coherence that relates to the logical, temporal, or spatial dimensions of the subject more than to the author's reactions to it.⁹⁴

By employing objective direction, writers in these passages construct themselves as sociologists or anthropologists conducting studies of "the Negro." This pseudo-scientific register recalls an unexpected antecedent genre: the proslavery rhetoric of white southerners like Chancellor William Harper. It also anticipates the infamous Moynihan report, a controversial 1965 sociological study that blamed continued disenfranchisement among African Americans in part on the matriarchal family structure that Daniel Patrick

Moynihan observed in urban black neighborhoods. These passages' resemblance to antecedent genres promoting the very inequality the volunteers aimed to overcome illustrate the volunteers' inability to disentangle themselves from the centuries of racist socializing discourses that shape their reality and the reality of the black Mississippians they're trying to understand. Although committed to racial justice, the fact remains that the volunteers grew up in a culture shaped by financial stability and access to education, saw the kind of lifestyles allowed by those privileges as the norm, and struggled to make sense of the social responses to poverty and oppression that they witnessed among their new neighbors in Mississippi. In so doing they drew upon the discourses of white Americans from previous generations who tried to make sense of their black counterparts, but with drastically different intentions.

In antebellum pro-slavery texts like Harper's *Slavery in the Light of Social Ethics*, traits associated with black people as a race are attributed to genetics. Harper, for instance, proclaims:

That the African negro is an inferior variety of the human race, is, I think, now generally admitted, and his distinguishing characteristics are such as peculiarly mark him out for the situation which he occupies among us. And these are no less marked in their original country, than as we have daily occasion to observe them.

The most remarkable is their indifference to personal liberty.⁹⁵

To back his assertion, Harper quotes unnamed travelers to Africa who, it should be noted, list some of the same supposed characteristics for which some abolitionists, and even some of the volunteers quoted above, praise black Americans: "The few opportunities we have had of studying their characters, induce us to believe that they are a simple, honest,

inoffensive, but weak, timid, and cowardly race.”⁹⁶ Like Harper, a few volunteers suggest in their letters that negative characteristics are more or less generalizable to the whole of black Mississippi. Unlike Harper and other Jim Crow racists, the volunteers suggest that such negative characteristics are attributable to social, rather than genetic factors.

One volunteer begins by describing personal interactions he has had with his new neighbors and induces some more general conclusion about people in his new community:

When the men from town here are drunk, they come up to the house saying, “shit, I’m not scared of anything, hear.” By the next they are crawling again. The fear in their faces is pathetic [. . .]

Some of the proud Negroes among us say we are trying to save the black man’s body and the white man’s soul. But we are trying to save both souls. Many of these people are so smashed and whiplashed by the treatment they’ve gotten that they’re lost. . . This is the worst thing about segregation, it breaks people, it makes boys (“hey boy, come here”) out of men. The men are often so pitifully weak- unable to decide anything or to do anything. Another problem is that when the people get stronger, they often release against whites all the anger which they’ve repressed . . .⁹⁷

Disturbed by the destructive habits and sense of defeat that he sees in his new community and unable to relate to them personally, this volunteer takes on the role of sociological analyst, trying to understand the source of the drunkenness and weakness he perceives. Instead of blaming genetics, this writer attributes the destruction of black Mississippi men to segregation, and identifies as causes the demeaning ways in which black men are

treated at the hand of southern whites, and as effects weakness, drunkenness, and repressed anger released at random.

Particularly disturbing to the volunteer quoted above is the weak position he sees the men occupy, and he is not alone. A volunteer working in another county writes:

The interesting and horrible part of Negro life here is the absolute castration of the Negro male. He is trained to be nothing more than a child, with his . . . sheepish expression and ‘Yessir, yessir’ to everything the white man says. Children must then emulate the mother who usually takes the aggressive, stronger role in the family. Few Negro boys can look to their fathers as a strong figure with which to identify.⁹⁸

This volunteer also constructs himself as an outside observer studying an unfamiliar culture using direction toward the subject that is even more objective than that in the previous passage. The phrase “absolute castration of the Negro male” reads like a cross between the racist travel narratives cited by Harper and a Freudian psychological study. This passage, like the previous, also identifies causes and effects of the problem he perceives, castration. The cause is training by the oppressor, the effect is the relative strength of black mothers and a lack of strong male role models for black boys. The direction and conclusion in this passage anticipate the Moynihan report, published in 1965, which attributes disparities in income and status between black and white Americans to the matriarchal family common in black families.

Arguing that a legacy of slavery left black Americans in a “tangle of pathology,” Moynihan concludes that “the Negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is too out of line with the rest of American society, seriously

retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a crushing burden on the Negro male and, in consequence, on a great many Negro women as well.”⁹⁹ Although Moynihan argued that the family structure he deemed “pathological” was the result of many decades of oppression under slavery, as well as to continued discrimination and the failed project of Reconstruction, it nonetheless drew widespread criticism, especially from African American activists, for blaming structural inequalities on supposed failings of black families. James Berger notes that “James Farmer, the director of the Congress of Racial Equality, blamed the report for providing ‘a massive academic cop-out for the white conscience.’”¹⁰⁰ Farmer would undoubtedly have been interested, although probably not surprised, to know that his allies in the Freedom Summer Project were placing rural black Mississippians within the same rhetorical frame.

The clinical tone that these two volunteers take toward their new neighbors harkens back to the Jim Crow racism of pro-slavery writers and anticipates the colorblind racism forwarded by the Moynihan report. But the letters quoted in this section do not actually advance either viewpoint. Despite the similarities in direction and register, these letters depart from both Harper’s defense of slavery and Moynihan’s report in that they attribute what they perceive as negative characteristics common among their new neighbors not to genetics, as with the former, or to the citizens’ own failings, as with the latter. They are instead attributed to the deprivation to which blacks in Mississippi had been and continued to be subject. It is this very deprivation that the volunteers fought against day to day during the summer of 1964.

Soldiers for the Cause, Harried Librarians, and Critical Pedagogues: The Volunteers Find their Work in the Movement

As they settled into their lives in Mississippi, the volunteers engaged tenaciously in the daily duties of social activism. Here they were able to put the training they received in civics, math, political science, history, and the like to work. With the goals of the Summer Project laid out clearly before them, they thought critically and creatively in hopes of achieving them. They found their work to be unpredictable, frustrating, sometimes thankless, and often mundane. They described the details of their working lives in their letters to readers back home.

Many of the passages in which volunteers explain their daily duties are best described as informative rhetoric, because they aim primarily to convey specific information to their readers and assume a shared attitude toward the subject. In terms of direction, while all of the volunteer writers indicate a sense of personal involvement with their subject, the subject itself, rather than the writer's reaction to it, takes center stage, as with one volunteer who writes home about his strategies for effective canvassing:

Before we canvas a plantation, our preparation includes finding out whether the houses are posted, driving through or around the plantation without stopping, meanwhile making a detailed map of the plantation.

We're especially concerned with the number of roads in and out of the plantation. For instance, some houses could be too dangerous to canvas because of their location near the boss man's house and on a dead end road.

Our canvassing includes not only voter registration, but also extensive reports on conditions- wages, treatment by the boss man, condition of the houses, numbers of acres of cotton, etc. Much more such work needs to be done. The

plantation system is crucial in Delta politics and economics, and the plantation system must be brought to an end if democracy is to be brought to the Delta . . .¹⁰¹

In this letter the writer employs a metaphor that commonly structures American discourse, that of war.¹⁰² He constructs himself as a soldier for democracy, and the image of canvasser as soldier manifests itself throughout the passage. First, both the writer and his intended audience agree that the “boss man” is the enemy, the plantation system he maintains is enemy territory, and the people who work on the plantation are enemy’s oppressed subjects, even his hostages. Second, this volunteer’s description of canvassing calls to mind battle strategies: mapping enemy territory, noting escape routes, gauging danger relative to each plot on the map. Each voter registered without the enemy’s knowledge is a small battle won. At the same time, as the soldier engages in battle, he collects intelligence on the enemy’s territory, arguing that such information is crucial to an overall victory for his side.

Beale explains that “[i]nformation establishes a line of continuum with reflective/exploratory rhetoric as the author relinquishes the role of reporter, expert, or authority figure and begins to assume the role of sensitive consciousness through which events and experiences are projected to the reader.”¹⁰³ Because their experiences working in the movement are so new, descriptions of daily activities toe this line of continuum, providing detail about their work days and expressing their feelings and thoughts about them. For instance, in her memoir, Belfrage depicts an average day in her life as a community center librarian:

It was impossible to be alone. All the other deprivations, the total lack of recreation, relaxation, or release, might have been supportable if only there had

ever been a chance to be alone. Outside the office it was unsafe. Inside there were never less than two or three dozen local people and children and staff, with constant interruptions and distractions, accumulations of tensions and numbers. It would take half a day to write a letter, if you could muster the will, the space, and the typewriter to do it to begin with, and it ended up a mass of lost trains of thought, half the day gone you had no idea where. This person needs housing-stop and search the file of names and addresses, then call up or go hunting; that one wants a colored marker to make a poster- try to find one but they've all disappeared, the children took them [. . .]¹⁰⁴

Here Belfrage constructs herself as a multitasking secretary for the revolution, providing a list of mundane details that works to inform her audience about activist work in Mississippi. Readers can easily picture the small, crowded office, the stream of volunteers moving into Mississippi, the donations to be acknowledged and inquiries to be answered. The barrage of mundane details Belfrage provides also works to convey her intense feelings of anxiety, stress, and claustrophobia that result from the responsibilities heaped upon her in the face of a chaotic social environment. Therefore, at the same time she constructs herself as a sensitive, introspective person fighting breakdown in the face of demand for constant output, providing the reader with a rounded view of the realities of activism.

Another volunteer similarly informs her readers about her duties as a Freedom School teacher while reflecting on her thoughts and feelings about her work. She begins a long letter to her parents by conveying the joy that comes with her teaching position. “The atmosphere in class is unbelievable. It is what every teacher dreams about—real,

honest enthusiasm and desire to learn anything and everything. The girls come to class of their own free will [. . .] They drain me of everything that I have to offer so that I go home at night completely exhausted but very happy.”¹⁰⁵ In expressing such a wide range of emotions, this volunteer constructs herself as a caring teacher fully committed to critical pedagogy. Seeing her students’ will to learn motivates her to commit to them fully and give them the knowledge they so desperately seek, which she finds both invigorating and exhausting. She then goes on to back up her construction of herself as a teacher committed to liberatory pedagogy by informing her parents about the topics that she covers with her students, which include the Haitian slave revolt, religious studies courses in which students are asked to think critically about religion for the first time, and southern white people. This portion of the letter is primarily informative, as the volunteer is explaining the execution of a curriculum that both she and her readers view as necessary and important.

The writer moves back into reflective/ exploratory rhetoric when she emphasizes her discussion-based approach to teaching. Under this classroom model, students are asked to engage critically with the topics presented, practicing habits of mind that will help them to continue to question the beliefs and social forces that impact their lives. She celebrates her students’ capacity for respectful debate, noting that, “the girls respond, respond, respond. And they disagree among themselves. I have no doubt that soon they will be disagreeing with me. At least this is one thing I am working towards.”¹⁰⁶ That she wants her students to disagree with her indicates that this volunteer understands the importance of her students’ ability to question all authority, up to and including her own, another practice that leads to sustained agency for oppressed groups. However, she

understands that regardless of how much they deconstruct and resist their oppression, they cannot deny its lasting impact on their lives. “They are a sharp group. But they are under-educated and starved for knowledge. They know that they have been cheated and they want anything and everything we can give them.”¹⁰⁷

After acknowledging her worries for her students, the writer closes by countering this sobering reality by offering a positive outlook for their future. “I have a great deal of faith in these students. They are very mature and concerned about other people. I really think that they will be able to carry on without us. At least this is my dream . . .”¹⁰⁸ Like any critical pedagogue, this volunteer expresses respect for and trust in her students. She has faith, she says, that the time she has spent working with her students to act on their own, practicing the strategies that they developed together to stand up to their oppressors in her absence.

Expatriates of the White Middle Class: The Volunteers Become Part of the Black Community

Some volunteers not only worked to act with but also think and feel like and with their new friends, and the volunteers’ efforts to attain consubstantiality with their black Mississippi hosts are evident in their letters. Kenneth Burke explains consubstantiality with a simple equation: “A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. [. . .] To identify A with B,” Burke continues, “is to make A ‘consubstantial’ with B.”¹⁰⁹ He argues that “A doctrine of *consubstantiality*, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an *act*; and a way of life is an *acting-together*; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them *consubstantial*.”¹¹⁰ In acting with their southern black hosts, the northern

white volunteers started to share ideas and values central to those communities. These new values were often difficult for the volunteers to reconcile, as they contradicted many of the values of their home communities.

Upon entering Mississippi, one volunteer immediately learns of the terror that whiteness evokes in people of color described by bell hooks.¹¹¹ “When I walk,” he writes, “I am always looking at cars and people: if Negro, they are my friends; if white, I am frightened and walk faster. When driving and a car approaches, I am always asking: black? white?”¹¹² The distrust of white people among SNCC workers that the volunteers puzzled over at orientation suddenly becomes understandable for this volunteer in an immediate, visceral way.

Another volunteer writes home about a startling realization about values that he had previously taken for granted: “Most of us . . . are from schools and families where sensitivity to pain is a very important virtue. I have made here the discovery that sensitivity is one of those virtues that depends upon the certainty of food and roof . . . Here, one who is sensitive to pain will soon be reduced to a mass of wounds and hurts . . .”¹¹³ This passage communicates a new awareness of the situated nature of knowledge for the volunteer writer. Linda Flower explains that situated knowledge is information about “the likely effects of policies and actions on people in different social locations.”¹¹⁴ Tapping into others’ situated knowledge, Flower argues “has the potential not just to change our knowledge of the world but our image of ourselves in that world.”¹¹⁵ As an example of such understanding’s transformative potential, Flower cites a student volunteer in her community literacy project whose “glimpse of someone else’s situated of knowledge also created a heightened awareness of her own.”¹¹⁶

The Freedom Summer volunteer quoted above, just like the volunteer in Flower's project forty-some years later, reports gaining a heightened awareness of how his own situated knowledge and embodied experience has shaped his values and beliefs. He realizes that sensitivity to pain, a value that seemed to him universal before traveling to Mississippi, is actually dependent on economic privilege and the comforts it affords. Reverence of heightened sensitivity to pain, in fact, depends upon protection from any real pain. This observation backs Baldwin's assertion that sentimentality signals an "inability to feel," and an "aversion to experience."¹¹⁷ The gushing expression of feeling in response to another's pain that is central to sentimental expression is the result of the heightened value placed on sensitivity by the writer and her audience, a sort of sensitivity that, as this volunteer discovers, depends upon the absence of pain in one's own embodied experience.

The desire among the volunteers for consubstantiality with their hosts is particularly noticeable when it comes to religion, since this is a subject that frequently separates the liberal, often agnostic or atheist volunteers from the devoutly Christian black Mississippi residents. Not surprisingly, the centrality of religion in black Mississippi folk life is a source of frustration for some of the volunteers. For example, one volunteer writes that, "At the service this morning, in the interminable prayer of thanksgiving, I was ready to gag. These people- who for sincerity and simplicity of belief are unrivaled by ten times as many Central Churches- have no reward for their faith. I wanted to tell them, but of course I won't, because it's all they have, and I admire them for it . . ." ¹¹⁸ This writer is appalled by the contradiction between the unjust conditions to which his hosts are subject and their sincere expression of thanks to their god. While he

claims to “admire them” for their devotion, he gives no reason for his admiration, which suggests that that statement is a desperate attempt to temper his expression of disgust.

This ubiquitous feeling of discomfort with and distrust of religion makes the fact that one volunteer finds church to be a place to experience consubstantiality with her new neighbors all the more extraordinary, not only to readers of Martínez’s collection but, it seems, also to the volunteer herself:

[. . .] there’s a direct tie between every person in that church and God, and every person with me and I with them.

Tonight was different from the first time . . . I left the church, wondering the eternal question of God, which we so easily answer with terms of science and evolution and theories of the Beginning . . . I cannot say God, I cannot think God, yet I cannot so easily dismiss the thought of some higher order of things—and after so long I cannot accept it and I want to run to some Wise One and plead “Tell me, tell me- what is the answer?” And there is no Wise One to answer me—and now I shall never know and I am afraid to read again what I am writing to you now with such speed because I know two weeks later, I will say to you—well, I was very tired when I wrote this to you and I will forget how I felt and I will sink back into that middle class existence you and I and our clan live in. No—I do not mean that exactly, for we do think and really wonder and worry and hope and weep and feel- but it’s sort of a rut. For we think more or less in the context in which we were brought up – Aye, liberal and thought-provoking though it is, it is still enslaving us.¹¹⁹

The direct tie that this writer describes is the experience of consubstantiality. In coming together in the act of worship, the volunteer feels a sense of shared concepts and sensations with those around her. While she welcomes the feeling of identification with her neighbors, the fact that church is what prompted this identification is clearly troubling to the writer who, the letter suggests, was not religious when she arrived in Mississippi. This identity crisis is evident in the letter's rapid shifts in aim and direction. After saying that this visit to church was different, the writer reveals exactly how it was different by making the thoughts and feelings she observed in her neighbors at church her own, contemplating the existence of God. On this question she is clearly divided. She recognizes that it is impossible to identify both with the atheists back home, whose viewpoints she brought with her to Mississippi, and who would answer the "question of God" in terms of science and evolution, as well as with the Christians with whom she just worshipped, who believe in a "higher order of things."

As she grapples with her question of belief, it seems that the writer is her own primary audience and that she is writing her letter in the form of an exploratory essay until, mid-sentence, she shifts her focus from her relationship with God and the mysteries of the universe to her relationship with her readers back home. At this point the letter's aim becomes less exploratory and more deliberative, as the writer recognizes that her readers will not likely be receptive to her ontological contemplations. In admitting fear at the thought of rereading her letter at a later date and explaining it away as exhaustion-induced delirium, the writer acknowledges her tendency to identify with her readers on the question of religion but insists that she, at the moment of writing, tentatively identifies with the other camp by expressing disappointment at the thought of herself

“sink[ing] back into that middle class existence” that denies her the freedom to contemplate the great mysteries of life. Identification with their way of knowing, she implies, precludes the consubstantiality with her neighbors that she enjoyed at church. In the next sentence she softens her stance toward her audience, acknowledging the validity of their intellectual and emotional struggles, but concludes that their way of doing things is nonetheless “a rut.”

In the final two sentences, the writer explains that what she means by “rut” is the tendency for a specific set of socializing discourses to be interpreted as Truth among those who share them. The experience of consubstantiality with her Christian neighbors at church, then, does not make the reader a Christian. Instead, it leads her to a greater understanding of the multiplicity of socializing discourses, the multiplicity of belief systems, and the multiplicity of identifications that emerge as a result. The point that this volunteer ends up arguing is that there is no source of absolute truth or, as she puts it, no “Wise One.” Her readers’ way of knowing, which they believe to be the best way, results from their subject position among place-specific discourses, just the same as her new neighbors’ Christian viewpoints. While the two perspectives on life’s deepest questions may be irreconcilable, the writer is invigorated by her discovery of their equal social sway, and by her attempts to dwell in the space between them.

Subjects and Agents of an Exploitive Society: Reflections on the South, the Struggle, and the Self

For the atheist volunteer who wondered about God in a Mississippi church, struggles to establish identification across difference led to a broadened perspective on beliefs about the mysteries of life and death. For other volunteers, the experience of

straddling the color line that summer resulted in broadened perspectives on American society and bittersweet insights into their roles as American citizens.

One volunteer writes about the awe she experiences on seeing realities of black life in Mississippi:

There are almost no sidewalks in the Negro neighborhoods. The red clay dirt is hard and the sun won't quit . . . The poverty and sorrow of the neighborhoods doesn't leave you. I've been to hundreds of houses I could kick down with my feet and a small hammer. And I've seen the hands of these people, swollen and bruised, hard and calloused from years of work at practically no pay and whatever the pay was, it was always half what a white man would get for the same job. And I realized very suddenly and forcefully that these are my people and their sorrow is mine also. And since we are of this country our grief is collective whether the rest of the country admits it or not . . .¹²⁰

Traces of sentimental antecedent genres resonate throughout this passage. In form it is very similar to many that one can find in abolitionist literature. A lamentable scene of rural southern poverty resulting from racial exploitation is described in sensory detail. Then the readers are condemned for letting it happen. But the crucial difference between this letter and sentimental rhetoric lies in the letter's direction toward its subject and readers. Where sentimental literature would take on what Beale calls "affective direction," addressing the reader directly following the sad description and beseeching them to think, feel, or do something specified by the author, this volunteer instead adopts "expressive direction", which, according to Beale, "is characterized by the sense or illusion of personal involvement on the part of the writer; by language heavily laden with

subjective, evaluative terminology; by such overt markers as *I, I feel, I believe*; and by an overall pattern of coherence that relates more closely to private associations of the author than to independently discernible features of subject or method.”¹²¹

Seeing that her new neighbors’ life experiences had been so drastically different from her own does not lead the volunteer to see herself as distant from them but rather as closer to them. Instead of using affective direction, in which the writer positions the subject as a catalyst for action that the reader is implored to take, as with sentimental rhetoric, or objective direction, in which the author holds the subject at arms length so that it can be examined by reader and writer, as with pseudo-scientific rhetoric, this writer positions herself as standing *with* the subject of the letter. This writer in essence declares Burkean consubstantiality not only between herself and the people whose homes she visits while canvassing, but between all American citizens.

The conclusions that the writer comes to are, in accordance with expressive direction, attributable to her own private associations, but she is confident enough to state her feeling of collective sorrow as a fact that she realized rather than something that she alone feels. The volunteer quoted above declares consubstantiality between herself and the poor people she meets in Mississippi and, instead of imploring her readers to identify with them, as would sentimentalist writers, she denies her readers the choice altogether and implicates them in consubstantiality. In her view, all Americans, because they are of the same country and therefore subject to interconnected political and economic systems, are all indeed acting together. Although the volunteer acknowledges that many Americans are too far away from the impoverished black south to literally share common images and sensations with the nation’s most disenfranchised citizens, she insists that

national consubstantiality leads to a shared grief. In establishing consubstantiality between herself, her readers, and the subjects of her letter, this writer moves beyond the patronizing stance toward black Americans taken by sentimental rhetoric and suggests racial equality by declaring an unbreakable connection between them and their fellow Americans.

The viewpoint that this volunteer expresses: that one American's pain is, in fact, all Americans' pain, is one that was promoted during orientation. For the volunteers to be honest and effective civil rights workers, they needed to be in Mississippi not because they wanted to do charity work, but because they understood that their own destinies were tied to the destinies of the most disenfranchised American citizens. Internalizing this notion is the starting point for the white volunteers in the long road toward establishing informed antiracist identities, but the real work comes in confronting the polarizing effects of racialized subjectivity in a racially stratified society.

Belfrage, who was several years older than many of her fellow volunteers at 27 and practiced in the art of reflective/exploratory writing, having already published one memoir in 1959, did this work. In her 1965 memoir *Freedom Summer*, Belfrage thinks through her relationship as a white person to the nation's history of white privilege. In an intensely reflective four pages near the middle of her memoir, Belfrage works to make sense of the largely unacknowledged but always palpable tension that hung between the black activists who had painstakingly lain the groundwork for the Summer Project, and the hordes of white volunteers who descended upon Mississippi to bring the cause to the next level. In so doing, she acknowledges the role of the black activists, the media, and southern whites, in shaping the story of Freedom Summer.

She begins her reflection by acknowledging the resentment she saw among local SNCC workers toward “the hundreds of smart, sharp, articulate white students coming down and taking over,” and doing a decent job of it, while “some of the local SNCC workers faded into the background, away from this onslaught of insensitive Northern energy.”¹²² In introducing the tension between the local SNCC workers and volunteers, Belfrage seamlessly practices “rivaling,” a rhetorical stance that Flower recommends for respectful communication across difference. The rivaling stance, she explains, gives participants “the freedom to offer rivals as *possibilities* to be considered [and also operates as] a desperately needed alternative to adversarial argument and the imperative of advocacy that often [locks] them in the closet of ‘my opinion.’”¹²³ In her introduction of the conflict Belfrage approaches each viewpoint from a stance of openness and carefully explains both sides. The volunteers were, as she says, sharp, articulate, and energetic. They had the skills and the enthusiasm necessary to take charge of various projects and help them to succeed. Yet at the same time the whirlwind of energy they brought with them was insensitive to the local context and, more specifically, to the local activists’ expectations for communication. It usurped authority that was arguably rightfully theirs.

She continues, “[b]efore the summer they had been a small tight group, bonded together in trust and friendship and in deep understanding of their cause, since they *were* their cause. Now the nation’s press was hailing the bravery of the young white army gone to save the Negroes of Mississippi, failing at every point to credit the grass roots.”¹²⁴ Here, Belfrage elaborates on the local SNCC workers’ perspective. She acknowledges the rhetorical injustice done to them by the media in their coverage of SNCC’s fight for

racial justice. In celebrating the white volunteers without even a nod to their recruiters, the media denied the black activists' agency in their coverage of a project whose aim was to promote black agency in political and economic spheres. If the local SNCC workers were resentful and sullen, Belfrage's analysis clearly suggests that it was not merely the result of racial prejudice. But racial prejudice, she insists, was very much a part of the movement:

The movement, despite any white illusions and black resentments, was and is an indigenous one, before, during, and after the summer. Black and white had to fight together in the movement, but the fight was as much against its own internal racism as the outer world's. The only difference was that the movement was in the middle of the mess, acting on it immediately, while the rest of America preferred to ignore it.¹²⁵

In this passage, Belfrage moves to correct the widespread illusions perpetuated by the media: Freedom Summer was initiated by local people, not the white volunteers who descended on Mississippi for the summer. In the next sentence, she effectively employs the rhetorical figure of *antithesis*, which Richard Lanham defines as "conjoining contrasting ideas,"¹²⁶ by first evoking the image of the Summer Project as a "beloved community" in which black and white people harmoniously lived and worked together in a utopian community that transcended racial prejudice, and then immediately debunking that image by saying that, in fact, the largest struggle was against the participants' own racism. Far from utopian, the movement was plagued by the same destructive racial dynamics as was the rest of the world. The last sentence reads as a challenge to the rest of the world. The only thing that separated movement activists from other Americans, she

says, was their willingness to acknowledge racism and act on their understanding, rather than ignore it. When it came to the realities of race in America, SNCC workers and volunteers were not saints, she insists, but merely pragmatists.

Although active engagement was the commonality that united the SNCC workers and volunteers, even this point was a sticky one, as Belfrage goes on to explain that “[i]mplicit in all the songs, tears, speeches, work, laughter, was the knowledge secure in both them and us that ultimately we could return to a white refuge. The struggle was their life sentence, implanted in their pigment, and ours for only so long as we cared to identify with them.”¹²⁷ Here Belfrage argues that the rhetorical and instrumental discourses that circulated between the Freedom Summer participants were self-consciously overdetermined. Whether singing “We Shall Overcome,” comforting each other in the wake of death and violence, editing memos or filing forms, the fact of America’s racist past, present, and future and its implications for each individual echoed through each word spoken between black and white activists. This fact shaped each party’s role in the movement, for which blacks felt resentful and whites felt guilty. Among the guilty stands Belfrage herself, which she declares in her shift from third person to first person pronoun use in her discussion of the volunteers.

At the beginning of the reflection Belfrage’s voice is akin to that of an omniscient narrator, characterized by objective direction toward the subject and impersonal contact on the side of the addressee.¹²⁸ But when she begins discussing the largely unacknowledged temporary nature of the white volunteers’ relationship to the movement, she shifts to collective contact, still writing *about* the tension between black and white participants, but now also speaking *with* the other white volunteers. Although she is still

practicing the rhetorical technique of rivaling, sympathetically acknowledging each viewpoint while resisting a strong emotional attachment to one or the other, at this point Belfrage locates herself within the conversation and begins to practice the moves central to rhetorical listening. In this passage she begins to stand under discourses, which Ratcliffe defines as “identifying the various discourses embodied within each of us and then listening to hear and imagine how these discourses might affect not only ourselves but others.”¹²⁹ In characterizing Freedom Summer’s discourses as overdetermined, Belfrage nods to the ways in which the nation’s racist discourses are embodied in herself and in her fellow freedom fighters and identifies the impact that those discourses have on her own standpoint (and that of the other white volunteers) with respect to the discourses she names. The white volunteers relate to those discourses from a standpoint of voluntary commitment while the black SNCC workers relate to them from a standpoint of mandatory commitment.

Guilt over the ability to leave the project is a common sentiment among volunteers anthologized in Martínez’s collection. One volunteer refers to himself as a “Northern white intellectual snob,” and admits self-consciously to his desire to hear the 7 Mahler symphonies his friend had written to him about and to escape what he sees as the cultural sterility of Mississippi.¹³⁰ Many volunteers decided to stay in Mississippi after the summer, stating a strong sense of urgency. One volunteer explains that “[t]here is a certainty, when you are working in Mississippi, that it is important for you to be alive and to be alive doing what you are doing.”¹³¹ Another volunteer, guilty about returning home, tells her reader that parties being planned for returning volunteers are “a big mistake,”

arguing that “the people who really need support or deserve ‘glory’ (if anyone deserves glory) are those who are staying.”¹³²

Belfrage goes on to discuss the white volunteers’ struggle to make sense of the anger that she perceived black activists to express toward them due to their ability to leave the struggle if they so desired:

Over and over in Ohio they had told us that we were all the victims of the very prejudice we fought. How could this be so? We were forced to examine ourselves meticulously for symptoms of the disease. Yet those who exonerated themselves could see no contradiction in their innocence and their parallel desire for gratitude. Why gratitude? The battle was as much ours as theirs, and to expect thanks was somewhere to feel superior to that battle. But we didn’t *have* to come, did we?¹³³

Here Belfrage again juxtaposes what Flower calls rival hypotheses, the black activists’ view of the white volunteers in the context of American racism, and the volunteers’ view of themselves. Many volunteers, she argues, insisted that they were not prejudiced but at the same time wanted gratitude for their presence in Mississippi. They, unlike most of America, had taken responsibility for challenging the country’s oppressive practices. And as she points out, they could have much more easily decided not to travel south on their own dimes to risk their lives. They could have stayed in the security of their own homes. Approached from the perspective of the individual volunteer, the desire for gratitude seems natural. But from the black activists’ perspective, the privileges that the volunteers enjoy are the result of white supremacy’s long history, and even the troubled sense of

entitlement that volunteers feel toward the comforts they are accustomed to suggest identification with white supremacy.

Recognizing this history, Belfrage acknowledges, leads to a sense of guilt in white progressives. “Was it guilt, after all,” she asks, “which lay behind the thousands of motivations a thousand volunteers produced for the television cameras?” She then goes back to a rivaling stance, fully dramatizing that possibility. “Try it. Yes, I feel guilty. I am guilty of the sins of the world, the sins of the past, the sins of the foreign [. . .].”¹³⁴ Belfrage’s use of the pronoun “I” indicates that she is speaking for herself as an individual. However, the abstract descriptions employed at this point still put forth a sense of collective, rather than personal contact, suggesting that the “I” here is also a hypothetical “I”, referring to any number of Freedom Summer volunteers in addition to the writer herself.

Following through with this train of thought, Belfrage considers what it would mean if guilt did indeed motivate the volunteers’ voyage south. Her description exemplifies the guilt side of what Ratcliffe calls the guilt/ blame logic. She explains that:

A common dysfunctional pattern is as follows: When white women feel guilty, their ears hear criticism not as an invitation to dialogue but as blame, and because an individual white woman knows that she is not personally responsible for the history of the social realm in which she has to dwell, she can refuse guilt and blame and, as a result, dismiss the initial criticism that triggered this narcissistic foray.¹³⁵

Viewed from this angle, Belfrage sees the Freedom Summer Project as a cycle of guilt and blame. Traveling south, she says, “is a pilgrimage to a foreign country; traveling

there, I can leave my guilt behind and atone for someone else's."¹³⁶ The hypocrisy Belfrage points out here is the same hypocrisy with which southern whites frequently accused the volunteers. Why travel to Mississippi when New York has plenty of its own problems? In the attempt to escape their guilt, she says, the volunteers just face more blame directed toward them from the black civil rights workers: "They understand what it's all about; and through them, a new guilt flourishes."¹³⁷

While she implicates herself in a guilt/ blame logic, I argue that by dwelling with the difficult questions that Freedom Summer brought up for her in her memoir, Belfrage actually practices the rhetorical strategy of "proceeding from within an accountability logic," which Ratcliffe names as the alternative to the cycle of guilt and blame.¹³⁸ "Because a logic of accountability focuses us on the present, with attention paid to the resonances of the past, a logic of accountability suggests an ethical imperative that, regardless of who is responsible for a current situation, asks us to recognize our privileges and nonprivileges and then act accordingly."¹³⁹ Despite the impulse to shut out the perspectives that might make her feel guilty, Belfrage acknowledges her own accountability to her fellow activists and her readers and delves into the difficult questions about the individual's relationship to a troubled collective past and present normally effaced by feelings of guilt. She finishes out her reflection by dramatizing another rival hypothesis:

Try that. I am the oppressor: I look the way he looks, the way America has decided one *should* look. Perhaps it is possible to reduce the question to one of appearances. I examine all the hatreds I have ever known. During the war I remember asking an adult to explain why Jews were being killed. The concept of

Herrenvolk was explained to me; I heard the word Aryan. “What are Aryans?” I asked, and the answer was: “People who look like you.” The Negro maid who brought me up, an old woman whose mother had been a slave, hated Jews. The Jewish mothers of my schoolmates hated me. My English relatives hated the lower classes. The lower classes hated Negroes. I have always felt as if I inhabited a place in the center of this circle, ringed round by it, untouched. But am I in too, linking them all together?¹⁴⁰

Starting from the posited notion that she is the oppressor, despite her reluctance to identify as such, Belfrage is able to identify the connection to history that she otherwise may have overlooked. In naming the stories she heard about Aryans and their explicit connection to her, Belfrage is practicing what Ratcliffe calls standing under discourses, or considering all of the discourses through which she has been socialized that are relevant to the question at hand. A crucial part of standing under discourses is acknowledging one’s standpoint in relation to those differences. The difficulty she experiences in her attempts to come to terms with the resentment directed toward her by black activists during Freedom Summer prompts Belfrage to reconsider her standpoint among the racially charged discourses that she remembers circling around her throughout her life. While she had previously assumed that she was innocent of all of the hatred she observed, thinking about them again from a responsibility logic forces her to reconsider her own role, as a middle class white woman, in the cycle of race and class oppression.

At the heart of the seemingly irreconcilable differences that Belfrage works out in her reflection is the difficulty that comes with attempts at identification across differences of power and privilege, and in this case, the difficulty that comes with white advocacy for

people of color. As she and the other volunteers discovered, that long journey to Mississippi did not exonerate them from their relationship to a long history of white privilege. Instead, it forced them to come face to face with the centrality white privilege had played in their lives and personalities without their knowledge. This unsettling fact is not only at the heart of Belfrage's reflection, but of many of the student volunteers' letters home as well. Regardless of whether they stayed in Mississippi or went home in time to start a new semester, the volunteers left Freedom Summer with more developed and more complicated views of their positionalities in a racist nation.

Chapter 2:
Cherished Children: How Black Activists Constructed the Volunteers

In her memoir, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Anne Moody recounts stories about growing up in a tiny, dilapidated plantation shack in Mississippi: babysitting her infant sister as a young child while her parents went off to work; living on beans and realizing only upon receiving leftovers from white homes that other people got to eat meat and vegetables for dinner every day; missing school because her parents could not afford the clothes necessary to send her there; resorting to cornbread when even beans became too expensive; later working in restaurants to support her efforts with the civil rights movement; and finally, losing tremendous amounts of weight and hair in her young adulthood due to the stress that came with fighting for civil rights with scarce resources in the wake of constant threats of violence toward her family as retribution for her activism.

Moody's powerful account ends as Freedom Summer begins. "When we walked in [to the COFO office in Jackson]," she writes, "I was again overwhelmed by all the excitement going on in the office. There were now about thirty white students standing around who had just arrived for the Summer Project."¹⁴¹ Although she is overwhelmed by the energy the volunteers bring to the office, Moody's excitement is offset by the wariness she feels after her consistent experiences of life-threatening activism resulting in massive resistance, moderate success, and broken spirits among her fellow freedom fighters. She concludes her memoir with an image of her sitting on a bus to Washington, DC, having been pulled unexpectedly from the Summer Project to go and testify to federal officials about human rights abuses in Mississippi. Listening to the other

passengers sing “*We shall overcome, We shall overcome/ We shall overcome some day,*” the final thoughts Moody offers are “I WONDER. I really WONDER.”¹⁴²

For the white volunteers, Freedom Summer was a deliberate step outside of the sterile but safe comfort zones of their northern homes and schools. It was a chance to take the knowledge they had acquired in the classroom into the streets. It was an opportunity for them to rethink the meaning of white supremacy and their relationship to it. For many of the volunteers, it was an experience that radically changed their goals and worldviews. But for the black activists who recruited and worked alongside the volunteers, as Moody’s memoir shows, Freedom Summer was one short, albeit significant, chapter in a long story of subjection and resistance to unabating violence, poverty, deprivation, and oppression in the south and apathy in the rest of the country.

In Earnest N. Bracey’s biography of Fannie Lou Hamer, for instance, Freedom Summer marks a turning point in the life of a Mississippi sharecropper who suffered similar physical and educational deprivation to that which Moody describes, in addition to other graphic instances of unthinkable violence. Bracey writes that Hamer was subject to forced sterilization in response to a small, non-cancerous uterine tumor, which according to Harriet A. Washington was “so common that in the South, rendering black women infertile without their knowledge during other surgery was so common that the procedure was called a ‘Mississippi appendectomy.’”¹⁴³ Scarred but not defeated by such inhumane treatment, Hamer worked tirelessly with SNCC to demand her right to vote, for which she was beaten within an inch of her life in a Mississippi jail. Hamer helped to found and lead the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), an alternative to the white supremacist Mississippi Democratic party elected into office by white voters,

during Freedom Summer. In hopes of being officially recognized by the Democratic National Convention, Hamer testified in front of their credentials committee on behalf of the MFDP, her strong, resonant voice calmly recounting the violent injustices she had recently experienced, a poor farmer from rural Mississippi laying the facts before an audience of federal politicians in suits. Because of that speech, Bracey Declares, “The 1964 Democratic Convention made Fannie Lou Hamer a national celebrity, a national hero.”¹⁴⁴

While they receive little specific discussion in Hamer’s biography, Hamer clearly appreciated and admired the volunteers, and saw them as agents of much needed change. In the foreword to Sugarman’s *Stranger at the Gates*, Hamer writes, “If Christ were here today, He would be just like these young people who the southerners called radicals and beatniks. Christ was called a Beelzebub, called so many names. But He was Christ. I can hardly express what those students and that summer meant to me—what it meant to the people who didn’t dare say anything.”¹⁴⁵ The volunteers’ solidarity with Hamer and her neighbors took on a historic, spiritual dimension for many Mississippi residents who, until their arrival, had suffered consistent abuse and deprivation at the hands of local whites with nearly no notice from the outside world.

But SNCC workers James Forman and Stokely Carmichael construct the volunteers within a less spiritual and more pragmatic frame in their autobiographies, as does Eric Burner’s biography of Robert Parris (Bob) Moses. For these activists, Freedom Summer was a three month long rhetorical act, and the volunteers were seen as what David R. Russell calls tools-in-use for the civil rights movement activity system.

Drawing from activity theory, Russell defines an activity system as “any ongoing, object-directed, historically-conditioned, dialectically-structured, tool-mediated human interaction: a family, a religious organization, an advocacy group, a political movement, a course of study, a school, a discipline, a research laboratory a profession, and so on.”¹⁴⁶ The three components of an activity system as a unit of analysis, according to Russell, are subjects, mediational means (tools), and object/ motive – outcomes.

The subject “is the agent(s) whose behavior (including that kind of behavior called discourse) the analyst is focusing on. The identity of both individuals and collective groups is conceived in social terms as the history of their involvements with various activity systems, because both individuals and collective groups can be involved with multiple activity systems.” The object/ motive is the “ ‘raw material’ upon which the subject(s) bring to bear various tools in ongoing interaction with other person(s): the ‘object of study’ of some discipline, for example (e.g., cells in cytology, literary works in literary criticism) and the direction of that activity, its purpose (e.g., analyzing cells, analyzing literary works).” Tools “refer to material objects in use by some individual or group for some object/ motive to accomplish some action with some outcome [. . .]” Russell lists as examples of possible tools “machines, writing, speaking, gesture, architecture, music, etc.”¹⁴⁷

Analysis of SNCC activists’ biographies and autobiographies, original volunteer recruitment materials, and other accounts of the Freedom Summer Project using Russell’s theory of activity systems reveals that the volunteers’ white privilege was appealing to the SNCC activists when the volunteers functioned as tools-in-use, but problematic when they functioned as agents.

Inventing Freedom Summer: The Opportunities and Limitations of an Integrated Movement

In *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*, James Forman begins his chapter on the Mississippi Summer Project by indicating that its purpose was to establish the kind of identification across racial and economic lines that had been impossible through other means. Forman opens this chapter with four paragraphs that all begin with the phrase “We often wondered,” employing the rhetorical device of *empimone*, defined by Richard Lanham as “[f]requent repetition of a phrase or question, in order to dwell on a point.”¹⁴⁸ The point that this repeated phrase emphasizes is that SNCC activists spent much time contemplating the question of their social position vis-à-vis potentially sympathetic white Americans, and how to mobilize them as movement allies, which characterized the relationship between SNCC and this population as an important but complicated one.

“In SNCC we had often wondered:” Forman declares, “How do you make more people in this country share our experiences, understand what it is to look in the face of death because you’re black, feel hatred for the federal government that always makes excuses for the brutality of Southern cops and state troopers.”¹⁴⁹ In this question, by “people” it is quite clear that Forman is referring to those who are neither the black people who experience terror nor the violent whites who perpetrate that terror, but rather white people who, because they are not directly confronted or, to their knowledge, negatively impacted by the atrocities that Forman describes on a daily basis, tend to ignore it. While Forman creates a sharp contrast between “we,” specifically SNCC and presumably also the black southerners on whose behalf they engage in activism, and “them,” the privileged white audience for the Summer Project, he also envisions the potential for shared feeling. These potential allies could feel outrage toward brutalizing

police and an enabling federal government, but only if they experience a taste of the adversity Forman describes.

The barriers to such shared experiences, though, are great, as Forman suggests in the next paragraph. “We often wondered: How do you make a fat, rich country like the United States understand that it has starving people within its own boundaries, people without land, people working on Senator Eastland’s plantation for three dollars a day or less.”¹⁵⁰ Forman suggests here a major barrier to identification: the Summer Project’s intended readers are beneficiaries of a system that encourages them to avoid noticing the starving and disenfranchised by keeping them fat, rich, and comfortable. After all, it can be much harder for those held up by a system to criticize that system. While they understood how the privilege barrier functions, Forman makes clear that SNCC certainly did not see this barrier as an excuse for inaction.

“We often wondered: How can you make the people in the United States exercise their responsibility to rid themselves of racist politicians who fight every progressive measure introduced in the halls of Congress?”¹⁵¹ Political participation, Forman indicates here, is not a choice. Instead, those who benefit from the system are *responsible* for using the resources that come with their privilege to make that system less corrupt and more beneficial for all citizens, rather than just for themselves. Those who do not accept that responsibility are, in their inaction, irresponsible and by extension unethical.

Finally, Forman concludes his set of questions with “We often wondered: How can we find the strength to continue our work in the face of the poverty of the people, to do everything that shouts to be done in the absence of so many resources?”¹⁵² The answer that many readers are bound to give after reading the previous question is, “Tap into the

resources being hoarded by fat, rich America!” While Forman doesn't say directly that this is his plan, he seems to imply it in the next paragraph, consisting only of one sentence: “The Mississippi Summer Project was an attempt to answer those questions.”¹⁵³

“Bob Moses presented the idea [for the Summer Project],” says Forman, “at the December, 1963, meeting of SNCC’s executive committee, the idea in large part based on the successful participation of Yale and Stanford students in the mock election of November, 1963.”¹⁵⁴ In his autobiography, Stokely Carmichael provides more detail about the 1963 mock election and why it was considered a success. Despite all of SNCC’s efforts and all of black Mississippi’s suffering, according to Carmichael, “not many black voters- probably no more than maybe three hundred total- had been registered in two and a half years of hard work.”¹⁵⁵ Because of this very limited success, SNCC decided to take a different approach and hold a “freedom election,” running its own candidates and inviting black Mississippi residents unable to vote in state elections to vote for a candidate of their choice. Carmichael explains that the election’s purpose was largely rhetorical. Although obviously the representatives chosen through the freedom vote would not hold any political power recognized by the state or federal government, it would “destroy Eastland’s myth that ‘Ouah Nigras are happy. They have no interest . . . , etc.’”¹⁵⁶ The purpose of the freedom election was to gather evidence to convincingly refute the opponent's “happy darky” claim to a yet unnamed audience.

Because the election exhausted SNCC’s human power, “A young Stanford professor, Allard Lowenstein, volunteered to organize a group of student volunteers to come down and work on the campaign. Bob accepted the offer and forty students from Yale and Stanford came into the state for three weeks leading up to the vote.”¹⁵⁷ The

incorporation of these volunteers was successful not only because they helped with various projects, but also because their presence brought national attention to Mississippi. Carmichael remembers with surprise that during the three weeks that these well-connected students were in the state, violence in Mississippi actually decreased. He continues that “naturally, the national media had followed them to the state. Also, there was suddenly a visible if temporary FBI presence at the rallies. Bob later explained to me, ‘That was the first time that I realized that the violence could actually be controlled. Turned, y’know, on and off. That it wasn’t totally random [. . .]’¹⁵⁸ Cooperating with white students from top schools during the mock elections revealed that reaching across racial and class lines for help with the movement presented several important advantages. Well-educated students brought real skills that would be useful to the movement. They brought financial resources. But most importantly, they brought national attention. Not only would the students’ personal social circles be far more likely to support the project in Mississippi financially and rhetorically, but the citizens with voting and purchasing power could identify with the white students. Therefore, these students brought media attention—their presence in the violent south made an excellent news story, and with them came protection from the federal government, as harm to these students would illustrate neglect on the part of the nation’s leaders.

The primary audience for Freedom Summer, then, was not white Mississippians, as many would assume and as contemporary representations of the civil rights movement tend to suggest. The long and largely unsuccessful battle SNCC had waged in Mississippi up to that point indicated that Mississippi whites did not meet the criteria for an appropriate audience of a rhetorical act, as they were not at all open to SNCC’s message

or capable of being swayed. Faced with Mississippi whites' utter intransigence, the SNCC activists realized that they needed to appeal to a federal audience whose values were more closely aligned with their own. While the immediate argument Freedom Summer made was that segregation and voter suppression was unjust and the immediate audience was Mississippi southerners, the project's organizers did not hold out much hope of moving that audience. The project's primary audience consisted of the federal government and potentially sympathetic white people in other parts of the country, and the argument was not that segregation was wrong, as this audience already accepted that premise, but that the segregation and oppression in Mississippi was so egregious that the audience should give it immediate and sustained attention and support.

With this audience in mind, the white Freedom Summer volunteers were conceived originally as tools-in-use for the civil rights movement activity system. More specifically, their white privilege was a tool-in-use. One object upon which the SNCC workers wanted to act was public policy at the state and national level. Media attention affects voters' opinions, which can affect public policy. Money from donors provides the sustenance necessary for the movement to keep functioning, raising awareness, and educating and mobilizing disenfranchised citizens so that they might more effectively intervene in public policy. FBI presence in Mississippi represents an achievement on the part of the movement- it indicates prioritization of civil rights activism in Mississippi on the part of the federal government.

In order to achieve these results, SNCC had to persuade middle-class and wealthy, forward thinking Americans and the federal government that represented them to support their cause. As Aristotle argues, "it makes much difference in regard to persuasion [. . .]

that the speaker seem to be a certain kind of person and that his hearers suppose him to be disposed toward them in a certain way and in addition if they, too, happen to be disposed in a certain way (favorably or unfavorably) to him”¹⁵⁹ SNCC’s target audience, they knew, was predisposed to be concerned about its children, and therefore much more likely to turn their attention to their efforts in Mississippi. The nation’s identification with its privileged white youth, then, was a tool useful enough to SNCC that it made the volunteers’ presence worthwhile, regardless of what they did as agents/ subjects. Moses clearly articulated this rhetorical aim to James Atwater in an interview for the *Saturday Evening Post*, saying that “These students bring the rest of the country with them. They’re from good schools and their parents are influential. The interest of the country is awakened, and when that happens, the Government responds to that interest.”¹⁶⁰ In other words, any of the intended effects of Freedom Summer as a rhetorical act were not expected to result from specific actions that white volunteers took within the movement activity system. Rather, just their presence in Mississippi was expected to produce these results.

As subjects in the movement activity system, full-time civil rights workers like Carmichael already knew that the volunteers would be problematic because of the way their social positioning and involvement in other activity systems affected their perceptions. Carmichael says of the Freedom Election that:

A few of the volunteers—not many but a few—were almost sent home. I’m not sure, maybe one or two were in fact asked to leave. Why? Apart from a misguided and dangerous sense of entitlement and class prerogative, acting as though nothing could happen to *them*, a few seemed incapable of respecting the

experience and accepting the authority of local staff. Whether this was because the staff was black, young, or merely local, I don't know or much care. But it was antithetical to everything that was most important to SNCC. And it is also why so many of the local staff at first resisted the idea for the Summer Project.

One of our best project directors was a brother named Dickie Flowers. He was smart, sassy, disciplined, and very effective. Dickie was well respected in SNCC. Forman said that Dickie came to him quite distressed before the Summer Project. "Look Jim," he said, "I'm the project director. You know I know what I'm doing. Yet when those volunteers were here, I all the time found myself saying I'd been to damn Morehouse. Jim, now you know I ain't been to Mo'house or no house."¹⁶¹

While on one hand the volunteers' white privilege was a useful tool to SNCC, on the other hand, their identity as subjects marked by involvement in white, privileged activity systems outside of the movement like rich, well connected families, prep schools, and ivy-league universities made them something of a liability. The financial and rhetorical support of privileged whites at a distance was useful, while embodied white privilege within the movement was jolting. Good as their intentions may have been, the volunteers Carmichael mentions exhibit on an individual level the traits of the white supremacist society SNCC worked so hard to fight. The tendency to think of their ways of doing and knowing were the only acceptable or respectable ways, and to expect deference to their expertise everywhere they went is the same mentality that allowed for denial of the right to self governance for poor blacks in the first place.

It was partly this tension and SNCC's subsequent impulse to limit white involvement in the organization that urged Bob Moses to push for the Freedom Summer Project. Responding to minutes of a SNCC meeting he had missed, delineating strict limits to white participation in Mississippi SNCC projects, Moses argued that the inclusion of white people was important to SNCC's rhetorical aim. An integrated movement, he argued, "changes the whole complexion of what you're doing, so it isn't any longer Negro fighting white, it's a question of rational people against irrational people . . . I always thought that one thing we can do for the country that no one else could do is to be above the race issue."¹⁶² In this statement, as in Foreman's, the white volunteers are constructed as tools-in-use, serving as means for the agents, SNCC, to communicate a message, the possibility of transcending the race issue, to a secondary audience, all American citizens, who held sway over their primary audience, federal politicians.

Moses's protest against limiting white participation in SNCC and his proposing the Summer Project resulted in countless tension-filled debates in muggy, smoke-filled rooms. While the Summer Project was controversial and many SNCC workers feared its impact on the local activists and their sense of ownership, Moses, in his quiet way, was a powerful enough figure that he gained enough support to launch the project. The next big step was to recruit volunteers, and the recruitment materials reflect SNCC's conception of the volunteers as rhetorical tools as well as their intention to maximize the rhetorical impact of the volunteers' white privilege.

Inventing the Volunteers: Identification in SNCC's Recruitment Materials

When SNCC representatives traveled to university and college campuses across the nation to speak to students about the upcoming Summer Project, they likely handed out the document entitled “Memorandum: on the SNCC Mississippi Summer Project, 1964.”¹⁶³ The recruitment memorandum’s overall purpose is to spark interest in the Summer Project and to recruit volunteers. A prominent strategy that SNCC uses to persuade its audience to volunteer for the project is the implication of preexisting identification between writer and reader.

The label “memorandum” right away suggests identification between SNCC and its readers, because memo genre traditionally mediates communication between insiders, for example coworkers within a company or members of an organization. That SNCC labeled its recruitment document “memo” rather than “letter” or “pamphlet” suggests a preexisting identification, prompting readers to think of themselves as participants in a groundbreaking movement.

The memo’s three introductory paragraphs function as informative rhetoric, giving an overview of SNCC’s activities in Mississippi, beginning in August of 1961. That these paragraphs fall into the category of informative rather than deliberative rhetoric further suggests identification with readers because the lack of argumentative function regarding the memo’s framing generalizations¹⁶⁴ implies a shared attitude toward the subject of civil rights between writer and audience.

The first paragraph further positions readers as insiders by indicating that they are assumed to know what SNCC stands for, as the acronym is not once spelled out, nor is the organization’s overall purpose or leadership structure explained. The memo does not assume extensive knowledge of SNCC’s activities in Mississippi, however, because it

explains these, if briefly. After the first registration drives, the memo states, “[m]any hardships were met and overcome in the difficult time that followed, and eventually SNCC workers were able to spread their activity to the Delta and then the entire state. By the fall of 1963 SNCC had expanded into all five of Mississippi’s congressional districts and had joined with CORE, SCLC, and the NAACP in forming a statewide organization called the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO).”¹⁶⁵

This narrative serves several purposes. First, it continues to inform readers of SNCC’s progress in Mississippi. Second, it suggests the organization’s notable success within a short period of time and indicates that, through partnerships with other civil rights organizations, they have created a system of support for those they aim to recruit. Third, they indicate that activism in Mississippi is difficult, presenting many “hardships,” but leaves readers guessing as to what those “hardships” might be, perking their desire to learn more about the movement they are being invited to join.

The second paragraph, which introduces the need for SNCC to expand its efforts beyond voter registration, provides more insight into SNCC’s construction of its audience. “It was realized,” the memo states, “that in order to prepare Mississippi for real Democracy, not only literacy programs were needed, but also programs of social and political education.”¹⁶⁶ Here the memo writers strengthen identification with their readers by invoking a key American ideal, “Democracy,” as a motivating factor for their work. Readers, then, are assumed not only to be committed to this principle, but to agree that there are undeniable barriers to its enactment in Mississippi that must be overcome.

The intended readers, then, are constructed as patriotic and racially progressive. They see the connection between their own freedom and that of poor black people in

Mississippi, and do not need to be persuaded that a system that discriminates based on race is not truly democratic. The next sentence, “In addition, retaliation by court authorities forced SNCC to organize food and clothing drives for near-starving families,”¹⁶⁷ introduces the remainder of the second paragraph’s subject and tone. In juxtaposing the realization about democracy with this sentence, the memo makes clear that the official powers that be in Mississippi actively work against democracy, and that support from equally powerful agents is necessary to make any progress.

The implication that the memo’s intended readership represents is also identified with powerful agents might indicate to some readers that this is an opportunity for them to become heroes to Mississippi families. Part of this opportunity for heroism comes from their connection, also suggested in this sentence, to the fat, rich element of the United States to which Forman refers. In addition, the description of desperate, starving families systematically denied food and clothing (even in the fat, rich America with which the memo’s intended audience are so familiar) invokes compassionate readers who can be moved to action by their sympathy for others.

The next section calls for “scores of students, teachers, technicians, nurses, artists, and legal advisors to come to Mississippi this summer to staff a wide range of programs,” and describes each program: “freedom schools, community centers, voter registration, and special projects” in some detail.¹⁶⁸ The description of freedom schools envisions liberatory pedagogical situations consisting of small classrooms full of mostly high school students, discussing a wide variety of subjects. “Whenever possible,” the memo reads, “studies will be related to the society in which the students live.” In other words, the Freedom Schools would prepare students to become educated, empowered citizens

capable of participating effectively in an emerging democracy. The community centers would also provide a host of educational programs for community members including “pre-natal care, infant care, and general hygiene [. . . as well as] literacy, adult education and vocational training,” again aiming to help citizens to become more powerful agents in their own lives and those of their neighbors.¹⁶⁹

The voter registration project, to which three paragraphs of logistical description are given, is positioned as the Summer Project’s central aim, and the effort to which the most humanpower will be dedicated. “The struggle for freedom in Mississippi,” this section opens, “can only be won by a combination of action within the state and a heightened awareness throughout the rest of the country of the need for massive federal intervention to ensure the voting rights of Negroes. This summer’s program will work toward both these objectives.”¹⁷⁰ This sentence reiterates that inequality is not just a southern problem, but a national one, again insisting on the existing identification between the readers and the oppressed citizens of Mississippi. Voter registration strategies aim not only to mobilize southern black people, but also to convince potentially sympathetic audiences outside of Mississippi to put more resources toward the problem of discrimination in the state. Because federal intervention is a stated aim, readers with connections to the federal government or to people with influence over federal politicians learn through this description that their participation would be especially valued.

The special projects all call for well-educated and socially savvy students. The “research project” calls for research into how economic, political, and social interests in the state are bound up in and dependent upon racial oppression. The “law student project” calls for “at least 100 law students” to “launch a massive legal offensive against the

official tyranny of the state of Mississippi.”¹⁷¹ The readers addressed by these two projects are clearly defined by specific skills in research and law.

The special project that is most interesting in terms of audience is the “white communities” project. “Until now,” the description opens, “there has been no systematic attempt by people interested in the elimination of hate and bigotry to work within the white communities of the deep South. It is the intention of the Mississippi Summer Project to do just that.”¹⁷² The memo does not explain why such an effort has not yet been made, and there is probably no need to explain. If the intended readers know nothing else about SNCC’s work in Mississippi, they would at least know that Mississippi’s white population is hostile to it. Segregation, as they saw it, was part of the fabric of their culture and everyone, including “their Negroes” liked it that way. SNCC’s intervention in the segregationist system up to that point had provoked nothing but resentment and violence from Mississippi’s white community.

However, the memo acknowledges that gaining support from local whites is crucial to the movement’s progress in Mississippi, and points out that “While almost all Negroes in Mississippi are denied the right to vote, statistics clearly indicate that a majority of whites are excluded as well. In addition, poverty and illiteracy can be found in abundance among Mississippi whites.”¹⁷³ This information seems to be aimed at two audiences at once. The first audience is potential Summer Project volunteers and, through them, white Mississippi. This sentence acknowledges that the “white communities” project is risky and therefore a hard sell. It anticipates the question, “What could I possibly say to suspicious white Mississippians to persuade them to go against their

mayor, chief of police, pastor, etc. and support the project?” and gives potential volunteers one important talking point that they’ll be able to use.

Even armed with empowering facts, volunteers working in white communities are in a precarious position. Any mention of civil rights is likely to be met with an invitation to leave. Implying identification between black and white Mississippians by suggesting to white southerners that they, like their black neighbors, are indeed also disenfranchised, would likely be taken as an insult by many and provoke strong racist responses, since, as scholars in whiteness studies have noted, proximity to the bottom of the social rung makes perceived racial superiority all the more important to poor whites.¹⁷⁴ Due to this sensitive situation, the memo outlines in no uncertain terms the profile necessary for volunteers to undertake this special project. “In the past year, a significant number of Southern white students have been drawn to the Movement. Using students from upper Southern states like Tennessee, and occasionally native Mississippians, SNCC hopes to develop programs within Mississippi’s white communities.” Volunteers working in the white communities project must be white southerners themselves. They must possess characteristics with which Mississippi whites can immediately identify. They must dress and speak in ways that the white citizens recognize as similar to their own. They must be able to converse in ways with which the white citizens are familiar in order to put them at ease and gain their trust before even broaching SNCC’s talking points. The message is consistent throughout the memo: the easier it is for the Summer Project’s target audiences to identify with the volunteers, the better. The description of the “white communities” project concludes with a sense of urgency. “This project will be pilot and experimental and the results are unpredictable. But the effort to organize and educate whites in the

direction of democracy and decency can no longer be delayed.”¹⁷⁵ Those southern white students who agree with SNCC’s aim are badly needed as agents in the Summer Project, as no one else would be effective in that position. Identification, the memo makes clear, is everything in Mississippi.

Until this point, the memo is written in what Beale calls “objective direction.”¹⁷⁶ He defines “direction” as “a concept that refers to a [written] monologue’s relative degree of alignment with or direction toward the three other operational components of a communication situation—author, subject, and audience. Accordingly, the three modal ‘directions’ are *expressive*, *objective*, and *affective*.”¹⁷⁷ Objective direction, which Beale says is most commonly used in scientific and instrumental discourse, “is distinguished by a relative paucity of self-referring expressions; by referential vocabulary; [. . .] and by an overall pattern of coherence that relates to the logical, temporal, or spatial dimensions of the subject more than to the author’s reactions to it.”¹⁷⁸ The “self” most commonly referred to in this section is SNCC, as opposed to “I” or “we,” (although the ‘royal we’ is invoked to explain the research project’s rationale) and individual feelings and opinions are not expressed. The objective direction used in the memo’s opening depicts SNCC as a unified activity system with a history that has led to well-planned, well-reasoned, and uncontested projects for the summer into which volunteers can confidently enter.

The direction changes in the final section of the memo, which is marked with centered text, underlined and in all caps, “HOW YOU CAN PARTICIPATE”. At this point, the direction moves to somewhere between *expressive*, which “is characterized by the sense or illusion of personal involvement on the part of the writer; by language heavily laden with subjective, evaluative terminology; by such overt markers as *I, I feel, I*

believe; and by an overall pattern of coherence that relates more closely to private associations of the author than to independently discernable features of subject or method,” and *affective*, which, among other things, makes “frequent use of the second person pronoun.”¹⁷⁹ With frequent use of both “We” and “you,” this section has the feel of a conversation between the memo’s writers and its audience as they negotiate details of potential participation.

The heading is followed by an introductory paragraph stating an April 15 deadline, then four numbered items. The first invites anyone who sees him/ herself as qualified for any of the projects described in the memo to apply. It then states an age requirement of 18, adding that “all those under 21 must have the consent of their parents,”¹⁸⁰ which indicates that they expect many of their participants to be undergraduate college students. The second item explains that, because of a scarcity of funds in SNCC, participants must fund their own participation in the project, bringing \$150 with them to cover their own costs for the summer. While the memo acknowledges that this fee could present financial hardship for many readers, the expectation that readers will be able to foot the bill positions them as relatively well off. This requirement invokes potential volunteers’ membership in other activity systems—schools, neighborhoods, families and the like—whose financially solvent and politically powerful members make up part of the Summer Project’s primary audience.

The memo’s intended readers’ privileged economic situations are directly contrasted with another population of potential volunteer recruits:

One of the reasons we have made this decision is that we are trying to recruit as many Southern Negro students as possible. Many of these students will not be

able to work with us if they cannot be provided with money for the fall semester. We have therefore committed ourselves to trying to provide scholarship money for these students. With this added budget for the summer program in Mississippi, we will not be able to meet these demands without asking support from Northern participants.¹⁸¹

“Southern Negro” students’ involvement in the project, readers can conclude, is important for similar reasons that the participation southern white students described above is important. SNCC’s driving philosophy, as described in Barbara Ransby’s biography of Ella Baker, is that power comes from communities working together to assert their own agency.¹⁸² Since a primary goal of the Mississippi Summer Project is to mobilize black Mississippians, the volunteers encouraging voter registration should, as much as possible, be part of the same communities in which they are working. The constituents should be able to identify with the volunteers and trust that they also are risking their own security to fight for greater political representation. Students from those communities do not have money or direct access to people with money, and are not part of this particular memo’s readership. The memo’s northern readers are expected to understand this dilemma and use the resources that come with their privileged positions to help SNCC to address it.

The audience for the memo’s final section, “Fund Raising,” seems to shift from those students who might be willing to travel to Mississippi to other parties who might be willing to act with the volunteers by supporting the project in other ways, specifically by carrying out fundraising on their respective campuses. This section lists materials like buttons, stickers, and songbooks that SNCC has available for fundraising and requests

further ideas. It directs readers' actions even further by suggesting two possible goals for campus fundraising. First, it recommends that, "Each campus could set a goal for the support of one or more summer field staff. We estimate this at \$150."¹⁸³ In addition to sending students from their campuses to Mississippi, northern colleges can lend support to those volunteers by funding a staff member to help them. Second, appealing to their readers' value of education, the memo works to garner support for students less well off than those this memo addresses, explaining that, "Scholarship money for Southern Negro students to enable them to continue their education next year could be another goal. We estimate that the average would be \$400 per student for one semester."¹⁸⁴ The recruitment memo's alternately informative and imperative tones, and alternately objective and affective direction invokes a well-connected community of readers who may not be very familiar with SNCC's work in Mississippi, but who agree in principle with their goals. The memo encourages participation in a number of ways, both direct, through volunteering, and indirect, through fundraising. It anticipates that one volunteer's participation in the Mississippi Summer Project will generate support from classmates and professors on his college campus.

Just as northern, white volunteers' involvement in the Summer Project was expected to generate concern and financial support for the project from the students' alma mater, so too was it expected to spark interest from the volunteers' financially solvent and politically powerful mothers and fathers. An undated memo distributed by the New York SNCC office entitled "GUIDELINES FOR ACTION FOR PARENTS OF NEW YORK AREA STUDENTS GOING TO MISSISSIPPI"¹⁸⁵ aims to encourage and direct that interest. Whereas the recruitment memo combines multiple directions toward its

audience, subject, and author, the memo to parents strictly employs affective direction.

According to Beale, affective monologue:

May be characterized by evaluative and incitive terminology; by a high frequency of imperative forms; by affective imagery; by the frequent use of the second person pronoun; or by series of short, clipped locutions – either sentences, fragments, or sentence modifiers- designed to emphasize feeling or imagery over logical and syntactic connection, and attempting to engender what Burke has termed ‘formal appeal.’ *Affective* is the dominant ‘direction’ of consumer advertising.¹⁸⁶

The memo’s direction reinforces SNCC’s intent to fully capitalize upon the volunteers’ identification with financially and politically powerful activity systems outside of the movement. While the memo doesn’t necessarily emphasize feeling over logical connection, it certainly assumes that readers are approaching the memo with strong feelings. As parents of young adults engaged in dangerous political work far from home, the memo’s intended readers, while proud of their children, are also very worried about their safety and want to protect them, but feel unable to do so. The pronoun, “you,” is frequently used, and the entire memo is written in imperative form. The short, direct sentences suggest to readers that they should act with urgency, similar to consumer advertising, as Beale points out. While the actions that the memo encourages are clearly more noble than the purchase of consumer goods, that the memo so closely conforms to advertising’s preferred direction is significant in that it assumes to have as much persuasive power over its financially and politically potent readers as commercials do over their own audience.

After the title, this one-page memo forgoes any introduction and proceeds to a list of six action items, stated as imperatives rather than suggestions. The document's brevity implies that, due to their close identification with the Summer Project's volunteers, its stated readers not only do not need to be convinced that their involvement in the movement is important, but that they are already looking for ways that they can support the movement and promote safety for project participants: their own children and the children of their neighbors. The first action item reads:

You should immediately inform your congressmen and senators that your son or daughter is going to Mississippi, and ask them to show their interest in their welfare by sending requests to the President and Attorney General for Federal protection. In form [*sic*] the Mayor of your community and local officials.¹⁸⁷

This item achieves several ends at once. First, it empowers parents who might feel helpless. While they cannot ensure their children's safety in ways that they are accustomed to doing as parents, the readers, as voters, have sway over politicians, who have the resources to protect their children. Second, the item's urgent tone suggests that the readers' intervention in federal politics may be the difference between their children's relative safety and their unmitigated exposure to the violence of white Mississippians. Third, it anticipates a tertiary readership of federal politicians, suggesting that if they do *not* urge the President and Attorney General to send protection to Mississippi, then New York federal congressmen and senators are not interested in the welfare of their constituents' children and therefore not worthy of their vote. The second, third, and fourth action items reiterate the importance of federal protection in Mississippi, urging

readers to engage their friends, churches, synagogues, clubs, etc. in petitioning the government for federal protection in Mississippi.

Action item number five reiterates the assumption that the northern volunteers come from financially well-to-do social circles, as it urges readers to, “Ask friends in your community to begin raising funds to help support SNCC for the summer and to help support the Summer Project itself. A contribution in any amount will be of help.” The memo then gives examples of what contributions from northern supporters can achieve. The suggested amounts range from \$5, which “will supply school materials for one day student for the entire summer,” to \$3,000, which “will buy one used bus for transporting vote workers and registrants.” The memo concludes with action item six, which encourages parents to join their children in volunteering their time to work for SNCC, but in the New York office. They explain that, “Our activities will increase while the Summer Project is going on, and we will be in need of regular volunteers to help us handle the Northern end of the Mississippi Project.”¹⁸⁸ Instead of sitting idly by to worry, this item suggests, parents can join a nationwide community of activists.

Even the applications created for the project emphasize the volunteers’ social connections as much as their own skills and abilities. In one Summer Project application¹⁸⁹, volunteers are asked to, “List your Congressmen and Senators,” to “List your hometown and city, or college area newspapers, indicating frequency of publication, and address,” and to list people to contact for bail-bond, among other social contacts, all before they are asked, as the 10th item on the application, to, “List your specific skills and experiences which may be useful in the Summer Project.” That this question is underlined in the application emphasizes its importance, but the fact that it comes only

after nine questions about the volunteers' social networks suggest that the volunteers' connections constitute much of their appeal to the movement.

Volunteer Vetting: Tools become Agents

While the volunteers were most valuable to SNCC as rhetorical tools due to the American elite's identification with them, the fact remained that they were also individuals with whom the SNCC activists and black Mississippi citizens would have to live and work. So SNCC reconceptualized the volunteers as individual agents and potential agents of the movement activity system during the recruitment process, particularly in the spring of 1964, when they conducted interviews with applicants all over the country and made recommendations for acceptance or rejection.

The recommendations function as what Beale calls performative rhetoric (epideictic). Beale explains that the usual purpose of performative rhetoric is to "perform public acts of commemoration, declaration, celebration, recognition, among others, in connection with the functions and values of public institutions." Performative rhetoric, Beale continues, "does not merely say, argue, or allege something about the world of social action, but [. . .] constitutes a significant social action itself."¹⁹⁰ The applicant evaluations perform the social action of recommending or rejecting prospective Summer Project volunteers, basing their choices on the applicant's alignment with SNCC's values and with the project's goals.

The volunteer evaluations indicate that the interview and recommendations helped SNCC members to clarify the qualities that were desirable and undesirable in potential recruits. As Burner puts it, "Dorothy Zellner [. . .] gives a good indication of what SNCC was not looking for when writing an evaluation of one applicant":

I think she's arrogant. I explained about running Mrs. Hamer and that many people would raise eyebrows because she is an ex-sharecropper. She said, "Well, why are you running her?" Later she asked why we were running a *woman* for office . . . She also said she wouldn't participate in anything to which she was opposed. . . When I asked her if she had taken part in any of the civil rights activities here. . . she said no, she was writing her term thesis . . . (She) says that a reporter from *Life* approached her about doing a picture story during the summer-All-American Girl in Mississippi Freedom School sort of thing.¹⁹¹

Along with this assessment, Zellner provides further support for her rejection of this applicant, noting, "Just spoke with Bob Moses, and he told me to pick the willing ones (i.e., willing to do anything) and the *non*-rugged individualists."¹⁹² Moses's commentary on this applicant concisely reiterates SNCC's foundational values and applies them to the selection of volunteers. SNCC, nurtured into existence by seasoned civil rights activist Ella Baker, very much reflected her grassroots approach to activism. Unlike the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which was largely middle class and driven by individual, larger-than-life personalities, most notably Martin Luther King Jr., SNCC was group-centered, deliberately rejecting the rise to power of any one individual "leader."

As an organization, SNCC valued debate and consensus, and aimed to empower the most disenfranchised within its ranks. As Ransby writes in her biography of Ella Baker, "When SNCC broke with the largely middle-class, male-centered leadership of existing civil rights organizations, it stripped away the class-based and gender-biased notions of who should and could give leadership to the movement and the black community."¹⁹³ The volunteers recruited to help carry out SNCC's mission, then, needed

to show that their ways of knowing and doing were compatible with the organization's radical philosophy. The "All-American Girl" departed from SNCC's values and goals in a number of ways, enumerated by Zellner as reasons for her rejection.

The All-American Girl suggests several times over that she would not likely adapt well to SNCC's group-centered approach, indicating that not only is she individualistic, but also self-centered and, as Zellner argues, arrogant. First, in refusing to participate in anything to which she is opposed, the applicant places her own interests above the interests of the group, refusing to compromise even to help SNCC to achieve the goals that she presumably finds to be worthy, since she applied to participate in the project. Next, her admission to neglecting local civil rights activism in order to devote her full attention to her thesis suggests, again, that her academic ambitions come before the well being of the community. Finally, her mentioning the *Life* story prospect in her interview suggests that the All-American Girl is attention-seeking, reveling in her own star-potential more than thinking about the demands or dangers of participation in the Summer Project.

In addition to emphasizing her self-centeredness, the All-American Girl aligns her values with the middle class patriarchy in opposition to which SNCC defined itself. Fannie Lou Hamer's bid for office represents SNCC's deliberate resistance to race, class, and gender oppression, but the All-American Girl opposes her nomination on the basis of gender, and questions the value of running a candidate whose class status might be seen as unfit for a political official, revealing herself to not only be clueless about but directly opposed to SNCC's foundational values.

Andrew Goodman, the volunteer murdered alongside James Chaney and Michael Schwerner during Freedom Summer, is depicted as the American Girl's opposite in his evaluation. According to Emery et al:

SNCC worker Jim Monsonis commented on his interview with Andrew Goodman, whom he met on April 15: "I've talked with him here and feel he ought to be accepted. He is a white student with some political sophistication and knowledge about the state, is particularly interested in voter registration work and the political campaigns."¹⁹⁴

In his evaluation, Monsonis depicts Goodman as humble, earnestly interested in and educated about politics and Mississippi, and eager to help SNCC to achieve its political ends. Because his personality comes across as mild enough not to intrude on his conversation with Monsonis about the Summer Project, Goodman is depicted as someone who would likely adapt well to an activity system that emphasizes the group as opposed to the individual. As these two divergent evaluations show, the volunteers' social connections alone would not gain them admission into the Summer Projects. In addition to serving as tools in the movement, they also had to demonstrate that they, as agents, held values that aligned with SNCC's in order to be accepted into that activity system.

Even after vetting applicants and selecting only those whose values and aims most aligned with SNCC's, interactions between the SNCC activists and the white volunteers they recruited during the two week-long orientations indicated that the volunteers' absorption into the movement would not be seamless. The cultural logics that the volunteers brought with them to the Summer Project, drawn from the privileged, white, activity systems through which they had been primarily socialized, told the SNCC

activists that they may not be ready to go safely into Mississippi. The workers and volunteers addressed this conflict of cultural logics head on one tense night after the screening of an informational film.

Dramatizing Disidentification: Volunteer Orientation and the Infamous Film Incident

The differences in perception caused by differences in identification, in both the substantial and discursive senses, are dramatized in multiple descriptions of the same video, which is well known as the turning point in communication between the SNCC workers and volunteers at orientation. A volunteer describes the incident this way:

For the first two days there was a noticeable tension between the volunteers and the staff . . . Then, Tuesday night we saw a movie made by CBS Reports (“Mississippi and the Fifteenth Amendment”) describing how the Negro was discriminated against in Mississippi with regard to voting. Some of the film was absolutely ridiculous and ludicrous—a big, fat, really fat and ugly white county registrar prevents Negroes from voting; the stupid, really completely irrational and dishonest views of some white Southerners and so on. Six of the staff members got up and walked out of the movie because it was so real to them while we laughed because it was so completely foreign to us—if anyone had said what they did in the movie, we in the North would lock them up or dismiss them completely, but this is the way many white Southerners think.¹⁹⁵

Sugarman describes the scene in great detail, explaining that giggling broke out at two points during the film, first, at the white Mississippi registrar. When the registrar came on the screen, and the volunteers chuckled at “[t]he gross indolence of the body [that] was accentuated by the cranky baby face that lolled on the fat, fleshy neck.”¹⁹⁶ The next laugh came after a man described his house being shot up after he registered to vote:

The camera moved to the old Negro lady who was his wife. Her face was birdlike and an absurd hat balanced on the top of her thin gray hair. The voice and the face conspired to conjure the image of an intent, bespectacled parrot, and her recital of the nightmare that had struck her home was lost as a nervous giggle ran through the seats.¹⁹⁷

I argue that this moment is infamous in the story of Freedom Summer because it forced participants, for the sake of saving the movement, to grapple with identification in ways that Ratcliffe recommends for rhetorical listening. In Ratcliffe's theory of identification as it functions in rhetorical listening, the modern conception of identification as described by Burke is in conversation with the postmodern conception described by Diana Fuss. Integral to Fuss's conception of identification is its (perceived) converse, "disidentification."¹⁹⁸ According to Ratcliffe, "Fuss claims that *disidentification* signifies an identification that is not so much 'refused' as disavowed'; in other words, a disidentification is 'an identification that has already been made and denied in the unconscious.'"¹⁹⁹ When the volunteers giggled at the fat white registrar and the birdlike black woman, they were expressing disidentification with these people. They disavow identification with the fat registrar who, as the volunteer quoted above mentions, is ridiculous and worthy of dismissal from society in the eyes of the volunteers, who came to the project espousing the cultural logics of rationality and critical thought, which they had learned through the socialization of their previous activity systems. They disavow identification with the elderly black woman because, as Sugarman explains, her "absurd" hat and birdlike appearance make her appear like the sort of anthropomorphized

parrot that the volunteers may have seen depicted in cartoons, and therefore are conditioned to ridicule rather than to take seriously.

A question always present in thinking about identification, according to Raticliffe, is “How accurate are mental images that drive our identifications and disidentifications?” She argues that:

When such mental images are fairly accurate, the disidentifications may be productive, as when a society refuses to embrace serial killers and decides to incarcerate them. On the other hand, when such mental images are mostly inaccurate, disidentifications may be nonproductive (even dangerous), as when a society refuses to embrace the intellectual and managerial talents of women and decides to disenfranchise them.²⁰⁰

Len Holt, who downplays the film incident in his narration of the orientation mentions the incident in order to point out social effect of radically different mental images:

On a few occasions the volunteers found themselves being rebuffed by the veterans who walked out of an assembly. The volunteers had chuckled at a film on voter canvassing when the aged Negro spoke in a dialect that most of the volunteers had heard only over the ‘Amos and Andy’ program. No matter. These petty conflicts—inevitable whenever green troops join battle-tested veterans—were soon forgotten.²⁰¹

While Holt’s interpretation of the reason for the volunteers’ laughter differs from Sugarman’s, the two authors seem to agree that the SNCC workers walked out of the film screening in great part because they saw the mental images that sparked disidentification as expressed through laughter as dangerously inaccurate. In the case of the registrar, the

volunteers' expression of disidentification was perceived as dangerous not so much because the volunteers refused to *embrace* him, as the SNCC workers undoubtedly refused to do this as well, but rather because they refused to *respect* him. Preiss explains the radically disparate mental images that the volunteers and SNCC workers brought to the film in Sugarman's narrative:

The Snick kids didn't see a fat man who was against Negroes. They saw a white man who was powerful, and he had hurt them. They knew this powerful white man. They knew he had hurt them, and they knew he would go on hurting them. This was no abstract injustice. This was the guy who said 'No' after you had worked your tail off for months getting frightened people to the point of walking up his county courthouse steps. This was 'Mr. Charlie.' This was no laughable fat man. This was the man you *weep* about.²⁰²

In the case of the elderly black woman, disidentification was seen as dangerous because this woman and others like her were the people for whom the volunteers were meant to advocate in Mississippi. She represented the brave families who would soon become the volunteers' hosts, students, and partners in civil disobedience. That the volunteers laughed at the woman's appearance indicates that the assumptions about culture and social class that they brought with them from their privileged circles might prevent them from acting in compassionate, respectful, and culturally appropriate ways once they got to Mississippi.

The volunteers' laughter also illustrates key differences between them and the fulltime SNCC workers with regards to the Burkean components of identity. Ratcliffe explains that, "For Burke, first-nature substance (the material body and its natural

environment in which we live) is inextricably intertwined with second-nature substance (rhetorically constructed discursive and cultural categories, both extrinsic and embodied, within which we think and feel).”²⁰³ Preiss dramatizes these differences in describing the SNCC workers’ response to the volunteers’ second giggle:

“[. . .] And then they watched the lady from Ruleville whose house and nieces got shot up. She’s not funny-looking to them. They helped her wipe the blood off the couch and get her nieces to the hospital—the white hospital—because they couldn’t stop the bleeding. And they watched these kids—mostly white kids—giggling at a ridiculous hat and a cackling voice. ‘How can they laugh? What are they doing here?’”²⁰⁴

Different embodied experiences led the SNCC workers and the volunteers to interpret the bodies they saw on the film through fundamentally different socializing discourses, to mentally place them into different cultural categories, which inspired drastically different reactions. The SNCC workers lived in physical proximity to the fat man in the film and encountered him directly. They had been physically threatened by people like him. In their experience, he set the tone for the local dominant discourse, constructing them and their neighbors as less than human. For the volunteers, he is much more abstract, a stereotypical embodiment of ignorance and sloth much like the cartoonish rednecks they had probably only seen in movies and on TV.

Sharing physical space and embodied experiences with the woman on the film and her contemporaries led the SNCC workers to feel a kinship with the person depicted on the screen. On the other hand, the volunteers, who did not know the woman or anyone like her, associated her image with media portrayals that depicted poverty, a southern

African American dialect, and backward fashion sense as objects of humor and ridicule, and responded accordingly. In this moment the SNCC workers recognized that not only did the volunteers come from different physical and rhetorical backgrounds than themselves, but that they brought many unquestioned assumptions drawn from those backgrounds into orientation. Seeing that the volunteers had not questioned their stereotypical notions of the south enough to humanize its citizens in their minds led the SNCC workers to wonder, as Preiss imagines, “What are they doing here?”²⁰⁵ Preiss, in Sugarman’s narrative, goes on to explain that the film incident revealed that the volunteers and SNCC workers could not truly feel consubstantial, even if they believed in the same abstract principles. He argues that the volunteers came to Mississippi because they saw the racial situation there as unjust. “They think they understand the Snick kids because they feel for the Mississippi Negro. A lot of them take the Friday night and Sunday morning morality seriously. So they really do feel for the Mississippi Negro. [. . .] But they can’t feel *like* the Mississippi Negro. They know it, and it makes them unhappy.”²⁰⁶ The dramatization of this lack of common feeling made the Freedom Summer participants think that the movement would fall apart. Instead, they learned to communicate and identify through difference, rather than aiming for the eradication of difference, which they recognized as impossible.

The participants were willing to act as prophetic pragmatists. That is, they were willing to continue working together toward a pressing goal despite the impossibility of perfection. They could not achieve the “beloved community” of black and white people together in perfect harmony, but they made the conscious choice to connect through commonality *and* difference.

Ratcliffe's description of the process of non-identification lends insight into exactly *how* they did this. She explains that, "Within an interdependent place of non-identification X and Y are imagined not as subject and object but as two very different subjects- that is, as subjects who are juxtaposed but not necessarily on common ground, as subjects who are encountering the same socializing discourses but processing them very differently [. . .]." Ratcliffe suggests that non-identification "engages Burke's recovery of substance as an 'acting together,' but non-identificatory acting together is a conscious choice. That is, non-identification stipulates that when acting together, people must *choose* to recognize their interdependency as well as their movements among different insider and outsider cultural positions."²⁰⁷

One volunteer explains that immediately after the film incident, "We had the whole thing out in the living room, with everybody sitting on the floor or standing along the walls."²⁰⁸ According to this volunteer, during this heated conversation the volunteers and SNCC workers discussed their differences and made their demands. The SNCC workers explained the gravity of personalities like the fat registrar's in Mississippi. They declared to the volunteers that, "Somebody walked out of a movie, but you won't see anybody walk out on your picket line. When you get beaten up, I am going to be right behind you."²⁰⁹ At the same time the SNCC workers acknowledged the conflict that comes with differing cultural positions, they also affirmed recognition of their interdependence with the volunteers and vowed to act with them in Mississippi.

The Freedom Summer participants' willingness to continue preparing for Mississippi and to use discussion of their differences as part of the preparation, as the above passages describe, shows that they consciously acted together through non-

identification. The SNCC workers were prepared to make the effort to work with the volunteers through non-identification because they had already determined that the rhetorical benefits of their presence outweighed the interpersonal costs. The volunteers were committed because they believed in the cause and were determined to see their commitment to the project through to its end.

An important tool in lubricating the tense conversations necessary to establish identification across difference was the Freedom Song. The most popular Freedom Song during the Summer Project was “We shall overcome,” which Moody shows her colleagues singing at the end of her memoir. These songs often wrapped up tense orientation sessions like the film incident described above, and signaled participants’ commitment to acting together through non-identification. They were an important rhetorical strategy for communication across difference because they emphasized a common goal/ object-motive and gave participants the chance to act together—to sing the same words and focus on the same message at the same time, knowing that they still didn’t completely understand each other, and that they were still in very different places.

Actions and Outcomes: Volunteer Participation in Mississippi

Because the volunteers were an unknown element, invited into Mississippi for a specific rhetorical purpose, accounts of the Summer understandably evaluate the impact of their presence upon the state, the movement, and the nation, as well as their efficacy as both tools and agents. As tools, the volunteers were effective in attracting media attention and broad support for the movement from their extended social circles. They did not, however, achieve for SNCC the desired response from Freedom Summer’s primary audience. Burner concludes that “If success is calculated by whether the project forced the federal government to send troops to Mississippi then it fell short. But the murders of

Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman did bring a massive federal presence to Mississippi not only to search for the bodies, but also to infiltrate the Ku Klux Klan.”²¹⁰

Carmichael remembers the outrage that the volunteers directed at John Doar, the Mississippi point person for the federal Justice Department when he told them at orientation that “the federal government ‘will or can not guarantee anyone’s safety’ or ‘cannot protect you.’”²¹¹ Although probably not fully aware that they had been brought to Mississippi as rhetorical tools whose *ethos* SNCC intended to leverage in order to provoke action from the federal government, the volunteers became outraged in learning that they might not achieve that aim after all. According to Carmichael, that outrage was warranted, because at the same time that the southern media was publicizing Doar’s statement, James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman disappeared, leading to the too-hard-won achievement of Freedom Summer’s rhetorical ends.

Carmichael laments:

[. . .] Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, and young Andrew Goodman hadn’t died entirely in vain. Yes, it was an absurd, ignorant, vicious waste of three good young lives. But the belated attention of the administration and the media presence that followed it undoubtedly saved a great many others. Only why did it have to come so late? And at such a price?²¹²

This reminder that death functioned as a rhetorical tool in the fight for civil rights casts a shadow over the hopeful story of Freedom Summer. But even Carmichael’s somber recollection serves to forward Freedom Summer’s rhetorical end, drawing continued identification with the summer’s mission and carrying out its legacy.

As agents, the volunteers are ultimately constructed as more or less successful, but also as problematic. Carmichael remembers worrying about how the volunteers would fare in Mississippi, despite the credit they had acquired for making it through two rounds of screening: the recruitment interviews and the orientation. “For the most part,” he concludes, “I’d say they did just fine.”²¹³ This anticlimactic assessment of the volunteers’ roles as agents in Freedom Summer is characteristic of their portrayal in the biographies and autobiographies of SNCC’s power players. Although Carmichael takes a clear stance of advocacy for the volunteers, he does not give much attention in his autobiography to any specific, measurable positive impact that the volunteers made upon Mississippi through their own direct actions, as opposed to their mere presence.

The bulk of Forman’s chapter on the Summer Project focuses on the difficulties of coordinating with other civil rights organizations in the wake of such a big project, the question of armed self-defense vs. nonviolence, and on his efforts to manage SNCC’s strained relationship with the Congress on Racial Equality. His main commentary on the volunteers is that “the presence of so many white college students had a negative effect on SNCC workers and local people.” As examples of the volunteers’ negative effect he offers the shame that one project director began to feel about his sixth grade education in the presence of people attending prestigious colleges and universities. He continues that “In other areas, local black people who had been in the process of learning how to handle office work and administrative matters just got shunted aside as the whites came in with their already developed ‘skills.’”²¹⁴ In this sense, the volunteers’ actions were actually counterproductive, if one of the goals of Freedom Summer was to empower local citizens to participate effectively in a sustained, locally driven grassroots movement.

What Forman identifies as the biggest problem of Freedom Summer is particularly significant, in that it points to a clear difference between the ways that SNCC insiders constructed the volunteers' roles in relation to the Summer Project and the ways in which the volunteers constructed their own roles. Forman states that although SNCC knew about the kinds of problems that accompanied the presence of wealthy, white students in Mississippi because of their role the freedom election:

[. . .] we did not worry about such problems too much in the summer of 1964 for one simple reason: It was never contemplated by anyone in SNCC that volunteers would remain after the summer. It was always assumed that they would leave. Here COFO and SNCC made a cardinal mistake, a disastrous miscalculation. We did not anticipate that the volunteers would either want to stay or that they would stay. We failed in our planning and we would pay dearly for this miscalculation.²¹⁵

The volunteers, as noted in the first chapter, felt that it was necessary for them to stay in Mississippi, and that they were more useful there than anywhere else. Those who left felt that they were doing a great disservice to the movement, that they were traitors, and that those who stayed were to be celebrated. But Forman, Carmichael, and presumably Moses saw the decision to stay on the part of almost 200 volunteers²¹⁶ from a very different perspective. At the end of the summer, the white volunteers had served the rhetorical purpose that SNCC had set for them as well as they could. Their continued presence in Mississippi after the conclusion of Freedom Summer, while perhaps appreciated by local Mississippians, was viewed as a problem for SNCC leaders.

While the volunteers had brought positive attention from the national media during the project, they had the opposite impact after the summer. Carmichael notes that, “As though to compensate for the praise they had been so free with during the summer, elements of the national media now began to reevaluate the SNCC volunteers in an ugly way. Maybe, after all, they were (especially the women) merely spoiled, overindulged, rich white kids looking for a ‘black experience.’”²¹⁷ Carmichael argues that this assessment of the volunteers was ridiculous, mainly because, as he points out, if this were the case the volunteers could have chosen a much less violent place to have their “black experience.” Nonetheless, the increased media scrutiny was not welcome among SNCC activists.

The volunteers’ continued presence had other negative effects as well, including the social inequalities that Forman describes along with growing pains, as SNCC tried to adapt to its drastically increased membership. It caused arguments about how leadership should be structured, and how the organization should be funded. In the wake of these growing pains, Carmichael recounts a startling meeting:

One night [Moses] came into one of those staff meetings and said he was not, and had never sought to be, a “leader.” From that moment on he wanted to be considered merely another field secretary. To emphasize that, he was no longer to be known as Bob Moses, but Robert Parris, his mother’s maiden name. Then most startling to everyone who knew him, he said, as though to finally lay to rest the baggage of his old identity, that he would no longer talk to whites. Then, leaving a troubled silence behind him, he walked out of the room. And eventually out of sight and contact.²¹⁸

Moses' abrupt departure had likely been a long time coming. Burner notes how troubled he was by the death of Herbert Lee before the Summer Project, which resulted in three more deaths. But his declaration that he would no longer talk to whites suggests that he was also troubled by his decision to invite so many white, northern college students into Mississippi. Despite the volunteers' use value as rhetorical tools, Moses may have felt after the project's end that the problems they caused may have outweighed their benefits. Shortly after Moses' departure, according to Carmichael, SNCC went from an integrated organization to a separatist one, advocating that black and white people both continue to fight for racial justice, but with black activists working in black communities and white activists working in white communities.

Although SNCC changed its membership and philosophy shortly after Freedom Summer, none of the SNCC insiders, it seems, saw the summer as a failed project.

According to Burner:

Years later Aaron Henry, the titular head of COFO and long-time NAACP leader, would call Freedom Summer “the greatest sociological experiment the nation has ever pulled off,” noting that the goal was the “freeing of the minds of blacks . . . (who) began to look upon themselves as somebody. . . There was the opportunity of people to learn . . . about each other. You can read about me all you want . . . but until you sleep in that bed and I sleep in that bed, and we use the same bathroom in the morning . . . the human relations aspect . . . was the greatest thing we accomplished.”²¹⁹

Carmichael echoes this sentiment in his autobiography, saying that the volunteers “learned something about their country, about black culture, and about themselves. Their

presence changed black Mississippi, but clearly black Mississippi changed them even more. They might have come for different reasons—adventure, idealism, even to write about it—but most went back better people than they came. That much, I'm sure of.”²²⁰

Freedom Summer's greatest success, according to the black activists who made it a reality, was not the media attention it generated or the reluctant FBI presence it prompted, but the promotion of mutual understanding toward which the privileged, white students and their disenfranchised black hosts worked. The volunteers, then, succeeded most not as tools but as agents motivated to work for racial justice. No one accuses the two groups of perfectly understanding each other at the end of the summer, but just the effort that each party put forth to identify with the other, and to gain new situated knowledge, resulted in positive change.

Chapter 3:**Outside Agitators: How White Southerners Constructed the Volunteers**

As college students filled out Summer Project applications, attended orientation sessions, and made tense and fearful road trips toward Mississippi, the state's residents prepared for their arrival. Black Mississippians prepared by designating space in their homes, cooking extra meals, and arming themselves against their white neighbors, who they knew would not approve of their new houseguests. White Mississippians prepared by hiring extra police officers, arming themselves, and by trying to make sense of and respond to the volunteers' arrival through spoken and written discourse. In news articles, letters to and from editors, speeches, pamphlets, flyers, sermons, and so on, white southerners painted a very unflattering picture of the Freedom Summer volunteers.

In white, southern discourses in 1964, the volunteers and black Mississippians alike were dupes, fooled by the communist-driven civil rights organizations bent on disrupting the peaceful coexistence that white and "Negro" southerners had enjoyed for generations. The volunteers were also communist invaders and agitators. They were presumptuous, un-American, un-Christian foolish brats insistent on disobeying their parents and sticking their noses where they did not belong. They were in Mississippi seeking publicity and interracial sex. They were determined to undermine the "Southern Way of Life," which they did not understand, while ignoring egregious racial problems in their own states. The volunteers and the organizations that recruited them were aggressive, invasive enemies, while white (and often black) southerners were their victims.

Seeing their beliefs and folkways under attack by the rest of the nation, the white south built up its defenses. Thus, rhetorical discourses produced by white southerners in

the period immediately surrounding Freedom Summer serve to validate the “Southern Way of Life,” defend it against those who would question its validity, and urge audiences to do the same. As a result, written discourses circulated among white southern writers and readers set up rigid dichotomies with themselves on one side, the volunteers, the civil rights groups who recruited them, the national media, and the federal government on the other, and black southerners standing precariously in the middle.

For good reasons, white Mississippians emerge as the villains in the story of Freedom Summer. Exploitive, racist, and capable of committing or at least turning a blind eye toward unthinkable violence, the white Mississippians of 1964 were reprehensible to most of the world during that time and are even more so to those learning about them today. But they did not think of themselves as villains, and they took great pains to articulate and defend their views in their written texts responding to the civil rights movement. In order to present a rounded picture of the Mississippi that the volunteers descended upon that summer, it is necessary to situate white Southerners’ view of them within the cultural logics that informed their spoken and written discourses. In this chapter I turn to Richard Weaver, a conservative theorist who wrote during the mid-twentieth century, for insight into the cultural logics most common among white southerners in the 1960s. In his books and articles, Weaver advocates for the conservative cause, and defines and prescribes strategies for conservative rhetorical practice. Weaver’s concepts of “tyrannizing image”²²¹ and “ultimate terms”²²² in particular help to elucidate 1964 white Mississippians’ worldview and their rhetoric responding to civil rights initiatives like Freedom Summer.

The “Southern Way of Life”: Historical Trauma and White Supremacy

In a speech²²³ responding to moves to integrate southern white churches

beginning in the fall of 1963, Jesse H. Roberts, a Methodist preacher born and raised in Alabama and residing at the time of his speech in Chicago, urges his fellow clergy to try and understand the southern perspective before trying to change the south. He explains that:

It seems to me that one very important point for the Northerner to understand in dealing with the South is the psychological effect of the history of the last one hundred years. After 1865 the South was occupied until 1877. To give a graphic illustration of how the Civil War has influenced even the present generation of the defeated South, I refer to my own family. My Grandmother Roberts was ten years old when the Civil War ended. She was twenty-two years old, already married, and rearing a family when the Northern troops left the area after twelve long years of occupation. [. . .] As a boy, I knew and conversed with many Civil war veterans, who, after the surrender at Appomattox, had to literally beg their way home. The fathers, grandfathers, and great-grandfathers of the people now living in the South were the ones who fought the war—and lost.²²⁴

Punctuating his narration with the repeated acknowledgement that the circumstances he describes “do not excuse the South,” Roberts goes on to cite the poor economy and low literacy levels for both white and black people that plagued the south since Reconstruction. He drives his characterization of the southern mentality home with a quote by Gordon Allport:

In order to understand the situation that exists, it is necessary to take a broadly historical point of view. The suffering and humiliation of the South in the Civil

War was a trauma of immeasurable magnitude. Aggressive hostilities were released against the North, against the Negro, and against social change in general—all of which would with some logic be blamed for the intolerable situation. To restore self-esteem it became psychologically necessary to counter the intentions and wishes of the North, and to keep the Negro, if not in actual slavery, at least in a subordinate role.²²⁵

Southern whites, according to this account, are a wounded people struggling to cope with the historical trauma inflicted upon them by their defeat by the North during the Civil War. Though defeated politically, they refused to let their culture be absorbed into the folkways of their conquerors.

Instead, southern whites were (and still are) bound together by the gravity of the “Southern Way of Life,” their culture’s tyrannizing image. According to Richard Weaver:

There is at the heart of every culture a center of authority from which there proceed subtle and pervasive pressures upon us to conform and to repel the unlike as disruptive. [. . .] At this center there lies a ‘tyrannizing image,’ which draws everything toward itself. This image is the ideal of excellence.²²⁶

Weaver continues that the tyrannizing image can take various forms, such as religious scriptures, common literature, and codes of conduct. He explains that “Not to feel [a] magnetic pull toward identification and assimilation [toward the tyrannizing image] is to be outside the culture.”²²⁷ From the tyrannizing image comes a culture’s style, which according to Weaver is of the utmost importance because:

It imparts tone to the whole of society by keeping before its members a standard of the right and not right. But this form depends upon the centripetal image of an ideal of perfection and goodness and upon confidence in ruling out what is unlike or fortuitous.

The task in our time of the conservative is to defend this concentration and to expose as erroneous attempts to break down the discriminations of a culture.²²⁸

For white Mississippians in 1964, the tyrannizing image of perfection and excellence that draws in those who fit and conform to it and casts out those who do not is the “Southern Way of Life”. Writing in the mid-1960s, sociology and religion professor Earl D.C. Brewer confirms this status: “In spite of outstanding exceptions,” he observes, “southern Protestantism has tended to endow the “Southern Way of Life” with divinity, defending it against all corners.”²²⁹ And whether or not they read Weaver, the discourses that white southerners produced and consumed at the time suggest that they were undoubtedly in agreement that they were tasked with defending the validity of their tyrannizing image and deflecting attempts to challenge it.

The “Southern Way of Life” venerates tradition and ancestry, from which its central values of individual liberty, states’ rights, Christianity, white supremacy, and racial segregation are drawn. William J. Simmons, editor of the White Citizens’ Council publication, *The Citizen*, echoes Weaver’s emphasis on the validity and value of traditional cultural beliefs and practices in the introduction of his February 20, 1964 speech at the University of Hawaii: “Custom does not exist without reason. Rather, it is the product of reason, developed by our ancestors from their hard-earned knowledge and distilled by the experience of many generations into well-defined rules of conduct.”²³⁰

White Southerners, like any conservative group, viewed the long-established values, practices, and beliefs handed down to them by their ancestors with reverence, and novel (or merely foreign) values, practices, and beliefs that contradicted or threatened these with distrust and even resentment.

Southern whites actively promoted traditional values and worked to instill them in their children, as is evident in a 1961-2 pamphlet published by the White Citizens' Council for an "Essay contest for Mississippi High School Students," which invites students to write on any of the following subjects: "a) Why I believe in social separation of the races of mankind. b) Subversion in racial unrest. c) Why the preservation of States Rights is important to every American. d) Why separate schools should be maintained for white and Negro races."²³¹ This essay prompt reflects the conservative approach to politics in its stance toward the audience and subject. The prompt indicates to the high school students who make up its audience that there is only one acceptable viewpoint regarding segregation, states rights, etc. The prompt indicates that for Southern white students, there should be no question as to the validity of the tyrannizing image. That is taken as a given for anyone who is part of that culture. The essay contest measures how eloquently they can express the principles of the tyrannizing image, asking students to demonstrate how well they can embody the "Southern Way of Life".

Topic C in the essay prompt, states' rights, along with individual liberties, are commonly cited in written discourse opposing the Civil Rights Bill and the kind of federal intervention in southern states for which civil rights groups advocated. This principle, like all tenets of the "Southern Way of Life," is tied to the Southern identity that crystallized during and after the Civil War. At his 1962 speech to the Citizens'

Council in New Orleans, for example, Ross Barnett warns that “Now, after 85 years, there are those on our National Government who would once again place New Orleans and the entire South at the mercy of the NAACP and other modern-day Carpetbaggers. At this very moment, our Southern leaders in Congress are battling heroically against vicious Force Bills which would destroy individual freedom.”²³² Here Barnett admits to the lasting feeling of powerlessness that that plagued the south ever since their defeat in the Civil War cited by Roberts in his speech to Northern clergy. The 85 years he refers to is the 85 years since the end of the Northern occupation of the South, a span of time which, if this speech is any indication, did nothing to mitigate southerners’ feeling of vulnerability. On the contrary, southerners like Barnett were on constant alert for further infringement upon their culture.

That the Civil War and Reconstruction continued to provide the language through which conservative Southerners understood the relationship of their culture to the rest of the nation is nowhere more evident than in Barnett’s use of the term “Carpetbagger,” which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines this way:

After the American Civil War of 1861-5: an immigrant from the Northern into the Southern States whose ‘property qualification’ consisted of the contents of the carpet-bag which he or she carried. Hence: any Northerner who went south and tried, by the black vote or otherwise, to obtain political influence. Also: (in extended use) a person intervening in the politics of a locality with which he or she is thought to have no permanent or genuine connection.²³³

The Civil War was a major hit to states’ rights, and allowed for what southerners saw as the exploitation of their society by those who were not part of it. Because southern

culture is conservative and structured around a tyrannizing image inconceivable to those not socialized into the culture, the presence of outsiders, or any imposition upon the South from outside of it, was viewed as destructive. For white southerners, individual freedom and states rights were exercised most through practice of the customs dictated by the “Southern Way of Life,” most notably segregation and, although these aspects are not directly discussed in the white southerners’ written discourse, voter suppression and economic exploitation of black people.

The view that traditional Southern culture and all that came with it was the glue that kept society functioning bred commentaries like “What About Prejudice?” a guest editorial from the Richland Bacon-News in Rayville, Louisiana, appearing in the August 4, 1964 edition of the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*. In this piece the author laments the “anything” goes approach to behavior embraced by most of America, and contrasts it to enduring Southern practices. “The nationally known commentators condemn the white people of the South and especially those in Mississippi who are trying to live in the traditional way handed down by their ancestors, fine gentlemen and lovely ladies, who founded that beautiful state.”²³⁴ Like Weaver, who argues that discrimination and hierarchy are necessary aspects of culture that provide order and promote unity, this commentator argues that “If prejudice means adhering to ones [*sic*] ideals and inherent beliefs, then we could use more prejudice in our nation. Tolerance is destroying our civilization.”²³⁵

This writer implies that the rejection of racial prejudice leads to a rejection of prejudice against any behavior, which causes chaos and breaks down civility. More often, Southerners justified racial prejudice and forced segregation by claiming that it was best

for both white *and* black southerners. In a June 30 letter to the *Clarion- Ledger* editor, for example, a woman pen named “Sane Jane” from Washington DC lauds the race relations she observed on a recent trip through the state, reflecting that “racial peace down there has a tremendous foundation resting upon the habit of centuries. It survived a war and a looting.”²³⁶ With so many decades of tradition behind it and such observably positive results, she reasons, how could Southern segregation be wrong?

In addition to relying on tradition for validity, white Southerners also turned to observable facts (however specious), a rhetorical technique more associated with the progressive left and their rhetorical practices, according to Weaver.²³⁷ A pamphlet titled “Racial Facts”²³⁸ published by the White Citizens’ Council in May of 1964 lists numerous “facts,” 70 in all, as proof of Mississippi’s superiority on the question of race relations in comparison to northern states. Two of the redeeming “facts” included are as follows:

8. Mississippi has 7,274 Negro school teachers. Senator Jacob Javit’s state, New York, only has 3,707 Negro school teachers and Illinois has only 4,280 Negro school teachers. Both Illinois and New York have a much larger Negro population than does Mississippi in total numbers.

9. In the state of Mississippi there are 7,989 Negro college students. Yet, there are not 7,000 Negro college students in New York, Ohio, and Illinois combined, with these states having nearly three times as many Negroes as there are in Mississippi.

239

Implied in these facts is the assertion that segregation is best for everyone, including the black Mississippians who had no say in the matter.

Few Americans would argue against the importance of individual liberties and states' rights in principle. However, white southerners' written discourses communicate the belief that those rights included the "right" to exercise control over other human beings through economic deprivation, voter suppression, substandard education, and physical violence, which the rest of the nation saw as inhumane and illegal. In their written discourse from the mid 20th century, white southerners deny these tactics while indirectly justifying them by arguing that "Negroes" are inherently inferior to whites, and constructing "race mixing" as a fatal threat to society. The final "racial fact" in the Citizens' Council pamphlet is a quote from Mississippi Senator (1935-47) Theodore G. Bilbo popular in racist literature at the time:

70. "If our buildings, our highways, our railroads should be wrecked, we could rebuild them. If our cities should be destroyed, out of the very ruins we could erect newer and greater ones. Even if our armed forces should be crushed, we could rear sons who would redeem our power. But if the blood of our white race should become corrupted and mingled with the blood of Africa, then the present greatness of the United States of America would be destroyed and all hope for the future would be forever gone. The maintenance of American civilization would be as impossible for a negroid America as would be redemption and restoration of the white man's blood which had been mixed with that of the negro." – Theodore G. Bilbo ²⁴⁰

Bilbo's quote is representative of white Southern rhetoric that emerged in response to the Civil Rights Movement in two main ways. First, it expresses the (apparently) sincere belief in inherent white supremacy, which is reiterated consistently in racist literature

from that time. This belief is frequently supported by the notion that racial separation is natural and dictated by God, as “racial facts” 66 and 67 state: “66. The races of man are the handiwork of God, as is everything in nature. If He had wanted only one type of man, He would have created only one.; 67. The Holy Bible does not advocate integration. In fact, it advocates racial separation.”²⁴¹ Although Bilbo does not make either of these appeals directly, he does claim that continued segregation and white supremacy are necessary to maintain a functioning, moral society.

Second, Bilbo predicts that a dystopian society will emerge if events continue to progress in any direction counter to the revered “Southern Way of Life”. In his dystopia, the white race has disappeared, and with it, so has civilization. Because the white race has been “mixed” out of existence, it cannot be restored, and thus, neither can the country, which white people alone were capable of running. The slippery slope that leads to Bilbo’s deteriorating society is depicted in an undated cartoon published by Americans for the Preservation of the White Race.²⁴² The cartoon is blocked into ten “stages.” In the first stage, a white mother condones school integration at a PTA meeting. Subsequent stages show the woman’s daughter dating, marrying, and having children with a black classmate. Stage nine depicts a scene intended to horrify readers, with the same mother reading to her grandchildren, a white girl and a black boy. Stage ten is labeled “making a big stink” and shows criminal-looking man stirring a large pot. One ingredient he is pouring in is labeled “NAACP.” The caption next to the image reads “Communist controlled organizations do this with the help of the Feds. They get laws made for their own benefit.” The final block urges readers to act: “The only reason you are white YOUR

FOREFATHERS PRACTICED SEGREGATION! Our enemy is organized! We must organize as White People. Join A.P.W.R.”

This cartoon clearly functions as deliberative rhetoric, urging its readers to think and act in a specific way. It uses demonstrative enthymeme to make its point, drawing a conclusion “from what is agreed” between writer and audience.²⁴³ Implied in the cartoon is the assumption that readers are both white and racist, although they may be motivated to practice tolerance. The suppressed premise is that readers value their whiteness and feel secure in the continued whiteness of their lineage. The major premise is that integration inevitably leads to intermarriage, despite assumptions to the contrary, and the conclusion is that integration should be stopped. The thought of having a black grandchild, it is assumed, will be enough to urge more moderate southern white people to join the A.P.W.R.

A pamphlet about Mississippi civil rights activist Aaron Henry running for lieutenant governor in the Freedom election further plays upon southern white fears of miscegenation, pointing out that a meeting about the candidacy “[. . .] concluded with [young black men singing] the Mississippi version [of a popular song], *I’m Gonna Marry Barnett’s Daughter, Bye and Bye*. ‘Man,’ one boy bent over in mirth, ‘his daughter, she ‘bout thirty-eight years old!’”²⁴⁴ For southern whites of 1964, this passage is meant to provoke fear and outrage not only at the insubordinate attitude among the young black men, but also at the threat of “race mixing” implied in the quote.

If the average white reader assumed that black people were inherently inferior to white people, then newspaper articles that appeared in the *Clarion-Ledger* in the summer of 1964, taken together, likely led readers to envision northern cities as racial dystopias,

proving to them that the worst could happen. In June of 1964, almost every day's newspaper featured a headline like "Negroes Alarming New York" on the second, "1000 Cops on Extra in N.Y. Crisis" on the third, "Blacks Run Amuck in New York City" on the sixth, and "Chicago Negroes Run Wild" on the twenty-seventh.²⁴⁵ Because they fit the genre of informative rhetoric, these reports are largely factual. But the unifying tone, discernible in just the headlines and increasingly evident in the articles, is one of incredulity and fear. The articles construct a white readership that identifies along racial lines, and the reports reflect that angle. For instance, the June 2 article reports:

The latest in a long series of racial incidents came over the weekend when roving Negro gangs attacked whites on subways with knives, bottles, fists, and even a meat cleaver. Members of the gangs, some of them reeking with alcohol, ran amok robbing, beating, and terrorizing white passengers and even threatening to decapitate a white motorman.²⁴⁶

The June 6 article tells of "a man standing in a grocery waiting to pay for two bottles of milk [who] was shot and killed by four men driving slowly past in a white car in an apparently senseless slaying."²⁴⁷ While plenty of black on black, white on white, and white on black crimes probably occurred in New York and Chicago during this time period as well, such reports did not make headlines in the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*. But alongside daily reports about the Civil Rights Bill making its way through the legislature came colorful reports of crazed, drunken "Negro gangs" knifing unsuspecting white citizens at random in racially progressive, integrated northern cities. These reports served to confirm the worst fears of readers already fully convinced of inherent white supremacy and opposed to racial integration, and to harden them against any effort to uproot the

southern system that had served them so well, especially the efforts of the students from northern cities scheduled to visit their state later that month. The Citizens' Council "Racial Facts" pamphlet further emphasizes the suggestion that integration leads to crime, stating: "25. There are over 21,000 rape cases reported each year in the United States according to the FBI. Approximately half of these involve white female victims and male Negro attackers. Of this total over 90% occur in the North and West. The South has a lower incident of criminal assault than any section of the Nation."²⁴⁸ If crime against whites is to be prevented in the south, this "fact" suggests, then the segregationist values of the "Southern Way of Life" must be protected against the influence of the rest of the nation.

Along with these specifically racial nightmares came dystopian visions of a different sort, featuring the emergence of totalitarian federal power and the dissolution of individual and states' rights. In "Civil Rights and Civil Wrongs," a short essay published by the Association of Citizens' Councils, Edward F. Cummertford "of the New York Bar" argues that "in about two decades, we have passed in rapid succession from the novel to the startling and from the startling to the grotesque." He asserts that at the time of his writing "Liberty is being subordinated to 'equality'. A type of absolute egalitarianism, riding roughshod over personal privacy and individual freedom, has become the order of the day."²⁴⁹ He concludes that such a state of affairs suggests that:

We may be, even now, in the twilight of our liberty, standing on the very threshold of the type of era envisioned by Orwell. When liberty is taken from some, it tends ultimately to fade for all. When that dreadful day arrives, there no

longer will be any need to argue about discrimination for we shall all be joined together in the terrible equality that is slavery.²⁵⁰

In Cumberford's dystopia the end result of integration is not necessarily the absence of whiteness but the loss of freedom. Racial discrimination is positioned as an individual right. Therefore, the outlawing of racial discrimination at the federal level and enforcement of integration in Southern states is a breach upon individual liberty, and leads to a slippery slope through which one freedom after another is plucked from the individual and the state, until all Americans have no rights that are to be respected and therefore no recourse against the totalitarian power of the federal government and its ruthless lawyers.

Along the same lines, in the June 4 entry of his "Mississippi Notebook" column for the *Clarion-Ledger*, Tom Ethridge summarizes "'Civil Wrongs Nightmare—A Fantasy,' by Dr. Delmar O Rhame of Clinton, South Carolina," which he calls "amusing but vaguely disturbing." In this dystopia, set in the Year 6,000,000 "which would have been 2,000 A.D.—only that system has been changed since it referred to the birth of Christ." America's "name is now Equasia: the governing body is the Supreme Equalizer—formerly the Supreme Court. Congress has been disbanded as unconstitutional and sent home." In the dystopia of Equasia, Christianity has been outlawed, all businesses are controlled by the government, sports are not allowed, because of course there are no winners or losers in Equasia, and "almost everyone is under indictment for violating somebody else's civil rights." Also, private property does not exist, although "Each person is allowed to rent a small home and a tract of land from the government, which now guarantees everyone security and equality. . ."²⁵¹ Equasia, of

course, is the polar opposite of a society whose Christian, capitalist norms are dictated by the “Southern Way of Life”. A final dystopia is envisioned by The Mississippi Association for Constitutional Government²⁵² in commentary accompanying a reprint of a Memphis *Commercial Appeal* article quoting a moderate Mississippi mayor blaming groups like the KKK and Citizens’ Council, which he calls, “extremist” for racial unrest in the state. The group castigates the article and the mayor, and concludes that the liberal controlled media “are the ones that are working so hard to diss-arm our country, mongrelize our citizens, and establish an international, atheistic, class-less, socialistic one-world government, administered by the UNITED NATIONS. They will not hesitate to twist or pervert our statements to their own ends.” After elaborating on this scenario, the group asks its readers, “Should we TURN OUR COUNTRY OVER TO SOMETHING LIKE THIS???”²⁵³ Readers are intended to walk away from this reading material seeing any move toward racial or economic “equality” as the beginning of a snowballing process that will end with the domination of U.S. citizens by a totalitarian government that squelches or outlaws all of the qualities that make southern culture what it is.

The Yankees Invade Again: Civil Rights Activism as Civil War

White, southern socializing discourses including stories of the Civil War passed down orally from grandparent to grandchild, news articles and editorials, speeches, and circulating pamphlets, constructed any move toward racial progress as progress toward the destruction of freedom, liberty, capitalism, and Christianity. This perception undoubtedly informed Barnett’s declaration that “We must show the nation that continued separation of the races is vital, if we are to preserve the greatness of America! WE MUST NOT APOLOGIZE FOR BEING RIGHT: rather, we should assume the

attitude of long-suffering, patient missionaries, laboring diligently to bring enlightenment to a people less fortunate than ourselves.”²⁵⁴ The white people of Mississippi took this advice, constructing themselves as long suffering, enlightened victims being invaded by power hungry, self righteous communists.

The term “communist” is ever-present in southern white discourses discussing Freedom Summer and other civil rights activities. Writing in 1953, Weaver declared that “Now ‘Communist’ is beyond any rival the devil term, and as such it is employed even by the American president when he feels the need of a strong rhetorical point.”²⁵⁵ In 1964, “communist” remained the uncontested devil term in the rhetoric of white Mississippians. Weaver’s notion of “devil term” is one of a set of “ultimate terms.” Introducing ultimate terms in the final chapter of *The Ethics of Rhetoric*, Weaver argues that, “rhetorical force must be conceived as a power transmitted through the links of a chain that extends upward toward some ultimate source.”²⁵⁶ Ultimate terms, he argues, are terms with great rhetorical force due to their high position on that chain. The first ultimate term he names is “god term.” He explains that:

By ‘god term’ we mean that expression about which all other expressions are ranked as subordinate and serving dominations and powers [. . . The] capacity to demand sacrifice is probably the surest indicator of the ‘god term,’ for when a term is so sacrosanct that the material goods of this life must be mysteriously rendered up for it, then we feel justified in saying that it is in some sense ultimate.²⁵⁷

As examples of god terms at the time of writing, Weaver mentions “progress” and “science,” such terms being granted automatic positive association in the discourse of the

day. For white southerners in 1964, god terms aligned with the tyrannizing image of the “Southern Way of Life” and included liberty, states’ rights, Christianity and the white race.

On the opposite end of the spectrum from god terms, according to Weaver, are “terms of repulsion.” “Some terms of repulsion are also ultimate in the sense of standing at the end of the series, and no survey of the vocabulary can ignore these prime repellants. The counterpart of the ‘god term’ is the devil term,’ [. . .].”²⁵⁸ Some examples of devil terms that Weaver cites are un-American, Yankee, Nazi, Fascist, and, of course, communist. Finally, there are “charismatic terms,” which “seem to have broken loose somehow and to operate independently of referential connections (although in some instances an earlier history of referential connection may be made out). Their meaning seems inexplicable unless we accept the hypothesis that their content proceeds out of a popular will that they *shall* mean something.”²⁵⁹ Some examples of charismatic terms Weaver offers are “freedom” and “democracy,” words whose meanings change drastically based on context but that nonetheless retain consistent rhetorical power.

As demonstrated in the first section of this chapter, in the rhetoric of white Mississippians from 1964, “segregation” and “white” arguably function as god terms, while “liberty” is a charismatic term. When it comes to rhetorical responses to Freedom Summer, southern white writers and speakers rely heavily on devil terms to depict civil rights activists as invading enemies involved in conspiracy with various entities, including the national media, the federal government, and foreign and domestic communist organizations intent on destroying American traditions and the “Southern Way of Life”. Like the national media described in the fourth chapter, white, southern

rhetoric constructs the Summer Project as a war. In these texts, writers use the primary devil term “communist,” combined with the terms “invader,” “agitator,” “integrationist,” and even “do-gooder” in order to position the Freedom Summer volunteers as malevolent aggressors and themselves as victims. Southern white responses to Freedom Summer consistently created this aggressor/ victim dichotomy, ignoring one crucial population of stakeholders: southern black people. When they are mentioned at all, black Mississippians are positioned, along with their white counterparts, as victims. However, Southern white responses to the “invasion” never acknowledge civil rights activists’ critiques of the voter suppression, economic exploitation, police brutality, and the like that black Mississippians endured at their own hands. Neither do they engage the viewpoint of black southerners, with a few notable exceptions in which a black person’s opinions align with their own. Rather than engage in direct conversation or debate with the “invaders,” white southerners invalidate their presence and their viewpoints wholesale by labeling them communist conspirators and/ or dupes being used by communist entities.

Communism: The Devil Term in Southern White Rhetoric

In his January 6, 1965 address to the Annual Leadership Conference of the Citizens’ Councils of America, later published by the Citizens’ Councils, Executive Director Louis Hollis sums up the battle of good and evil in which white southerners saw themselves engaged: “Integration represents darkness, regimentation, totalitarianism, communism and destruction. Segregation represents the freedom to choose one’s associates, Americanism, state sovereignty and the survival of the white race.”²⁶⁰

In mid 20th century America, communism was an ever-present threat that both the government the people generally agreed needed to be resisted. For white southerners,

totalitarian, communist rule was the inevitable end result of federal laws against racial segregation. With the communist argument, another enthymeme is at play. The major, unstated premise, accepted by the majority of readers and listeners is that communism is destructive and anti-American. The conclusion, also agreed upon and for the most part unstated, is that any person, organization, or action associated with or promoting communism should be actively resisted. With these two elements established, southern white writers and speakers sought to establish the minor premise(s), that A) civil rights organizations were communist and B) civil rights advancements would necessarily lead to a communist takeover of the United States. They did so by drawing connections between communism and civil rights groups' philosophies, people, and strategies.

The Citizens' Council's 1964 "Racial Facts" pamphlet draws several connections between communist principles and the civil rights movement:

60. Communists have been pushing race-mixing and colored supremacy since the mid 1800's when Karl Marx wrote a series of letters to the New York Tribune.

There has never been a Communist who has stood up for white supremacy or Christianity. Lee Harvey Oswald was a self-confessed Communist, integrationist and atheist.

61. The Communist Party Platform of 1928 has now blossomed into the current civil rights bill. Read them both and compare.

63. "Civil Rights" laws and court decisions are nothing more than a cover-up and spearhead for more Socialism and Communism. The 1954 de-segregation decision was a fore-runner to the 1963 Anti-Prayer decision.

64. Enforced equality is a principle of Marxism. It has never been considered in the philosophy of free enterprise and property ownership.²⁶¹

Point 60 makes the argument that because communists have advocated for “race-mixing,” and communism is of course un-American, then integration, through its association with communism, is necessarily un-American. On the other hand, Christianity and white supremacy, due to their distance from communism, must be foundational American values. These two statements situate communism as an ultimately powerful devil term by asking readers to define what is and is not American solely in relation to communism, as opposed to considering the relationship of such values and beliefs to foundational American texts like the Constitution. In this construction, the repellent value of communism trumps any other identifications through which American identity might be defined. The second statement in “fact” 61 is that Lee Harvey Oswald, Kennedy’s supposed killer and the prominent villain of the day, advocated for communism and integration, and was an atheist. The conclusion readers are expected to draw from this is that all atheists, communists, and/ or integrationists are also villains. This line of reasoning is what Aristotle defines as a fallacious line of reasoning “from a non-necessary sign.”²⁶² While Oswald, a criminal, may have been a communist, etc., not all communists, integrationists, or atheists are criminals.

Point 61 makes a vague connection between two texts, asking readers to read both and notice these connections for themselves. Point 63 argues that readers should not take Civil Rights laws at face value and asserts that they are not actually about race but about communism. The example offered for proof depends on reasoning that Aristotle names “*post hoc, ergo propter hoc*,” meaning “taking a non-cause as a cause,”²⁶³ and also on

communism's status as a devil term. Integration and rejection of Christianity, for the "Racial Facts" pamphlet's audience, are associated with communism and therefore closely related. Therefore, according to this point, it can be concluded that a law desegregating schools can be causally linked to a law outlawing prayer in schools that passed nearly ten years later. They are both, according to these writers, steps in a progression toward communist rule in the United States. Point 64 equates laws protecting citizens from systematic oppression based on race with the forced economic equality of communism, concluding that, due to this connection, civil rights policy violates free enterprise despite the apparent lack of direct connection between the two.

White southern rhetoric also aims to connect civil rights groups' tactics to communism, again making a *post hoc, ergo propter hoc* argument. Any social unrest or challenges to existing social order, they argue, is fertile ground for the growth of communism, regardless of other possible mitigating factors. A June 2, 1964 headline in the *Clarion-Ledger* lays the groundwork for a summer full of discourse attempting to link civil rights groups with communism in an article announcing "Militant 'Civil Rights' Groups Key Target For Red Infiltration." Even the headline of this article reveals suspicion, as it puts "Civil Rights" in quotation marks. This is another rhetorical move common in the discourse of white southerners circulated in the mid-1960s. The quotation marks indicate suspicion of the groups' real motives or a lack of respect. They say to the reader: "they call themselves civil rights activists but we call them un-Christian agitators!" or "masked Communists!" The opening sentence expands upon the headline, declaring that "The disgraceful 'civil rights' rowdyism at the opening of the New York World's Fair reportedly has caused two key committees of Congress to wonder just how

big a role Communist elements played in the riots and other trouble-making by irresponsible and selfish elements.”²⁶⁴ The next paragraph reveals that the congress member spearheading investigation is segregationist Mississippi senator James Eastland. Although Eastland’s suspicion was likely enough to convince the *Clarion Ledger’s* audience of possible infiltration, the writer backs his suspicion with the ethos of then FBI director J. Edgar Hoover: “They have it from an expert—J. Edgar Hoover—that the Communists are infiltrating the more militant forces of the Negro Rights movement.” The article concludes with an explanation of why protests at the World’s Fair would raise suspicion of communist infiltration:

“The infiltration, exploitation and control of the Negro population is one of the Communists’ principal goals today,” the FBI chief said.

Communism thrives on chaos. Agitation creates chaotic conditions. Thus, the so-called rights organizations which flaunt the law and trample the rights of others become the spawning grounds of subversive elements. The wild-eyed, overly emotional leader often is the easiest duped.²⁶⁵

This passage accuses civil rights groups of committing the same atrocities they aim to combat. Civil rights groups worked to resist the control of black populations by societies that trampled their rights. The protests declared self-determination on the part of black Americans and demanded basic rights to political participation, education, and job opportunities. That civil rights groups declared their refusal to be controlled by white supremacist societies indicated to observers like the *Clarion-Ledger* reporter and his readers, for whom white supremacy was the norm, that black Americans were being controlled by outside elements. The concluding sentence accusing civil rights leaders of

being gullible and overly emotional reflects the core belief that allowed white southerners to convince themselves that black activists were communist puppets: they did not believe that black people had the intellectual or emotional capacity to think, organize, or take action for themselves. If they were rejecting the control of white supremacists, they had to be under the control of someone else.

Like black Mississippians and other black civil rights activists, according to white Mississippi, the white Freedom Summer volunteers were not capable of thinking for themselves. A June 29, 1964 Jackson *Clarion-Ledger* headline announces “Colmer Hits ‘Invasion’ Of State,” Reporting that:

Congressman Wm. M. Colmer charged on the House floor that the “invasion” of Mississippi and Florida by civil rights resulted from an ‘unholy alliance between the Communists and the do-gooders in the clergy.

The Mississippi Representative accused “the Communists, the do-gooders and the self-serving leaders of the Negro movement” of enticing immature juveniles into going to Mississippi after indoctrinating them “in the Hitler and Krushchev form of schooling.”²⁶⁶

According to Colmer, the volunteers are not traveling to Mississippi on their own free will. In fact, they are too young and ignorant to think for themselves at all. Certainly, they would not feel a connection to the black struggle in Mississippi without nefarious influence. The only explanation, in Colmer’s view, was communist brainwashing. In addition, the communist brainwashing is assumed to be accomplished by techniques similar to those used by Hitler. Although Hitler was not a communist and, in fact, promoted a political philosophy hostile to communism, in this construction Hitler is

metonymically associated with it. The practice of brainwashing is the link that Colmer presents between Hitler and Kruschev, but readers likely accept the association more for rhetorical reasons than practical ones. Like “communist,” “Hitler” is a devil term in post-WWII America, and this shared position on the spectrum of ultimate terms makes the connection between Hitler and communism, which may otherwise seem nonsensical, perfectly acceptable. The volunteers headed for Mississippi, to Colmer and the citizens he represents, are no better than Hitler’s army of Nazis. Having been brainwashed, they are merely puppets for their propagandists.

A Vietnam-era KKK pamphlet announcing the organization’s intent to battle communism at all costs positions communism explicitly as a devil term in their vocabulary, arguing that “One cannot make peace with the devil and continue to serve GOD, nor can one make treaties or peace with a communist and serve America.”²⁶⁷ America, then, is Godly and the KKK, having declared themselves patriotic Americans, are thereby servants of God. Communists, on the other hand, are servants of the devil and thereby opponents of both America and God.

The next sentence announces, “By now we feel sure that everyone is aware of the fact that there is no war between the white and black race in the United States, that the civil rights movement in America has proven itself to be a communist-inspired civil ‘riots’ insurrection meant to create a anarchy [*sic*], murder and destruction on a wholesale basis.”²⁶⁸ Again, this pamphlet argues that civil rights organizations’ attempts to challenge and change existing social orders that oppress black Americans are promoting chaos, a technique that they associate with communism and that, in their view, must ultimately lead to the rise of communist power. Also, of course, because civil rights

organizations are communist-inspired, communists are the servants of the devil, and the devil is evil, civil rights activism leads to the ultimate evils, of murder and destruction. Belief in this dichotomy, for the writers and their readers, likely served to justify the KKK's violent actions against civil rights workers. If they committed murder and abuse, it was in the service of God and country.

Discourse written by and circulated among white southerners in the mid-1960s does not quote civil rights leaders, refusing them the opportunity to speak for themselves about their motivations or aims. Neither do they quote the volunteers they recruited or the black southerners at the center of the controversy, who white southerners were convinced were perfectly happy with their position in the southern social order, and equally disturbed by the "agitators'" presence.

The White Citizens' Council did, however, circulate a pamphlet reprinting a commentary by George Schuyler, a black writer formerly associated with the NAACP who became increasingly conservative in his later years, written for the *Texas Morning News* in August of 1965. The first page of pamphlet pictures Schuyler looking downward contemplatively, with a caption under the image reading "George Schuyler. . . eager to live in peace."²⁶⁹ The pamphlet's purpose, presumably, is to strengthen white supremacist groups' credibility by aligning their arguments about civil rights groups with a black person's perspective. In the opening sentence of his commentary, Schuyler characterizes civil rights activism as the "current crop of antiwhite disturbances." A few paragraphs later, he analyzes their methods: "Utilizing the traditional techniques of 'spontaneous' disorder, well known to Communists, Nazis and other political perverts, the self-appointed leaders of the Negro revolution have for years recklessly incited young

Negroes to mass action inside (and often outside) the urban Negro enclaves.”²⁷⁰ Like the KKK pamphlet, Schuyler associates communists with Nazis, and insists on a connection between these and American civil rights groups, citing protest strategies as proof of this connection. Then Schuyler works in Eastland’s mode, characterizing civil rights leaders as perverted, power-hungry, and reckless, thus unworthy of respect or serious consideration.

Not only do white southerners point to civil rights groups’ tactics to signal their connection to communism, they also name specific activists and allies with supposedly well-known communist connections. In the *Jackson Clarion Ledger*, SCLC leader Bayard Rustin is a favorite for this purpose. The June 2, 1964 article that reports civil rights activism at the World’s Fair reports that “One of the ‘stars’ of the World’s Fair sideshow, Bayard Rustin, has served prison terms ranging from draft dodging to perversion. He is a former member of the Young Communist League. As recently as 1962, he was helping gather medicine for shipment to Red Cuba.”²⁷¹ The list of offenses “from draft dodging to perversion” is offered here to undermine Rustin’s credibility and, by extension, the credibility of the movement that he represents. The worst offense is his involvement in communism. Communism’s status as a devil term already accepted among the article’s readers, the enumeration details of Rustin’s involvement with communist groups is enough to indicate that Rustin and any movement involving him are engaged in communist conspiracy against America. In a June 29, 1964 “Mississippi Notebook” entry, Tom Ethridge attempts to correct what he sees as egregious omissions in national coverage of the Summer Project:

Significantly, however, network propagandists have failed to dwell on the well-known Communist influence in various youth movements, as emphasized in J. Edgar Hoover's official statements and reports. [. . .]

Bayard Rustin, colored leader and advisor for this student movement, was shown on television lecturing campus trainees in Ohio, urging them not to waver in their determination to revolutionize Mississippi's social order.

Rustin is on record as having been a member of the Communist Party, and was also arrested some years ago on a morals charge involving sexual misbehavior.²⁷²

Here Rustin is again constructed as a petty criminal in addition to a communist.

Considering his alleged communist association, the image of him lecturing a room full of students at the Freedom Summer orientation takes on a sinister flavor, and readers are encouraged to make the assumption that the volunteers registering voters in their state are communist minions, brainwashed by the likes of Rustin, rather than well-educated, patriotic young Americans concerned with making the democratic process accessible for all citizens.

Other civil rights leaders are named as communist in white supremacist literature from that time period as well. "Fact" number 62 in the Citizens' Council "Racial Facts" pamphlet reads "The NAACP was founded in 1909 in New York by four white radicals and the Negro Communist, W.E.B. Dubois. It has never had a Negro president."²⁷³ This "fact" aims to implicate one of the foundational civil rights organizations in a communist conspiracy, not only naming Dubois as a communist but by implying that the "white

radicals” (read, communists) run the organization, manipulating black Americans to achieve their communist ends.

A March 20, 1965 article reprinted from the *Jackson Advocate* whose headline reads, “See Communist Behind Summer Miss Black Belt Project,” describes a “secret meeting” held in February by SNCC members. The article ties two of the meeting’s participants to the communist party. “Carl Braden, an identified Communist who works as a field secretary for the Southern Conference Education Fund, of New Orleans, was scheduled to appear on the program but at the last minute was replaced by Rev. Maurice McCrackin of Cincinnati, Ohio. [. . .] A photo of Rev. McCrackin was published in the December, 1964 issue of the Southern Patriot, official organ of the Southern Conference Education Fund and formerly published by the Southern Conference for Human Welfare, cited as subversive by the HUAC.”²⁷⁴ Although the author cannot find any direct connection between McCrackin and communism, his appearance in a publication formerly published by an organization censured by HUAC is enough for white southern readers to indict him in communist conspiracy. The article continues that “Rev. McCrackin is head of Operation Freedom [. . .]” and points out that “Operation Freedom representatives worked last summer in Ruleville in support of the so-called Summer Project.”²⁷⁵ That people associated with an organization whose chair is separated from communism by only three degrees of separation proves, for this author and his readers, that the “so-called” Summer Project was a communist operation.

In addition to constructing civil rights leaders as communists and Summer volunteers as their minions, southern white writers frequently accuse federal politicians and judges who support the cause of civil rights of communism as well. In his June 17,

1964 “Mississippi Notebook” entry, Ethridge implies that then-President Lyndon Baines Johnson showed communist leanings by referring to his communist and socialist supporters:

Norman Thomas, six times a presidential candidate on the Socialist ticket, recently told party members that they “should be grateful for President Johnson”
[. . .]

Addressing the Socialist Party Conference in Chicago on May 29, 1964, America’s Number One Socialist said: “We all have reason to be grateful for the way the President is handling civil rights and poverty. [. . .]”²⁷⁶

As if a socialist supporter was not enough, Ethridge goes on to describe another of the President’s supporters:

Arnold Johnson of New York, public relations director for the Communist Party has written a special letter urging Congress to pass LBJ’s legislation for a war on poverty.
[. . .]

“We are prepared to join wholly and without reservation in such a war,” the Red Party bigwig said.²⁷⁷

Because “communist” is a devil term for Ethridge and his readers, support from such people, a communist and a socialist, demonstrates that LBJ’s policies are un-American and nefarious. The thought of the president being celebrated in speeches at communist rallies, the walls draped in red and attendees calling each other “comrade,” is enough to send any most readers to the polls to cast a ballot for his opponent.

A June 23, 1964 article titled “Court Rulings Favor Mixers, Communists,” reports that “The Supreme Court closed the books on a historic 1963-64 term Monday with a last minute flurry of decisions that included reversing a series of sit-in convictions and upholding the right of U.S. Communists to passports.”²⁷⁸ Because this is a formal news article, it does not make an explicit argument that the Supreme Court is infiltrated by communist or has communist sympathies. Instead, it relies on readers’ previous associations with the term “communist,” and leaves them to make that association for themselves. The article also reinforces readers’ pre-existing association of civil rights activism with communism by making a metonymic connection between the two court rulings. While the two court cases are unrelated, the writer of this article, at least at first glance, implies that they are indeed related by placing them together in the headline and first sentence. Also, the rulings were made by the same court, and, predictably, a ruling in favor of civil rights activists is correlated with a ruling in favor of communism.

While these articles ground their claims of communist infiltration in specific names and relationships, the KKK pamphlet that equates America with God and communism with the devil does not pretend at such specificity. Instead, it states simply that, “There are more communists in our National Capital than any other place. They hold high level offices in all branches of government, they hold the highest security jobs where no real American would be allowed now”²⁷⁹ Readers of this pamphlet, it is assumed, are already willing to trust the KKK and do not need specific evidence to accept their claims. As “real Americans,” readers of this pamphlet likely already suspect communist infiltration of the federal government, and are happy to have their suspicions confirmed.

Convinced that communist influences were present in the media, the Federal government, and throughout northern cities, white southerners saw their way of life as the last bastion of true American patriotism. For this reason, they saw the movement of hundreds of college students into Mississippi as an invasion by misled and malicious enemies, and therefore constructed Freedom Summer as a war of aggression.

“Sow-Belly and Cornpone”: White Southerners Respond to the “Invasion”

In order to emphasize the southern white response to Freedom Summer, over and over throughout the month of June, 1964, when the students attended orientation in Ohio and began their work in Mississippi, the *Jackson Clarion Ledger* characterized the Summer Project as an “invasion.” In their responses to the “invasion,” white southerner writers make several common moves, all of which serve to vilify and discredit the Freedom Summer and the civil rights groups that recruited them, and to position white (and often also black) southerners as the victims of malicious and misguided aggression. These moves include: Providing examples of ways in which the volunteers and the media victimize white southerners; pointing out “racial problems” in the northern cities from which many of the volunteers hail; giving advice to white southerners for handling the summer; and belittling the activists and their aims.

One of the first appearances of the term “invasion” in the *Jackson Clarion-Ledger* comes in Ethridge’s June 8 “Mississippi Notebook” entry, in which he quotes a commentary by “friend Sid Harris, editor of the weekly Houston, Miss., Times Post: ‘As Mississippi girds itself for this invasion by outsiders who are not coming here to get a taste of good old Southern hospitality but to create turmoil and strife, let’s make our plans to meet this force with serenity, sound judgement [*sic*] and established law.’”²⁸⁰ This sentence exemplifies white Mississippians’ rhetorical stance toward the Summer Project

in several ways. The activists, in his view, are simply intent on upsetting the customs that had served (white) Mississippians and kept peace in the state for decades. Harris does not address the reasons that SNCC leaders provide for bringing the volunteers into the state, refusing to even acknowledge the notion that black Mississippians may not be quite so happy with the state's status quo. Second, he laments the fact that Mississippi's positive qualities are being overlooked, in this case by pointing out that the volunteers are not there to experience the "Southern hospitality" that locals show each other and most visitors. This reaffirms Mississippians' sense of positive communal identity and provokes offense that the coming "invaders" are not interested in experiencing the positive aspects of their culture. Finally, Harris gives southern white readers advice on how to respond to the Summer, urging citizens, as most conservative civil rights era writers do, to stay civil and avoid violence. This acknowledges and validates the anger that readers are presumed to feel, while sending a message to the outside world that white southerners intend to take the higher ground.

In a letter to the editor published in the *Clarion-Ledger* on June 16, the writer deflects accusations that white southerners are intolerant of racial difference, claiming that:

The Northerners criticize the people down South and then are more intolerant than the ones they are talking about could possibly be. It is amazing how so many people can be so blind.

Aren't the alarming attacks on whites in New York an example enough for the nation to see? It seems the racial strife in the Northern cities would open their eyes. I see where it has already resulted in the birth of white vigilante groups.

We have been told to expect an invasion on Mississippi this summer. We also have been told to expect bloodshed. In my life span, I have never felt so compelled to stand up for God and our country. I ask both white and colored not to let Mississippi turn into a small New York.²⁸¹

The writer starts off by accusing northerners of being more intolerant than southerners, but does not explain why that is the case. He might mean that northerners are intolerant of southerners, and that the upcoming “invasion” is proof of that, or that northerners themselves are more intolerant of people with different backgrounds than southerners are. He then vaguely points to the “racial strife” in New York as evidence of northerners’ intolerance, although it is unclear what point he means to make with this. Readers might see the “black on white” northern crimes so prominent in the *Clarion-Ledger* as evidence that black people in New York are intolerant of white people, or as proof that black people faced racial discrimination in New York and thought it necessary to react in opposition. The writer may, as I suspect, refer to New York in order to indirectly argue that enforced segregation is the only way to keep peace between black and white citizens. He then acknowledges the invasion and its expected result, bloodshed, leaving readers to imagine another Civil War in which Americans fight and kill each other on southern soil. The writer’s declaration of his intent to defend God and country would seem nonsensical to readers who are not part of the writer’s discourse and speech communities. But most *Clarion-Ledger* readers would be familiar with the Southern, segregationist, American, God/ Northern, communist, un-American, devil dichotomy discussed earlier in this chapter, so for them the statement would be perfectly fitting. Many readers undoubtedly identified with this sentiment and felt a swelling of patriotism and southern pride, and are

ready to respond positively to the writer's request in the next sentence that they resist the "invaders" attempts to make Mississippi more like the deplorable, godless cities from which they come.

In a June 19 *Clarion-Ledger* article titled "Recruited Students Coming," Bob Moses is given a rare chance to speak to white Southerners. The article, which explains that the first round of student volunteers are headed toward Mississippi, quotes Moses responding to white Southerners' concerns about the Summer Project: "'It's not an invasion,' said Moses, 'None of the students will be asked to participate in sit-ins and no marches are planned, except for some picketing around courthouses where voters register.'"²⁸² Here Moses acknowledges white Mississippians' concerns and denies their accusations of violent intent. He also subtly brings readers back to a major issue the Summer Project aims to address, voter suppression, reminding the *Clarion-Ledger's* readers of the dark side of their "Southern Way of Life" that they would otherwise deny.

After this nod to the opposition, the *Clarion-Ledger* reaffirms its readers' stance against the project full force in its June 23 issue, which features arguments against the project from multiple perspectives. An article whose headline reads "COFO Claims FBI Shirking," which reports the disappearance of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman and civil rights groups' insistence upon federal investigation, quotes "Sen. John Stennis, D-Miss., [who] appealed to parents to stop youths flocking to Mississippi for civil rights operations. 'They will do more harm than good, in a field they know nothing about,' he said. The Mississippi lawmaker described the students as 'mised pawns' of irresponsible leaders."²⁸³ This passage exemplifies another common rhetorical move that white southerners made in response to the Summer Project. They rationalized that if young

volunteers did happen to sustain harm in Mississippi, this was the fault of anyone other than white Mississippians. According to Stennis, there are three guilty parties in the disappearance of the three men. First, of course, are the “irresponsible leaders” who, in his view, manipulated the students into putting themselves in danger for the leaders’ benefit. Second, the students themselves are at fault for being so gullible as to be misled, and so presumptuous as to take action in a location they do not understand in a “field they know nothing about.” Specific reasons for Stennis’s assumptions of irresponsibility on the part of the leaders and naiveté on the part of the volunteers are left unsaid. Finally, the volunteers’ parents are held responsible for any harm that may come to their children at the hands of white Mississippi due to their lack of control over their children, and their unwillingness or inability to prevent them from sticking their noses where they do not belong. This statement threatens violence against the volunteers at the hands of white Mississippians while simultaneously denying white Mississippians’ responsibility for that violence.

An article titled “Struggles Schedule [*sic*] For State As Both Sides Make Their Plans,” printed in the same issue, reports that “militant Negro leaders” are “going ahead with drives and demonstrations they had planned for the long, hot summer ahead.”²⁸⁴ This is happening, according to the article, despite the passage of the Civil Rights bill and the possibility that their actions could damage the chance at re-election for Lyndon Baines Johnson, their favored candidate. The article continues that:

[. . .] the student non-violent coordinating committee is bringing scores of students into Mississippi this summer to conduct freedom schools and defy the wrath of the white residents.

The invading students, both white and black, are fully prepared to suffer. Not only the students but their parents have been given indoctrination courses, warning that the young volunteers can expect beatings, injury and imprisonment.²⁸⁵

That a newspaper article, compelled by genre conventions to remain impartial and factual in its language, would refer to the Summer Project volunteers as “invading students” and declare their intent to defy “the wrath of white residents” indicates the extent to which the paper’s readers are hardened against racial progress in the state. To contemporary readers, these phrases are inflammatory, but their inclusion in an article that rests firmly in the category of rhetorical information suggests that, for the *Clarion-Ledger*’s readers, these phrases lacked argumentative function. In other words, most readers received them as unproblematic and even neutral.

Furthermore, the article supports Stennis’ view that civil rights organizations, the student volunteers, and their parents are responsible for any harm that may come to the volunteers while in Mississippi. Already knowing that white Mississippians opposed racial integration and “are ready for a confrontation,” the students made the choice to “defy their wrath” and go into Mississippi, thus taking responsibility for any confrontation with white Mississippi that might harm them. Recruiting organizations like COFO and SNCC are also held responsible here, due to their “indoctrination courses.” Although he stops short of the term “brainwashing,” which is preferred by the KKK, this writer uses the term “indoctrination,” indicating that civil rights leaders led volunteers into an incomplete and biased viewpoint that favored their preferred doctrines, rather than using a more neutral term like “training,” to describe these interactions. The parents are

blamed here for allowing themselves to be brainwashed along with their children and sending them into Mississippi, even funding their journeys despite the known dangers.

Ethridge makes sure to chime in about the Summer Project in his June 23 “Mississippi Notebook,” offering a response to the Summer Project from the southern white perspective that is more comprehensive and colorful than many. In the entry entitled “Is Fear Of ‘Violence’ Exaggerated?” Ethridge begins by expressing that that will “prove true of the current invasion by leftist college students bent on social and political ‘reform.’”²⁸⁶ This is the first of many sentences in which Ethridge places phrases used by civil rights activists to describe the project and its aims into quotations. Other terms placed in quotations include “Mississippi Project,” “freedom schools” (also referred to as “so-called ‘freedom schools’”), “civil rights,” and “non-violence.” By placing these terms in quotations, Ethridge distances himself from them, thereby taking a skeptical stance toward the Summer Project, setting a sarcastic unifying tone for his commentary with which most readers undoubtedly identified. Terms like “invaders,” on the other hand, are not placed in quotations, indicating that this is the characterization of the Summer Project and its participants that *Clarion Ledger* writers and readers have agreed upon.

Ethridge continues on to make the move common among white southerners of constructing black Mississippians as victims of the “invasion.” “Our guess,” he writes, “is that many of the invaders will be surprised to learn that the rank and file of Mississippi Negroes are far more intelligent than is commonly believed in areas from whence cometh the self-important missionaries for ‘civil rights.’”²⁸⁷ In Ethridge’s view, the volunteers are coming to Mississippi to gain an ego boost by turning black

Mississippians, whom they see as too dumb to think for themselves, against the southern traditions that have served them so well. Instead, he predicts, the people the “invaders” came to help will snub them and reject their efforts as condescension and manipulation.

In the next paragraph, Ethridge makes a rare move and bravely attempts to address civil rights groups’ charges of voter suppression, something that most white southern commentators ignore altogether: “And it will probably come as a shock for them to learn that many Negroes who are registered voters didn’t bother to vote in our recent elections which found a number of colored candidates seeking major offices.”²⁸⁸ This statement, juxtaposed with the last, must cause some cognitive dissonance for readers with the least bit of critical capacity. While black Mississippians may not be dumb, as Ethridge assumes northern volunteers think they are, they *are* politically apathetic. It is not that voter suppression in the state that keeps black people from voting, Ethridge argues, but rather apathy and disengagement. “Negroes” *are* registered to vote, but could not be bothered to do so in the last election. However unbelievable, this statement is presented as enough proof to demonstrate that there is no reason for the Summer Project to take place in the state.

Ethridge then presents further reason for his readers to see the incoming volunteers as misguided: “Quite a few of the student invaders have preconceived notions about Mississippi, most probably false—hound-dogs sleeping in the dust and under shade trees along Capitol Street . . . almost everybody illiterate, ragged, backward, living in hovels. . . eating sow-belly and cornpone three times daily. . . toting shotguns and plotting secession. . . etc. etc.”²⁸⁹ For Ethridge’s readers, the thought of people coming into the state en masse believing these southern stereotypes would be incredibly

offensive, especially considering that they think of themselves as far more civilized than northerners. They, after all, are real Christians living out a rich southern tradition passed down to them by their wise ancestors. Correct or not, the fear that the people coming to visit their state do not see them as people but stereotypes serves to harden Ethridge's readers even further against the volunteers.

He goes on to assuage readers' resentment at these stereotypes by turning the tables on the volunteers:

In turn, Mississippians have preconceived notions about the invading students—smug, shrill, know-it-all extroverts with a savior complex . . . problem brats defiant of parental restraint . . . sexually promiscuous, addicted to interracial lovemaking, brainwashed in Communist doctrines, with no clear idea of Americanism . . . more hostile to the White South than to Red Russia . . . etc., etc.

It is no preconception but established fact that many of the invading students are coming here from places where racial segregation is the custom, where human life is unsafe on the streets even in broad daylight, and where the local crime rate is among the nation's highest.

Mississippi, in case they don't know it, has had the nation's third lowest rate of major crime in proportion to state population, according to official FBI figures.²⁹⁰

Whereas Ethridge is quick to point out that the volunteers' preconceptions about Mississippians are wrong, he does not indicate any suspicion that Mississippians' assumptions about them are wrong. Cues in other sections of this commentary and in other "Mississippi Notebook" entries suggest that Ethridge himself believes that the

preconceptions he lists are true. He calls them “self-important missionaries” earlier in the entry, which corresponds to the description of them here as “smug, shrill, know-it-all extroverts with a savior complex.” The notion that they are “problem brats” corresponds to the article in this same issue of the *Clarion-Ledger* that reports Stennis appealing to parents to keep their children from traveling to Mississippi. Although the Summer Project volunteers were legal adults, Stennis’s appeal indicates that Mississippi officials and the people they represent think of them as children too naïve to go into the project with full understanding of their aims or full awareness of the project’s potential implications. Ethridge almost certainly believes the charges of communism he labels a preconception here, as he charges civil rights groups of communist influence, and he, like his readers, was likely exposed to rhetoric distributed by the Citizens’ Council and KKK elaborating on that suspicion. Thus, the function of this paragraph is not to prompt readers to question their presuppositions about the Freedom Summer volunteers, but rather to give them the opportunity to feel the joy of substantial identification with Ethridge and their fellow *Clarion-Ledger* readers in their hostility toward them.

The next paragraph further validates readers’ hostilities by pointing out that even if Mississippians’ preconceptions cannot be proven, they nonetheless have documented facts to hold against the volunteers. The facts, of course, are the reports of “racial unrest” in the north so well publicized among Ethridge’s readers. This and the official crime rates in the volunteers’ home states are enough to point toward their misguidedness. Ethridge then points out the well-worn “fact” of Mississippi’s low crime rate, ignoring the fact that white-on-black crime in the state went unreported and therefore did not make it into the FBI’s record. Ethridge stays on this track for another paragraph, contrasting the peace of

Mississippi to the “crime jungles which are furnishing volunteers for this ‘Project Mississippi’ intrusion.”²⁹¹

Ethridge concludes his scathing assessment of the volunteers by declaring that, “As long as they [remain nonviolent], their insipid projects will go largely unnoticed and unmolested. But if they start any trouble, it is likely to be finished to their complete dissatisfaction, with prompt arrest and stiff punishment for all offenders regardless of race, creed or color.”²⁹² In this conclusion Ethridge gets one last jab into his opponents, characterizing their project as “insipid,” and also prescribes a course of action for his readers to follow. Stay calm, but be ready to retaliate at the first sign of “trouble.”

Ethridge is one of many white southern commentators to offer advice to readers on how should respond to the “long hot summer,” as the letter writer who urged readers not to be like New York, but to follow the Holy Bible quoted above illustrates. This type of advice endures throughout the summer, and is even repeated by a northerner who signs his letter to the editor, “Disgusted, Rochester, N.Y.” The writer begins by acknowledging that “The State of Mississippi has been held up to ridicule and abuse by the Northern press for its handling of the Negro problems.” He then urges them to stay strong in their resolve, offering Rochester’s situation as an example. He claims that in Rochester, “They were given jobs, welfare where needed and in many cases where not needed,” and so on, but rioted anyway. He claims that a “Negro leader” read a list of demands to the mayor on local television, “which thinly disguised was the was the ransom price for cessation of the rioting.” After validating the *Clarion-Ledger*’s assumptions about race relations in the north with this imagery and, for them, proving the wisdom of the “Southern Way of Life,” the writer finishes, “I close with an apology to the people of Mississippi for past

slanders directed at you from the ignorant Northerners. We are no longer ignorant. We feel a kinship for our Southern friends.” Reiterating the apocalyptic image of racial violence and anarchy in the north, this writer in effect finally surrenders the north to the south, admitting that they were ignorant and should have followed southern whites’ lead in maintaining white supremacy by any means. He then urges southern readers to learn from Rochester’s mistakes by resisting all efforts made by civil rights activists in order to ensure that their black citizens stay utterly powerless.²⁹³

Clarion-Ledger articles from the summer of 1964 follow Ross Barnett’s lead in urging southerners to stay unified in the face of those who would challenge the “Southern Way of Life”. A June 24, 1964 front-page story, for instance, announces “Governor Wallace Comes Here With A States’ Rights Message.” Announcing the arrival of the Alabama governor, the article proclaims that:

Governor Wallace deserves to have a capacity audience of Mississippians from every county when he speaks here tonight at the Coliseum. His address may well have a direct bearing on our future course of political action.

The courageous Alabama executive has carried the South’s battle and the light of all liberty-loving Americans into key states against hostile and even violent receptions to win great moral victories for the cause of constitutional government.²⁹⁴

In the wake of the “invasion” of Mississippi, readers are urged to welcome a visitor from the political right, and to learn political strategy from the famed segregationist. Readers are urged to show their continued commitment to the “South’s battle” in the face of

opposition by showing up to celebrate one of civil rights activists' most vocal adversaries.

White supremacist groups chimed in with advice for handling the summer as well, offering point by point suggestions for residents of the "invaded" state. The Citizens' Council distributed a flyer²⁹⁵ with five points of advice. Police departments are urged to:

- 1) form an auxiliary police force among citizens, and these forces are urged to handle "demonstrations and other racial outbreaks" in an organized manner.
- 2) "Advise Negroes not to affiliate with outside Agitators." The flyer elaborates under this point that "It is a mistake not to give them advice in this critical time when they are accustomed to looking to their white friends and employers for advice."
- 3) "Advise white citizens to ignore negro demonstrators." Anything else, the writers reason, would be giving the demonstrators what they want: "What these agitators are after is violence and publicity and orderly processes of law thwart them."
- 4) County bar association resolution: The County Bar Association should publicize a resolution advising citizens of their rights [. . .] and
- 5) "Identification of agitators and supporters: [. . .] No individual can be forced to employ or patronize any person whose objective is to destroy goodwill between the races and to create chaos in our community." This flyer positions white and black Mississippians as victims of malicious invaders, and urges them to take the high moral ground. It maintains a businesslike, legalistic tone, and reads like an official notice to citizens preparing for a natural disaster.

An undated flyer distributed by the KKK addressed to the "PEOPLE OF PANOLA COUNTY" does not aim for neutrality or civility in its tone. The flyer begins by announcing, "We have been invaded by the biggest band of renegades in this country

today.”²⁹⁶ After assessing the invaders, their tactics, and their motives, the flyer advises citizens in the second paragraph that, “the best way to deal with this bunch of scum and alley rats is strictly a hands off policy.”²⁹⁷ Although they make no effort to hide their hatred, even the KKK members who authored this pamphlet urge restraint toward civil rights activists among their followers. Like the Citizens’ Council, they reason that readers should remain peaceful, because violent reactions are what the “invaders” are hoping for: “Remember these people are just waiting for you to do something to one of them so they will have reason to raise all the hell they want to. Do not do anything to cause this.”²⁹⁸

Another flyer titled “YOU—AND THE F.B.I.,”²⁹⁹ some versions of which are signed by the “Jones County Citizens’ Council,” and others by “White Knights of the Klu Klux Klan of Miss., Sam Bowers, Imperial Wizard,” advise citizens of how to respond to FBI investigations in the state, presumably those related to the disappearance of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. The flyer quotes a resolution “adopted in 1960 by the Leflore County Bar Association at Greenwood, Miss,” advising citizens of their rights to refuse to answer questions posed by FBI agents “except in a court hearing or at a court-connected proceeding.” The final two paragraphs clarify the Bar’s position on the FBI:

In expressing this opinion, the Bar Association does not imply that information in any real criminal investigation should be withheld from any investigating officer. The FBI is a very efficient and honorable law enforcement organization, and the Bar Association urges that all citizens cooperate with it fully in its endeavors against crime and subversion.

“On the other hand, we do point out that when the FBI or other agency is ordered to make an investigation, not against a criminal or against a subversionist,

but under Federal Civil Rights legislation, **a citizen can legally stand silent and refuse to assist in that investigation** by refusing to answer any questions of any kind, harmless as such questions may appear, about voting, schools, employment, or anything whatsoever.³⁰⁰

According to the Bar Association, then, citizens are bound to cooperate with federal agents only insofar as the agents' aims align with the "Southern Way of Life". If they are investigating an incident that white southerners would agree constitutes a crime, then citizens are advised to comply. But because the civil rights law does not align with the "Southern Way of Life," Mississippians are not bound to honor that law. This viewpoint, expressed in writing, also confirms that white on black crime is not counted in the low crime rate that southern writers used so frequently to validate their way of life. The message is clear that Mississippians, both white and black, should identify as southerners first and national subjects second, and that they see themselves as victims of unjust policy.

While civil rights groups, northern volunteers, and the federal government are guilty of victimizing white southerners, there may be no entity more reviled for this crime than the national media, who encourage further unjust attacks on the south by egregiously misrepresenting southerners and their way of life. The KKK's "Communist Invasion" pamphlet sums up white southerners' view of the national media and its nefarious role in their lives well:

In the meantime, [the communist] can degrade and discredit all patriots because he controls the press, radio, and TV communications systems. He can brand the patriot a hate-monger, an extremist, a killer and worse through the vast media he

controls. The patriot has no way to fight back except in the facts you are now reading [. . .] whenever patriotism or patriotic Americans are cut off or shut up, there is a communist giving orders and pulling the strings.³⁰¹

If the world is against white southerners, it is not because their views and practices are flawed, but because communists, insistent on undermining freedom and democracy, have gained control of the media and misrepresent them to the American public for their own benefit.

Similarly, in their commentary accompanying their reprint of the July 20, 1964 *Commercial Appeal* article in which a Mississippi mayor blames white hate groups for strife in the state, the “Mississippi Association for Constitutional Government,” which reproduced the article with commentary, includes the declaration that:

we feel that every citizen should be aware of the fantastic coverage given to this type of ‘news’ in all northern areas. Anything that will put Mississippi, and the white people that have contributed so much to this nation, in a bad light, is printed all over the North and East by the liberal press, even if it IS manufactured news, slated or biased articles or, as in this case, just one man’s opinion.” [. . .] It is a proven fact that ALL nation-wide news agencies, T.V. networks etc., are owned, controled [sic] and operated by the Liberal-Socialist elements.³⁰²

Ethridge also airs his feeling of victimization at the hands of the national media in his June 29 “Mississippi Notebook” entry. “The Networks,” he laments, “have done a thorough job of creating sympathy for the invading students, publicizing their crusade in minute detail, and discrediting Mississippi at every opportunity.”³⁰³ While he stops short of claiming that all national media outlets are controlled by communists, Ethridge goes

on to argue that they have failed to publicize communist affiliations among civil rights groups, indicating that if media outlets themselves are not communists, they are communist sympathizers who further the communist cause by celebrating the Freedom Summer volunteers and vilifying Mississippians.

These accusations of communism among the national media likely stoked feelings of righteous indignation among southern readers, but did little to evoke sympathy from chance readers outside of the already-sympathetic south. A June 30 *Clarion-Ledger* article by Wallace Dabbs, however, uses enough imagery that readers outside of Mississippi might be forced for a moment to see the events from the average Mississippian's viewpoint. Dabbs's article, written shortly after the discovery of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner's burnt out station wagon brought a large FBI presence to Philadelphia, Mississippi, depicts Philadelphia as an idyllic, All-American town where, "The sun rose as usual and there were chores to be done," where "a group of young boys skipped down the street thinking about a swim later in the day," and where "the main problem facing Philadelphians was the coming Neshoba County Fair."³⁰⁴ But the discovery, the article reports, turned Philadelphians' world upside down by bringing FBI agents and military personnel hunting for the missing men, and most of all by attracting unyielding journalists for the national media. Because of these reporters, Dabbs claims that, "They have seen their town tried and found guilty by many outsiders."³⁰⁵ Because of these media vultures, in Dabbs' view, innocent Mississippians are now fodder for the criticisms of people who know nothing about them and have no understanding of their way of life.

Dabbs gives no details about the three missing workers, thereby minimizing the importance of their lives and their disappearance, glossing over the idea that they could be seen as victims. Instead, he effectively positions white Mississippians as the sole victims in the Neshoba story. Dwelling on the media circus, Dabbs quotes several citizens expressing the view that journalists are making much out of nothing. He concludes that, “An inquirer gets the feeling that these Mississippians don’t know what happened to the three. And after the treatment they have received from the national news media, they wouldn’t care to cooperate with visiting television folk.”³⁰⁶ In this passage, Dabbs exonerates the town’s residents of any wrongdoing of which “outsiders” might accuse them. As far as he can tell, they know nothing about the disappearance. And even if they did, he suggests, whatever fate might have befallen the workers pales in comparison to the mistreatment that the white Philadelphians are experiencing at the hands of the national media. Therefore, even if the citizens do have information, they are perfectly justified in withholding it.

Exploited Innocents: The Black Perspective According to White Mississippi

White Mississippians’ final defense against their adversaries was to discredit their aims. The Freedom Summer activists argued that they were in Mississippi because the way black Mississippians were being treated violated their constitutional rights. Rather than consult their black neighbors about this question, white Mississippians position them as victims of the movement, just like themselves.

The KKK flyer addressed to the “People of Panola County” declares that civil rights activists are “like parasites living off the poor Negro who doesn’t have the intelligence to realize that he is being used by these tyrants.”³⁰⁷ This paternal attitude dominates discussion of black southerners in white southern discourse, suggesting that if

black Mississippians appear to support civil rights activism, it is only because they don't know what is good for them and need their southern neighbors to protect them from manipulation.

Although white southerners constructed black people as too unintelligent to understand that they were victims of civil rights activity, they nonetheless saw black allies as important to their cause, and eagerly publicized the few black voices that aligned with their views. While white supremacists rarely endorsed violence in their written discourse, but they distributed a commentary by black commentator George Schuyler that does. Middle class blacks, he says:

know there is a lot of law in the end of a policeman's nightstick, and they want it used.

Above all, these Negroes wish white people in authority would stop flattering and encouraging the sorcerer's apprentices leading astray the mentally retarded and criminally-bent black minority.³⁰⁸

Schuyler in a sense counters the KKK's statement that "the Negro" "does not have the intelligence" to stand up for white supremacy. For Schuyler, it is not that black people are necessarily less intelligent than whites. On the contrary, many, like himself, "are eager to live in peace."³⁰⁹ It is only those who engage in protest against the existing social order who lack intelligence. Apparently, Schuyler is so appalled by such people that he is eager to describe them in language more demeaning than that to which even white supremacists would resort in writing. The Citizens' Council rewards these attacks by lauding Schuyler as a voice of reason and moderation.

Lacking direct support from black southerners (Schuyler was from New York), white southerners made heroes out of those who seemed to identify even remotely with them in interactions with civil rights activists. In a letter to the editor printed in the June 19 edition of the *Clarion-Ledger*, James R. Goff reflects on Larry Thomas, a young black Mississippian who, according to *Clarion-Ledger* reports and commentary, joined the Civil Rights Movement for a time, but later supposedly turned against it by saving a white southerner from being attacked by a black northerner.³¹⁰ Details about the incident are sparse, and the *Clarion-Ledger* does not quote Thomas in its articles about him, so Thomas's perspective on the story is unclear. The vague story provided was apparently enough for commentators to adopt Thomas as the poster boy for the southern segregationist cause. In a June, 17, 1964 letter to the editor, "Walter Lee, Pres. Walter Scott Coffee Club (Ex mayor, Jackson)" and "R.L. Grissom, Tres." praise Thomas:

Who has proven his good Southern Patriotism in protecting and saving a young white boy from a gangland attack by a bunch of young negro hoodlums in New York City.

This negro boy, Larry Thomas, is our kind. We will trade a bus load of those mongrel agitators and so-called churchmen who are flocking into our state to educate us—and more especially to stir up violence—for one Larry Thomas—anytime.³¹¹

The Walter Scott Coffee Club writers take the story of Larry Thomas to show that they are "pro-Negro," so long as they stand up for white southerners when necessary and otherwise stay separate from them. They also contrast Thomas the people they see as his opposite. Whereas they are "mongrels," someone capable of Thomas's heroic act must

favor racial segregation. And whereas the “agitators” only want to stir up violence, Thomas, on the other hand, protected a white southerner from violence. For this reason he has won the scores of civil rights activists. Goff also writes of Thomas that:

On page one of Mississippi’s leading newspaper under recent date, I found a brief article concerning a colored boy from Vicksburg who seems to have been duped into taking a bite of the sucker bait now being cunningly painted by a foxy bunch of agitators who are exhibiting breeding, class, and place of residence by preying on the otherwise honest, hard working colored people of the South who have been taught that their best friend is the white man of Southern breeding, educated in the art of dealing with the Southern colored people of similar problems and pleasures who had once had great faith and respect for his white neighbor, this being destroyed by a class of people whose only interest is personal gain and who have elected to use the colored people as a cat’s paw to accomplish their purpose.

[. . .] to my way of thinking [Thomas] could be used to heal the wounds which now exist between the white and colored people if properly handled by the press and otherwise.³¹²

While Lee and Grissom position Thomas as a poster child for southern race relations, Goff goes further and suggests that he be put in this position more formally by the media and white Mississippi citizens. Although he was led astray and fell victim to the manipulations of self-serving agitators, Thomas saw the error of his ways. In showing bravery and loyalty during his trip northward, Thomas acted on what he had been “taught,” that the southern white man was his “best friend.” Goff follows his suggestion of promoting Thomas to hero status by clarifying his unwavering support of rigid racial

segregation, as he urges readers to reach briefly across the color line to “lend a hand to Larry Thomas,” presumably in his cause of fighting to protect the white man from northern “agitators.”³¹³

Behind Closed Doors: White Southerners Listen Rhetorically

The depiction of SNCC activists and volunteers as villains bent on destroying the “Southern Way of Life,” a way of life perceived to be just as beneficial to southern black people as to their southern white patrons, seems so consistent in the public rhetoric of 1964 white Mississippi as to preclude intercultural dialogue between white southerners and activists. While instances of open dialogue between these two groups are scarce, they are not absent.

A chapter in Sugarman’s *Stranger at the Gates* recounts an open dialogue between Sugarman, a CBS reporter who openly supports the Summer Project, and Billy and Allison Cutler, a young, prominent, white Mississippi couple. The narrative explains that Allison invited Sugarman for a visit because she was curious to learn more about the motivations behind the Summer Project. Throughout their conversation, the couple and their friend make points situated within the white “Southern Way of Life” cultural logic. In his responses, Sugarman gently leads them toward a responsibility logic. By considering the Cutlers’ statements from alternative situated perspectives, he leads them to consider the ethical implications of those statements to an extent that, it seems, they had not previously done.

Early in their conversation, Allison says of the volunteers, “I never saw such a filthy bunch of people! Where did they find these creeps?”³¹⁴ Sugarman answers the question matter-of-factly with a list of prestigious universities. Then, supported by the *ethos* that comes with these prestigious associations, Sugarman points out the flawed

reasoning used to justify the “Southern Way of Life”: “You think ‘Jesus, what filthy kids! How scruffy! Think about it. When it’s dry, they’re dusty. When it’s wet, they’re muddy. You don’t pave roads in the Negro section of town.”³¹⁵ Here Sugarman illustrates that Allison is using a trait that she perceives as negative to justify her dismissal of the volunteers, despite the fact that the oppressive conditions created by segregation are the cause of the negative trait she identifies. The volunteers’ high status makes it difficult for Allison to deny this reasoning and insist that the filth is an inherent character flaw, and she does not try to do so. Instead, she acknowledges Sugarman’s comment by insisting that there is no excuse for filth.

Later in the conversation, Billy repeats the same version of the *post hoc* fallacy, assuming that X is the cause of Y when Y is actually the cause of X,³¹⁶ in his justification for the white southern paternalistic stance toward black southerners. This stance stood as a cornerstone of the “Southern Way of Life,” and Sugarman notes that Allison and the Cutlers’ other guest nodded in agreement during Billy’s argument. “They’re not responsible people, Tracy!” Billy insists. “They’re children themselves. They shuck responsibility every chance they get. But we know that down here.”³¹⁷ Similar to Allison’s citation of the volunteers’ dirtiness as justification for her dismissal of them, Billy cites southern blacks’ perceived resistance to responsibility as justification for their continued oppression at the hands of southern whites. Sugarman responds by pointing out the damaging psychological and material results of statements like this, insisting that the Cutlers acknowledge their accountability for such results:

“You say you love your Negroes. I say you don’t respect them. You don’t now, you never did, and as a result they don’t respect themselves.” I pointed at the

comfortable room. “If you couldn’t provide for Allison and your kids, if you couldn’t earn enough even to feed them twelve months a year, you’d despise yourself. Maybe you’d even drink, like so many of the Negro men do. It makes their inadequacy easier to bear [. . .] If the white southerner respected the Negro, he’d see that he learned skills so he could be a stable member of society. Instead, he thinks he’s being noble when he goes down to the jail on Monday morning and bails out his ‘boy’ so he can get him back to chopping.”³¹⁸

Billy offers southern blacks’ perceived tendency to shuck responsibility as evidence that the exploitive, paternalistic system sanctioned by the “Southern Way of Life” is actually beneficent. Sugarman refuses to accept the premise that black people are naturally inferior to white people, thus leading the Cutlers to think about the implications of racial oppression from a new perspective. In demanding that Billy imagine himself in the position of a southern black man, Sugarman redefines the “Southern Way of Life” for him. If the premise of inherent racial equality is accepted, then the racial oppression is the cause of the nihilism Billy observes, rather than the other way around.

Although Billy does not respond to this argument, Allison seems to concede his point, asking quietly, “‘Where do we start?’ Her eyes were troubled. ‘We’ve got to start, Tracy. But where?’”³¹⁹ Sugarman suggests integration of local schools as a place to start. At this suggestion, Allison’s focus shifts from identification as Ratcliffe conceptualizes it to identification as Burke conceptualizes it. Initially, she responds to Sugarman’s argument by considering her now troubled identifications with socializing discourses that uphold the “Southern Way of Life”. In recognizing the ethical fallout of these identifications, perhaps for the first time, Allison holds herself accountable and asks what

can be done to address the injustices resulting from them. Then, she reveals her lasting consubstantiality with other southerners, a shared feeling resulting from a lifetime of acting according to the “Southern Way of Life” that lingers despite Allison’s newfound understanding of her identifications with oppressive discourses. ““You can’t know—”” she tells Sugarman, ““it’s so hard. I can’t stand their touching me, shoving against me.’ Her face came up and her eyes were wet and wide. ‘What can I do?’”³²⁰ Allison expresses agony at the contradiction between the accountability she feels for her identification with oppressive socializing discourses and her consubstantiality with the white southern perspective. In her admitted repulsion to black southerners, Allison positions herself as a physical embodiment of the “Southern Way of Life,” and specifically of southern white women’s position in that paradigm. This agony leaves Sugarman’s readers, and likely Allison herself, wondering about the possibility of progress in the south. It also suggests that white southerners were not as intransigent as their ubiquitous public stance against the Freedom Summer project would suggest. This may be one of the few of such conversations to be made public, but the canvassing project in white Mississippi neighborhoods likely led to many others.

Unexpected Identifications: Religion and Patriotism

In 1964, white southerners were still haunted by their defeat and occupation during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Despite or perhaps because of these events, they remained convinced that the principles of Christianity, states’ rights, and white supremacy for which their parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents fought represented the most patriotic and just way to live. As their tyrannizing image, the “Southern Way of Life” structured white southerners’ response to the push for civil rights among their fellow Americans and their federal government. Communism, the ideology

that stood in opposition to every aspect of the “Southern Way of Life,” was the devil term in white southern rhetoric of the 1960s, and it along with “communist” took on overdetermined signification, encompassing any quality to which white southerners were opposed. By clinging to this cultural logic, by silencing the voices of black Mississippians, and by minimizing the viewpoints of northerners, reporters for the national media, and federal politicians, white southerners positioned themselves as the innocent victims of an unjust invasion by misguided outsiders.

White southerners of the time would be surprised to know that the volunteers’ identification with American religious traditions and political philosophies similar to their own drove them to Mississippi. In fact, the volunteers cite the same ultimate terms that white southerners invoke as reasons to oppose the Summer Project as motivation for their participation in it. Despite white southerners’ strong conviction that the Summer Project was communist-inspired, some volunteers saw the project as a way to resist communism. One volunteer explains in his application that he is committed to the project because of “a desire to enhance the image of the United States abroad, thereby undercutting Communist influence among the underdeveloped nations of the world.”³²¹ For this volunteer, the project’s success would show the world that the kind of representative democracy not possible under the Jim Crow system was still possible in America, thereby instilling faith in democracy in the populations of developing countries. Thus, parties on both sides of the segregation question opposed communism and endorsed democracy. Where they differed was in their views of the relationship of racial segregation to democracy.

Another ultimate term employed by both southern whites and civil rights activists was “freedom,” which as Weaver points out is a charismatic term with no generally

agreed upon meaning.³²² The malleability of the word “freedom” is evident in a comparison of southern whites’ rhetoric to civil rights rhetoric. For southern whites, “freedom” referred to the freedoms afforded by the “Southern Way of Life,” such as states’ freedom to make laws based on their own customs without restrictions from the federal government, and the individual’s freedom to choose whom his business serves based on race or any other quality. But freedom was also important to Freedom Summer activists, as is evident in the names of movement activities: the “Freedom Vote,” the “Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party,” “Freedom Schools,” and of course, “Freedom Summer.” For movement activists, the term signified the belief that no American is free unless all Americans, including the most disenfranchised, are free. If one person in the United States is denied the freedom to exercise her constitutional rights without fear of retribution, in the eyes of movement activists, then no one’s rights are safe. The argument here is not whether freedom should be protected, but rather how to define freedom.

Finally, for southern whites, Christianity was a god term closely linked with the tyrannizing image of the “Southern Way of Life”. Therefore they were convinced that Freedom Summer activists were intent on overturning Christianity and creating a godless America, but this was far from true. While the Summer Project volunteers represented a variety of religious beliefs, many of them were Christians. One volunteer, for instance, explains the desire to go to Mississippi by declaring, “[i]f I’m to continue *calling myself a Christian*, I must act NOW to put my abstract conception of brotherhood into practice.”³²³ The term “Christian,” especially viewed in this context, is another charismatic term. For white southerners, God intended for the races to be separated, and true Christians dedicate their lives to carrying out his will in that regard. For the volunteer

quoted above, true Christians identify with the most impoverished and disempowered people among them, and make their neighbors' plight their own. As with the term "Freedom," the point of disagreement between the two parties here is in how to define "Christian" and the Christian's role in 1964 America.

Few opportunities opened up to debate these definitions, however, because southern identity during the civil rights era was bound up with the tyrannizing image of the "Southern Way of Life". Unwavering belief in Christianity, individual liberty, states rights, and white supremacy, and their inextricability from one another was held up as a way to assert continued southern sovereignty in the face of northern dominance after the Civil War. Adherence to this tyrannizing image grew out of the trauma of southerners' defeat in the war and was seen as a way to honor those who fought for the south.

Identification with this ideal was so rigid in the south that opportunities for open dialogue across difference were shut down. The consequences of such a stance were not only rhetorical. They led to abject poverty and countless unacknowledged murders of black southerners before, during and after Freedom Summer. They led to constant harassment and beatings, and to the deaths of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner during Freedom Summer. Had they been open to cross-cultural dialogue from a stance of openness and responsibility during the long, hot summer, white southerners may have been surprised at the identifications that emerged.

Chapter 4:**Eyes of the Nation: How National Media Constructed the Volunteers**

Just as SNCC workers had predicted as they planned the Summer Project, journalists from widely circulated publications like *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *The Saturday Evening Post* followed the volunteers south for the summer. They descended first upon the orientations in Oxford, Ohio, then upon cities and towns across Mississippi, in order to document the summer's events. Equipped with press badges, notepads, audio recorders, and cameras, they documented role play in Ohio, beatings of local black adults and children, white volunteers, and even other journalists in St. Augustine, voter registration drives in Itta Bena, white supremacist rallies in Brookhaven, and exhaustive searches through humid swamplands for the bodies of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner in Neshoba county. These journalists were arguably the Summer Project's most powerful agents because they defined the project's meaning for readers across the nation and beyond.

These reporters wrote for a "mainstream" audience whose average member was white, middle-class, and politically moderate. A *Newsweek* survey published in October of 1963 provides a snapshot of the stance toward the status of race relations in the country most common among these readers, conflating respondents into a unified image: "The White American is divided within himself. He is biased against black skin—yet a sense of justice tells him he is incontestably wrong. He is pulled one way by his intellect, the other way by his emotions. Conscience whispers 'Equal rights, freedom for all,'; convention says, 'But a Negro is 'different.'"³²⁴ Paralyzed by this ambivalence, white America looked on with anxious curiosity as its children traveled south to act upon the sense of justice weighing on the nation's conscience. Magazines like *Newsweek* were

there to provide a window into Mississippi for these readers and their political representatives.

The texts that are the focus of this chapter fall squarely into Beale's category of rhetorical information, which according to Beale "has the aim of forming and informing public opinion, through the nontechnical (and even entertaining) presentation of subject matter. Rhetorical information incorporates, depends upon, and implies generalizations about its subject matter, but it does not argue or directly seek to establish the validity of these generalizations."³²⁵ Rhetorical information differs from deliberative rhetoric in that devices like "framing generalizations, unifying tone, and unifying metaphor" are taken as given, considering the facts presented, in rhetorical information, whereas in deliberative rhetoric these devices serve to support a thesis presumably or potentially contested by the intended audience.³²⁶ If their take on information is normalized in the minds of the American public, as Beale suggests, then an analysis of mainstream news publications and their framing devices should provide insight into public opinion regarding Freedom Summer and the volunteers' position in the project as it occurred.

An analysis of articles from *Good Housekeeping*, *The Nation*, *The New Republic*, *Newsweek*, *New Yorker*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Time*, and *U.S. News and World Report* during the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project and in the months preceding and succeeding it reveals that, like white southerners, the national media constructed the project as a second Civil War. National reporters felt that their construction of the Summer Project as a war was more than just metaphorical. In *The Race Beat*, Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff describe *New York Times* reporters who were assigned to the Freedom Summer story. One of them, John Herbers, "had not reported from a battlefield,

but he felt that covering the race story as it ran unpredictably between an aggressive movement and intransigent officialdom must be a lot like covering a war. He became certain of it on Halberstam's third day in Mississippi. 'There are several parallels,' Halberstam told him, 'between Mississippi and Vietnam.'"³²⁷ This perception is ubiquitous in national coverage, and results in an image of the volunteers that few likely expected. Within the war construct, the volunteers are depicted most commonly as pawns and soldiers. They are also sometimes portrayed as missionaries, evangelists, naïve idealists, and thoughtful, responsible citizens, but these characterizations pale in comparison.

In the picture of Freedom Summer that emerges from national media coverage, the "war" takes place between COFO and Mississippi white supremacists. The issue that prompted the war is the oppression of black Mississippians at the hands of white Mississippians. Mississippi is positioned as foreign, enemy territory, not so much part of the United States as its own sovereign entity with its own rules and policies doled out by white supremacist dictators. The federal government is positioned as a professed ally of COFO that has been reluctant to become involved, looking the other way in the face of human rights violations in the enemy territory. Within this scheme, the volunteers are either an army mobilized by COFO to defeat the enemy, or captives from the federal government's territory used to provoke their involvement. The war metaphor appears again and again in national coverage of the Summer Project, resulting in stories that read more like coverage of foreign policy than of domestic issues.

Consistent with coverage of foreign policy, articles about Freedom Summer in national publications most commonly give voice to the parties on both sides of the

conflict who have political power. This means that consistently, the Mississippians quoted in these articles are racist, white, male police chiefs and politicians, and sometimes their supporters. The average Mississippian is constructed as white, and the term “Mississippian” comes to refer to white Mississippians by default. As a result of these constructions, national media reports, like many volunteer letters, silence the voices of black Mississippians almost as much as their southern white oppressors even as they advocate for their enfranchisement.

“Into Another Country”: Mississippi as a Foreign Territory

Newsweek’s July 6, 1964 article, “Mississippi—Everybody’s Scared,” about the disappearance of Chaney, Schwerner, and Goodman begins, “They were three in the first wave riding south into another country, full of dreams that they could change it with words and books and young ideals, full of fear that they might never leave it alive.”³²⁸

This image is resonant not because it is unique, but because it exemplifies the metaphor most commonly used by the national media to make sense of the Summer Project for its readers. First, it illustrates the obscurity into which black Mississippians are relegated in national media reports on Freedom Summer by failing to acknowledge that Chaney was from Mississippi and therefore could not have felt at all like he was in a foreign country during that last car ride of his life. Second, it reflects the view commonly upheld in mainstream publications from 1964 of Mississippi’s status as a sovereign entity whose laws, beliefs, and customs stand apart from those held by the rest of America, and whose population is prepared to defend those customs through violent means.

This liminal position had been established in the press before the volunteers traveled to Mississippi. When it came to questions of race relations, *Newsweek* made a practice of acknowledging southern opinion among the rest of the nation while at the

same time separating it out. In “How Whites Feel About Negroes,” poll results are separated into three categories: “Nationwide,” “South,” and “Whites who’ve had social contact with Negroes.”³²⁹ They provide a percentage of expressed support for civil rights issues like job opportunities, voting, and education. The article reports percentages of the three groups as supporting Kennedy’s civil rights bill, for instance, as 63%, 31%, and 81%, respectively. This positioning of the south as separate from and far more conservative than the rest of the nation in terms of race relations serves as continued evidence for Grace Elizabeth Hale’s assertion that:

The ways in which the South has served national imaginings have, after all, doubled the ways in which blackness has served American whiteness. The South has been, to use the language of our racial orderings, the darkness that has made the American nation lose its color. Replicating the contradictions of whiteness itself both everywhere present and nowhere visible, the region has been both founding family member and military foe, both too black and more white, both less fragmented and more segregated, both a place apart, outside the flow of time, and an essential part of the national whole.³³⁰

Following this historical precedent, the national media presented the south, and in this case specifically Mississippi, as the nation’s dark Other onto whom all the nation’s shameful attitudes and practices are projected. Although Americans admitted to racial prejudice, those outside the deep south could feel largely exonerated in comparison to their racist southern cousins. While conditions for people of color may have been bad in New York, they were ten times worse in Mississippi. Although the average northern

white person could not deny her racial prejudice, at least she tempered it much more than the violent, spiteful white people who ruled the south.

This attitude toward the south undoubtedly contributed to the lack of attention that the rest of the country paid to the customs and practices that shaped Mississippi, and their effects on that state's disenfranchised black population. And, just like a small foreign nation calling out for US intervention, unrest in Mississippi prompted increased interest in the laws, culture, and lifestyles of its citizens on the part of the national media. What journalists found in their southward travels was appalling, and they reported it through details likely to disturb their audience.

Christopher Jencks begins his July 25, 1964 *New Republic* article with a scene of a Mississippi lynching in 1904, in which "two Negroes were captured," tied to trees, and "forced to hold out their hands while one finger at a time was chopped off. The fingers were distributed as souvenirs," followed by the removal of ears and the repeated application of a corkscrew to the victims' skin, "the spirals tearing out big pieces of raw, quivering flesh every time it was withdrawn."³³¹ He immediately contrasts this horrifying image to the now infamous 1964 murder of Herbert Lee, a black Mississippian who had been involved in voter registration. According to Jencks, E.H. Hurst, "a state legislator for Amite County, [. . .] shot Lee dead in downtown Liberty, Mississippi" in broad daylight, supposedly over an argument about a real estate deal. "Hurst," Jencks continues, "maintained that Lee had threatened him with a tire iron, and that the killing had not been deliberate. Had the killing taken place in 1904, that would have been the end of it."³³² But in the more progressive social climate of 1964, Hurst had to produce a witness to corroborate his story in court, and recruited Louis Allen, a friend of Lee's, for that

purpose. After the trial, “Allen told a civil rights investigator that he had perjured himself at the inquest of police threats, and that Lee had not had the tire iron in his hand when Hurst shot him. A year after that, on January 31, 1964, Allen was killed in front of his home by three blasts from a shotgun. The killer escaped, apparently unobserved.”³³³

Jencks’s stated purpose in juxtaposing these two stories is to remind readers that Mississippi has a long history of racial violence, and that the only progress the state made over sixty years in that regard is the construction of a pretense of lawfulness. In 1964, black Mississippians still had no protection from the violent whims of their white counterparts. His unstated purpose, is likely to provoke in their northern readers intense feelings of sadness and outrage on behalf of Lee, Allen, and other nameless black victims exhumed by federal agents from the Mississippi River in their hunt for the missing bodies of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner.

In a September 14, 1964 article for *The Nation* discussing volunteers’ decision to stay in Mississippi after the close of the Summer Project, Jerry DeMuth describes a heart-wrenching scene in Mileston, Mississippi:

A seasoned voter-registration worker, out canvassing one day, found a family living in a windowless shack. A little light and a lot of flies—and in the winter probably a lot of cold—came in through chinks in the walls. Both husband and wife, often ill, could seldom work, and there were no welfare payments. In the shadows huddled three children, their eyes puffy and running with pus. The boy’s stomach was swollen from malnutrition. On the bed lay a young baby crying. He had been born blind.³³⁴

Shortly after presenting this image, DeMuth recounts multiple instances of unpunished bombings, beatings, and murders of black Mississippians, including a child, at the hands of white Mississippians, both civilians and cops. These vivid images of extreme poverty and rampant violence depict living conditions in Mississippi so inhumane that readers would find it hard to believe that its country would allow such horrendous injustice.

These instances of *enargia* indicate that like the white volunteers who traveled south, the news media, like the white volunteers described in the first chapter, called upon antecedent genres from the antebellum era in order to portray the setting they encountered. Just as abolitionists engaged in a textual “campaign to make slavery meaningful, to make vivid and compelling an evil to which most Northerners had never born witness,”³³⁵ journalists with national publications sought to make palpable the evil of Jim Crow racism for northern readers who had never seen such atrocities for themselves in order to prompt action, as is the tradition of sentimental rhetoric.³³⁶

In response to depictions of such atrocities, most readers would wonder why and how those conditions could exist. Articles in *Newsweek* and *The New Republic* attempt to answer those questions by offering sociological and ethnographic-style commentaries on Mississippi, providing assessments of the state’s culture as familiar and homegrown as well as distinct from and in opposition to the rest of the country.

In “Letter from Jackson,” an August 29, 1964 *New Yorker* article, writer Calvin Trillin portrays Jackson as a typical American small town with an insidious twist:

the community bulletin board of a local radio station occasionally includes among reports of rummage sales and church suppers the announcement that Americans for the Preservation of the White Race will hold its weekly meeting that evening

and “all interested white people are invited to attend;” the chatty gray-haired lady in charge of a local bookstore, whose inventory appears to begin with the writings of the John Birch Society and move to the right, is available for political arguments with the civil-rights workers she refers to amiably as “those COFO things;” [. . .]³³⁷

Frank Trippett a *Newsweek* associate editor originally from Mississippi, offers a similar portrayal of Mississippi as a place where friendly banter is punctuated by threats of violence toward those perceived as different, indicating social literacy in white Mississippi involves learning the language of racism:

A well-educated man of early middle years tensely put a challenging question to his wife: “Would *you* kill one?”

But much of this was as good-humored as it was natural. It flowed out amidst laughter and jokes and nostalgic reminiscence. The “nigger problem” has been the hobby of every good Mississippian for a century, and the current state of crisis only places ancient attitudes in a new context containing new and explosive potential.³³⁸

In white Mississippi speech communities, overt racism is included centrally among the values and expectations of the populace. Racist expression was as much a part of white southern identity as Christianity and southern hospitality. Trippett explains that “Almost before he learns to spell the words, a white Mississippi boy masters the braggadocio of racial conflict (‘A nigger get smart with me I’ll be on him like white on rice and turn that nigger every way but loose’), and he utters these words as clarion proof of his masculinity.”³³⁹ According to mainstream news reports, racist values were so prevalent in

Mississippi as to be normalized, and anyone who tried to challenge them were seen to be, in the words of Governor Ross Barnett, “asking for trouble.”³⁴⁰ Despite their professed commitment to American values, white Mississippians’ commitment to the white supremacist cultural logics into which they had been socialized prompted them to resist the civil rights reforms that most of the country had more or less embraced. Jencks concludes that “Where the law coincides with local *mores*, Mississippians are law-abiding—not more so. But where the law is not backed up by local *mores* they treat it with contempt.”³⁴¹

Trippett further illustrates Mississippi’s tenuous position as both part of the United States and committed to its principles, and yet strongly committed to state beliefs and customs, even when those depart from beliefs and customs embraced by the rest of the country. When asked about the disappearance of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, the reported response of the average Mississippian is ambiguous: “Well, we wouldn’t condone it in *one* sense,” began one professional man, “—we would feel *sorry* that they were dead, and if we caught them we might even indict the men who killed them, but we would also feel that they were asking for trouble when they came down here trying to change the customs of other people.” Trippett situates this quote within a general adage about the state: “Never underestimate the Mississippian’s capacity for elaborately approving something he is against or disapproving something he is for.”³⁴² This dualistic capacity is clearly a function of Mississippi’s dualistic identity. On the one hand, Mississippians recognize that they are subject to federal law and don’t want to give the rest of the nation the impression that they would act outside of it. On the other hand, their identity as Mississippians requires them to disavow the rest of the country’s integrationist

turn and profess their loyalty to southern custom. As the professional man that Trippett quotes proves, those skilled in Mississippi discourse can nod to both viewpoints in a single statement.

Neither Jencks nor Trippett includes black Mississippians among the populations of average Mississippians. Despite the fact that their welfare and rights are at the heart of both articles, black Mississippians are an absent presence in both articles, spoken about but, it seems, not spoken to. No quotes from local black people on either the civil rights workers' disappearances or the state's ambivalent stance toward federal law. In these articles, as in many of the volunteers' letters and in sentimental abolitionist rhetoric from the previous century, southern black people emerge as images rather than agents, and as the impetus for action rather than actors whose efforts made the Summer Project possible.

Had national reporters interviewed black Mississippians, they would have revealed to the nation two very different views on the "Southern Way of Life" and the Summer Project. While white southern politicians claimed that both black and white southerners were content with the paternalistic interracial relations dictated by southern custom, the July 10, 1964 issue of "The Freedom News,"³⁴³ a newsletter published by the Holly Springs Freedom School, offered a very different explanation of how and why the "Southern Way of Life" persisted in Mississippi. The newsletter features short articles by local black citizens offering frank explanations for the situation in Mississippi. Ira Moore says of the Summer Project that:

The Negroes of Mississippi think their prayers are finally being answered. We have waited and prayed for so long for the day when we could get a job in any

factory that is in need of employees, go to any restaurant we would like to eat at, or sit on any seat on the bus that we chose.

Some of us are afraid to speak and do the things we think would help Mississippi. We are afraid because of our jobs, our children's lives, etc. We have heard over radios and T.V. about some of the Negroes that tried to help Mississippi. For example, Medgar Evers who was the Field Secretary of the NAACP and also a great leader. And the three freedom workers that are missing. The Negroes of Mississippi are praying that God has spared their lives and that they will soon be found alive³⁴⁴

For black Mississippians, Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were not asking for trouble by disturbing the peaceful societies bound together by mutually beneficial, well-established custom. They were standing up to the lawlessness and fatal intimidation that had kept black Mississippi helpless for over a century. Delois Polk's piece, published in the same newsletter, corroborates Moore's interpretation of the situation in Mississippi. Like Trippett does in his *Newsweek* article, Polk reports the results of informal conversations that aim to shed light on Mississippians' views of the Summer Project: "How do we as Negroes feel about the freedom workers coming into Mississippi is a question many are asking. After asking many of my friends and neighbors I have heard them say 'It's a miracle' or 'at least our prayers are being answered.' To us this is one of the most wonderful things that has happened since we were actually freed from slavery."³⁴⁵

If the Freedom Summer volunteers were disrupting southern custom, the newsletter makes clear that for black Mississippians this was a long overdue disruption.

While Polk and her friends and neighbors disagree with their white counterparts in this sense, they, like white Mississippians, view the Summer Project as a follow up to the Civil War. While for white southerners the Civil War was earth shattering, Polk makes clear the impact that the war had on the lives of black Mississippians was not nearly as transformative as those living outside of the south might assume. While the Emancipation Proclamation freed Polk's ancestors from slavery, it did not free them from the poverty, terror, and hopelessness imposed upon them by the "Southern Way of Life". Freedom Summer, black Mississippians hoped, might finish what the Civil War had started.

Like Polk, the national media positioned Freedom Summer as a second Civil War. White Mississippi, in its resistance to national norms, meticulously performed the role of deviant Other that the rest of America had assigned it. Its citizens professed identification with the rest of the nation by acknowledging its commitment to obeying federal laws while simultaneously placing its racist customs above those laws. Northern readers occupied a conflicted position vis-à-vis the south, just like their antebellum-era predecessors. Browne says that in the antebellum era "Northerners in particular were situated within a deeply ambivalent culture, where allegiances were taken seriously and loyalties seldom left unquestioned. The simultaneous claims of class and humanitarianism posed such a challenge to Northern audiences"³⁴⁶ Northerners in the civil rights era faced a similar predicament, which is nowhere more evident than in the *New Yorker Article*, "Letter From Jackson," in which page after page of thin columns of texts describing racial oppression and unrelenting violence in Mississippi are surrounded on each side, almost dwarfed, by eye catching advertisements for high-end goods and services featuring images such as thin white models with expensive hair and clothes and

European landscapes aiming to entice potential tourists. Despite this obvious conflict, the majority of Americans, along with their federal representatives outwardly condemned southern racist practices, and the activists with SNCC and COFO were portrayed as urging these entities to stand up for racial justice in the south, to which they had really only paid lip service for most of the previous century, in what amounted to a second Civil War.

Because northern concern for racial justice in the south had not been demanded on such a large scale in the last hundred years, comparisons of Freedom Summer to the Civil War and Reconstruction were inevitable in national media coverage. Indeed, articles from that time period frequently refer to this historical moment in framing descriptions of the project. A February 24, 1964 *Newsweek* article detailing Mississippi's preparations for the Summer Project, for instance, provides a concise but unmistakable assessment of the racial climate there by referring to "unreconstructed Jackson, Miss."³⁴⁷ In his ethnographic account of his hometown, Trippett makes this comparison and urges reconstruction-style federal intervention:

Just as it once took the Federal government to free the slaves, and will take it again to free the Mississippi black from subjugation, so in all likelihood will it take the Federal government to free the Mississippi white man from his self-imprisonment. So be it. Mississippi was not without eyes to see it coming. As they themselves say of so many victims of violence: they are asking for it.³⁴⁸

"Everybody's Scared," published in *Newsweek* a week before Trippett's article, though, emphasizes federal officials' reluctance to descend upon Mississippi in order to oversee a second reconstruction. Although President Lyndon Johnson had "ended segregation" in a

grand gesture that some might compare to the Emancipation Proclamation, *Newsweek* reported that he had no intention to send troops to occupy Mississippi, although “there were those in Washington who feared that the summer so grimly begun might yet end in a Federal occupation amounting to no less than a second Reconstruction.”³⁴⁹

A significant federal presence, if not a full federal occupation, was of course one of the SNCC leaders’ central aims with Freedom Summer. Reporters with the national media not only reported this stated aim, but often advocated for it by commenting on the legal possibility for federal intervention and suggesting federal apathy toward Mississippi, both before and during the summer. In so doing, the media prompted concern and in some cases even outrage toward federal reluctance on the part of their readers, thereby urging President Johnson, through the power of the vote, to intervene.

America’s Children: Building National Support

The federal occupation that Washington insiders feared, the same *Newsweek* article reports, “was precisely what some Negro leaders hoped for. With few new Negro voters to show after years of registration campaigning by the civil-rights professionals, the leaders mustered student amateurs as a means of involving the nation in their drive.”³⁵⁰ The volunteers’ position as rhetorical tools whose identification with the nation’s economically and politically influential circles constituted their primary appeal was no secret. In fact, it was clearly a common talking point, as several articles quote SNCC leaders explaining this aim. For example, a *New Yorker* article reports that despite fears of white volunteers taking over the project, southern white backlash, and the like, “the remarkable opportunity that the Summer Project presented for drawing the rest of the country into some involvement with Mississippi rather than a casual dismissal of the state” made volunteer involvement worth the risk.³⁵¹ The article goes on to quote James

Forman explaining that the goal of the summer was to “get the Justice Department to press certain suits” by “creat[ing] a public consensus, get[ting] people to call in about it,” in order to press the government to act where it otherwise would not.³⁵² Bringing wealthy volunteers southward was the strategy for generating the public attention necessary to create the necessary consensus. By including this quote, the article forwards Forman’s message by clearly stating the actions that SNCC hoped to generate through the Summer Project. If *New Yorker* readers wanted to support civil rights efforts, they could write to their senators and ask that they press the issue.

Similarly, Moses is quoted in a *Saturday Evening Post* article explaining that “‘It’s not just the publicity, [. . .] ‘These students bring the rest of the country with them. They’re from good schools, and their parents are influential. The interest of the country is awakened, and when that happens, the Government responds to that interest.’”³⁵³ Here Moses shows his understanding of the way a representative democracy works. Poor Mississippi black people having no influence due to their poverty and oppression, the nation’s politicians have little incentive to dedicate energy to ameliorating their plight. The volunteers’ involvement, however, provides incentive due to their connections to influential schools, family, and friends. Unapologetically, Moses states his intention to play by the system’s rules and use them to achieve SNCC’s ends.

Many national articles about the Summer Project turn a sympathetic eye on SNCC leaders’ massive recruitment. For instance, a *New Republic* article from July 25, 1964 confirms what all black Mississippians already knew, that in southern murder cases, mere citizenship is not enough to urge the federal government into action. “When we heard about the three freedom workers missing,” she writes in her “Freedom News” piece, “we

were hurt, but not shocked because many of our people have come up missing and nothing was said or done about it. Ever since I can remember I have been told of such cases from my people, but never have I heard it said on the news or over the T.V. or radio. This was known only to a few of us, not nation-wide.”³⁵⁴ Only victims with whom the public already identified garnered the desired response. “The recent discovery of two bodies in the Mississippi illustrates the fact that the ‘disappearance’ of an ordinary Mississippi Negro is seldom thoroughly investigated either by local or national authorities,” the *New Republic* article reports. “One must be ‘somebody’—a Medgar Evers or a member of the Mississippi Summer Project—to seize the attention of the FBI.”³⁵⁵

Volunteers with the Summer Project, although not famous, were “somebodies” because the nation’s voting middle class could easily identify with them. *Newsweek*’s June 29, 1964 article about the volunteers arriving for orientation begins with a narration of their arrival “by Volkswagen, in secondhand Fords, by bus and motorcycle, and they wore sneakers and sport shirts, bright print dresses and chinos and jean shorts.”³⁵⁶ Even if their own children, nieces, or neighbors were not traveling south for the Summer Project, the image of young people wearing the fashions of the day and driving their parents’ hand-me-down cars would ring familiar for most of the publication’s readers. Many Americans that summer knew someone who participated in the project. This description would remind readers who didn’t that it *could* have been someone they knew. These volunteers grew up in neighborhoods like their own, attended similar schools, and listened to similar music. They were the nation’s children, and thus evoked national identification.

Anticipating negative stereotypes into which readers might want to categorize the volunteers in order to dismiss them, reporters for the national media corrected these assumptions. Atwater, for instance, acknowledges that there are some long-haired, sandal types, but rejects the idea that the majority of volunteers fit this description: “‘the surprising thing is the fact that there aren’t more beatniks,’ said Dr. Joseph Brenner, an M.I.T. staff psychiatrist who was helping out the program. ‘They’re an extraordinarily healthy bunch of kids, mentally and physically. There aren’t a lot of starry-eyed idealists here.’”³⁵⁷ Reports like this make clear that the volunteers are not extremist outliers, but mature young people with realistic perspectives. They are, by all indicators, the best and the brightest, willing to give up their leisure time to stand up for their, and supposedly the nation’s, values.

One *Newsweek* article asks, “With the prospects of certain discomfiture and possible mayhem, what would lead vacationing collegians to forsake the beaches for darkest Mississippi?” It then quotes several volunteers, all with similar responses: One said, “‘I want to do what I think is right,’ said another, ‘to help others.’ ‘This all strikes a responsive chord in my humanness,’ said a third.”³⁵⁸ The *Saturday Evening Post* article also constructs the average volunteer as compassionate, patriotic, intelligent, and self-reflective:

“The movement is really one of chastened idealism,” said Barney Frank, who is studying for his doctorate in political science at Harvard. “We’re not really making a one hundred percent commitment to what is a very tough fight that lasts the year round.” [Another volunteer told the press] “As to why we’re going down, if anyone gave a simple answer, I’d be suspicious.” He smiled a little self-

consciously. “Part of it is the American dream, you know, and part is shame. I feel a very real sense of guilt. But I hope I’m not going down there to get my little red badge of liberalism, to be able to go back home and tell everyone how I spent two days in the Jackson jail.”³⁵⁹

The collective image of the volunteers projected by the national media is of thoughtful students concerned with the welfare of others, willing to risk their own safety and resistant to praise. Far from rebelling, their reasons for going south reflect the values with which most children of their generation were raised. Encountering these descriptions whenever they opened a news magazine would have made it difficult for most white Americans to ignore the summer’s events in Mississippi.

These same readers would probably also worry about the boys and girls next door transporting themselves to such a radically different geographical, economic, and social context, and the national news stories occasionally stoke that worry. For example although *Newsweek*’s October 1963 report on “How Whites Feel About Negroes” reports notions about race that are increasingly progressive for the era, “Ninety per cent of all whites throughout the country said they would be concerned if their teen-ager dated a Negro.”³⁶⁰ While a significant number of white Americans favored integration and supported the civil rights bill, interracial dating was still taboo in 1964. Knowing this, a conversation reported in a June 29 *Newsweek* article about the Summer Project volunteer orientation seems especially provocative: “‘We have talked about interracial dating,’ said a dark-haired girl during a training session in Western College’s Peabody Hall Auditorium. ‘Is there a policy you’d like for us to follow?’”³⁶¹ The revelation that the nation’s white daughters were expressing interest in interracial dating before they even

left orientation must have arisen suspicion about the project, its organizers, and their intentions. Were America's cherished children, in the process of working for the racial justice they supported, going to engage in the one type of "race mixing" that remained taboo? If anyone was eager to break this taboo, the article makes clear, it was not the project's organizers. Moses, according to the article, "gently explained that in Mississippi there just isn't any place for an interracial couple to go."³⁶² A Mississippi lawyer explained further that "What might seem a perfectly innocent thing up North might seem a lewd and obscene act in Mississippi [. . .] A tall Mississippi Negro bluntly disposed of the question to one white volunteer. 'This mixed-couple stuff just doesn't go in Mississippi,' he said, 'and remember, in two months, you'll be going home where you'll be safe and sound. I've gotta live there.'"³⁶³

Despite the occasional reported tendency to push the nation's limits of propriety, the national media by and large upheld the image of the volunteers as All-American children, embodying its image and enacting its values. This is perhaps never clearer than in the *Good Housekeeping* article in which Andrew Goodman's mother discusses her response to his departure for Mississippi and his untimely death. When Andrew announced his intention to go to Mississippi, Mrs. Goodman admits that she and her husband first reacted with apprehension. But "our dominant feeling was pride. "If we had a single word to discourage him I don't know how we could have lived with ourselves. Andy had grown up in a home that valued honest, serious, searching talk, not only about ourselves but also other people and their worlds."³⁶⁴ His traveling to Mississippi was the Goodmans' careful rearing come to fruition. It was the American spirit of equality and service put to practical action. People like Andrew Goodman, she reveals, won hearts

across the nation, even those of southerners who did not agree with his politics. For instance, Mrs. Goodman reports receiving a letter from a Mississippi mother expressing sympathy. “Your Andy and my son would have enjoyed talking,” she wrote. “My heartfelt sorrow to you both.”³⁶⁵

The sympathetic media attention devoted to the volunteers is evidence of Freedom Summer’s rhetorical success. SNCC’s intended audience responded in exactly the way they wanted them to by paying sustained attention to Mississippi and pressuring the federal powers to do the same. But the national media also reports that public sympathy for the volunteers backfired on SNCC leaders in the form of accusations that they were sacrificing the volunteers for their own political ends. According to a July 13, 1964 *Newsweek* article:

a Louis Harris poll showed that a national majority disapproved of the campaign, though most Americans favored sending in U.S. troops if necessary. And some sympathetic Northern commentators—The *Washington Post* and Joseph Alsop among them—were angry because that seemed to be precisely what some campaign leaders wanted. “The organizers who sent these young people into Mississippi must have wanted, even hoped for, martyrs” Alsop wrote- for the “avowed aim” of bringing in troops.³⁶⁶

The *Newsweek* article immediately follows this accusation with rejections of it by SNCC leaders and volunteers, responding that the Project was carefully planned, and that volunteers were repeatedly warned of the danger before traveling to Mississippi. But what is left unsaid but implied by the article’s direction toward the subject reinforces the construction of Mississippi as another country whose citizens lie outside of the federal

government's purview. This article and others like it frame the issue as one solely concerning SNCC, the volunteers, the public, and the federal government, largely excluding the perspectives of Mississippi citizens, particularly its black citizens. In reporting the suggestion that SNCC organizers are responsible for the deaths of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, media reports implicitly exonerate white Mississippians for their crimes while denying their status as American citizens. This construction also unapologetically places higher value on the lives of the white, northern students than on those of the black Mississippians subject daily and for generations to the violence of southern whites without hope of federal attention.

In an exception to this stance, the *New Yorker* acknowledges the accusations against SNCC, noting that "Moses is understandably irritated at the implication that he is a Machiavellian who sits in an office somewhere [. . .] sending innocents to the slaughter,"³⁶⁷ but clearly sides with SNCC, reframing the issue as one of national apathy toward Mississippi, rather than of SNCC's use of college students as pawns in a master plan. The article goes on:

Still, they acknowledge that protection for Negroes in Mississippi is likely to be provided only when whites are involved and that ordinary pressures, such as publicizing incidents and writing to congressmen, would probably not have brought in the F.B.I. if the murders had not occurred. No sophisticated study of public opinion is needed to establish the fact that in the United States, North or South, a white life is considered to be of more value than a Negro life.³⁶⁸

SNCC leaders took these accusations as another opportunity to ask America to weigh its practices against its stated values, and to urge federal intervention in the state. Moses

explains that they decided not to send volunteers into the areas where white citizens are most heavily armed, and where he had been beaten in the past. “So we will go in [to the most dangerous areas of Mississippi] ourselves. Then nobody can accuse us of sending (the students) in for the purpose of getting killed. Then the whole question will be whether the country will do for us and for Negro people what they have done for the volunteers.”³⁶⁹

The national media forwarded messages like this to the Summer Project’s intended audience, putting SNCC’s demands into conversation with the government’s responses and the journalists’ assessment of their responsibilities and capabilities. A *Newsweek* article on the disappearance of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner suggests that the president, although responsive to SNCC’s requests, hoped to commit as little resources as possible to Mississippi:

Lyndon B. Johnson quickly established a Federal presence in the state- first, FBI reinforcements, then ex-CIA director Allen Dulles, finally 100 sailors to help in the search. Plainly, he hoped that would be enough. But he was under heavy pressure to take the next step—dispatching U.S marshals or even troops to Mississippi to protect the students if local lawmen would not or could not.³⁷⁰

Johnson is an important character in the national media’s Freedom Summer narrative. In terms of direct action, Johnson and his administration look more like villains than heroes. Jencks, for instance, provides detail about the president’s potential to lend aid to Mississippi residents and contrasts that potential with his relative apathy toward the state:

The President has authority to dispatch troops, marshals, FBI agents, former CIA Directors, or anyone else he thinks may help preserve or restore law and order.

Both marshals and FBI agents have authority to make arrests, with or without a warrant, if they believe a violation of federal law is taking place in their presence or has just taken place. This authority has, however, been used extremely sparingly.³⁷¹

In a September 14, 1964 article in *The Nation*, Freedom Summer volunteer Elizabeth Sutherland provides an image of the FBI that had been implied but not stated so directly in media coverage over the course of the summer: “One thing seemed sure about the FBI: if an endangered volunteer had a parent of power or influence, quick action could be counted on.”³⁷² Statements like these portray the president and other federal agents as self-serving, devoting only enough attention to the abysmal situation in Mississippi to keep them from looking bad in the eyes of those with the power to impact their careers.

But when confronted face to face with citizens directly impacted by the violence in the state, Johnson goes from an apathetic bureaucrat to a person with a compassionate bedside manner. Mrs. Goodman recounts a trip to Washington that she and her husband took with the Schwerners, where they met with Robert Kennedy and then President Johnson. She says of the president that, “When he extended his hand to me, he changed from a public figure resembling his newspaper picture to a human being genuinely concerned about the life of my son. I could tell. There is no fooling a mother about this.”³⁷³ This image indicates that as much as Johnson may have wanted to distance himself from the problems of the south, the Summer Project made that impossible.

Despite their criticisms, media sources acknowledge Johnson’s commitment of resources to Mississippi and deem this a victory for SNCC. An August 24, 1964 *Newsweek* article concludes that the mild successes of Freedom Summer came at a

tremendous cost, the loss of three lives. But the murders, according to *Newsweek*, also prompted the project's most notable success: "They drew the attention—and the anger—of the nation. They forced Washington to set up a well-publicized Federal presence: a 153-man FBI force based in Jackson."³⁷⁴ Similarly, Atwater declares the project's historical significance, citing unprecedented FBI arrests and Robert Kennedy's dispatching of seven Justice Department lawyers to Mississippi.³⁷⁵

The Troops: Volunteers as Soldiers for Freedom

In relation to the conversation between SNCC leaders and federal officials, the media positioned the volunteers as pawns successfully leveraged to generate SNCC's desired results. These negotiations were of great concern to SNCC leaders, but of greater concern to the volunteers were their everyday lives in Mississippi and their interactions with the state's citizens, both black and white. Coverage of the project occasionally mention interactions between the volunteers and black Mississippians, like a *Newsweek* report describing a canvassing project: "The boy was young, white, and earnest, a student from a faraway school called Stanford. The man was old, black, and impassive, a Mississippian whose world runs no farther than the horizon line where the pale, hot, delta sky touches the flat cotton land."³⁷⁶ Using visual imagery and poetic language, this passage portrays the vast social distance between black Mississippi residents and northern white volunteers, depicting these interactions as extraordinary in their rarity. Other articles covering such interactions for national audiences depict such actions similarly. But focus on black Mississippi's reception of the volunteers is scant, as articles almost never quote black Mississippians. Instead, they follow the precedent set by abolition era sentimentalist and early 20th century modernist white writers depicting people of color described in chapter one, depicting black Mississippians largely through

sensory imagery. Therefore, black Mississippians' views of the Summer Project have little impact on the national media's characterization of the volunteers. The southern perspective that dominates mainstream media coverage of the Summer Project, instead, is that of white Mississippi.

The preoccupation with the civil rights activists vs. white Mississippi dynamic among reporters from the national media results in an image of the volunteers as soldiers on the front lines of battle. That voter registration drives, schools, and community centers set up by one group of Americans to serve another could be constructed as an act of war by the national media seems at first overly dramatic or metaphorical, but *Newsweek* coverage of Mississippi officials' militant reaction to the planned project indicates that it is not. A February 24, 1964 article titled "Allen's Army" sets the tone for future coverage of the Summer Project, reporting that in preparation for the Summer Project, Jackson Mayor Allen Thompson increased his police force, "bought 200 new shotguns, stockpiled tear gas, and issued gas masks to every man."³⁷⁷ The article goes on to list the vehicles the governor acquired, which include trailers to transport protestors to "two big detention compounds. [. . .] But the pride of Allen's Army is Thompson's Tank—the already popular nickname for a 13,000- pound armored battlewagon built to the mayor's specifications at roughly \$1 a pound."³⁷⁸ While the article subtly pokes fun at Allen by providing a comical image of the tank's failure on its first mission, when tear gas went off inside "and all twelve men stumbled out crying,"³⁷⁹ the reporter nevertheless forwards Allen's interpretation of the project as war, adopting this metaphor and extending it to coverage of SNCC's plans for the project. SNCC's leaders are "warhawks," the volunteers their "nonviolent army."³⁸⁰ Movement leaders were well aware of this

characterization and objected to it. According to Roberts and Klibanoff, when asked his opinion about news coverage of the summer, Reverend King commended the media on a job well done, but added that “the focus on coverage of violence concerned him, [. . .] especially when the focus of the movement was on nonviolence.”³⁸¹

Despite the term’s obvious internal contradiction and its incongruity with Freedom Summer’s aims, the “nonviolent army” characterization stuck to the volunteers in media coverage throughout the summer. So while both the media and the volunteers looked to the Civil War era to structure their understanding of Freedom Summer, they applied this gestalt in significantly different ways. The volunteers most commonly construct themselves as abolitionists, while the media construct them as Union troops. Several examples directly characterizing the volunteers as soldiers can be found in national publications.

Mrs. Goodman, for instance, introduces her *Good Housekeeping* article with a familiar scene: “One morning my son Andrew kissed me good-by and went off to fight for freedom. I never saw him alive again. As any mother who has lost a son in battle knows, this is a terrible thing to bear.”³⁸² Readers not familiar with Goodman’s story would picture Andy in a freshly pressed uniform, sporting a high and tight haircut, preparing to board an airplane while Mrs. Goodman and the rest of the family waving American flags. Having conjured this image, Goodman quickly constructs a different one likely to cause readers some cognitive dissonance: “But for me the feeling is different. Andrew died not in war but in peace. He was slain not by a foreign enemy but by a band of his fellow Americans.”³⁸³ She is not talking about Vietnam, but a second Civil War.

A June *Newsweek* article justifies Goodman's perception of Mississippi as a war zone by reminding readers of white Mississippians' reaction to the arrival of 1000 volunteers, much like Andy, in the state: "To white Mississippi, the 175 Northern students who arrived last week, and the 800 more still to come—seemed an invading army bent on destroying its way of life."³⁸⁴ The article goes on to describe bombings and other terrorizing acts in anticipation of the volunteers' arrival in the state. An earlier *Newsweek* article applies the war metaphor to orientation, identifying the shadow that Mississippi violence cast over orientation: The reporter says of the argument over interracial dating described earlier: "Here was but one hint of friction between the seasoned rights workers and the green volunteers [. . .] No matter. Petty conflicts—inevitable wherever green troops join battle-tested veterans—were forgotten by the weekend [. . .]."³⁸⁵ Only those who had not experienced firsthand the violent acts of which white Mississippians were capable would consider testing their limits so casually.

Anyone following these stories could see that the description of the Summer Project as war was not entirely metaphorical. Mississippi whites had consistently proven their willingness to resort to extreme violence in order to preserve their "Southern Way of Life". Atwater reports in his *Saturday Evening Post* article that, "When [Moses] tells the student volunteers about the dangers of civil-rights work in Mississippi, his words carry the weight of first-hand experience. In Amite County, for example, a white man beat him with brass knuckles as he led a Negro to register [. . .]."³⁸⁶ Reporters themselves experienced the white south's wrath, and were perceived as enemies of equal or greater threat to white southerners than the volunteers. Roberts and Klibanoff report that "Reporters ran into hostility at nearly every corner. They were confronted by thugs

banging on their motel doors. They got threatening calls in the middle of the night. They were followed.”³⁸⁷ Despite their nonviolent intent and the legality of their actions, any “outsider” brave enough to enter Mississippi had to prepare for the worst.

White Mississippians’ consistent attacks against SNCC workers and retaliation against local black people in the form of firings, home and church burnings, and worse made voter registration drives resemble war missions, as Atwater describes: “The only way the Snick staffers can reach these Negroes- to talk to them about registering to vote, for example- is by sneaking onto the plantations at night like guerrillas and eluding the patrols of men equipped with high-powered rifles and walkie-talkies.”³⁸⁸

Over and over, the national media reported details of battles to their audience, listing the atrocities committed by the “foreign enemy,” white Mississippians. As with foreign enemies before them, the media found a concise and vaguely derogatory label for white Mississippians. Just as the Japanese during WWII were referred to as “Japs,” during the summer war of 1964, white Mississippians were referred to in the national media simply as “whites.” *Newsweek* articles use this term most frequently, as with the July 6, 1964 article, “Everybody’s Scared,” which vacillates between using “white” as an adjective when referring to northern participants in the Summer Project, and as a noun when referring to Mississippians. That article, for example, describes northern victims of southern violence as a “graying, corpulent, white Episcopalian minister from Farmingdale, N.J.” and “a white teen-ager bloodied by a policeman’s billy.”³⁸⁹ One of their attackers, on the other hand, is referred to as “a sun-scorched white.”³⁹⁰ In a *Nation* article assessing the drama that unfolded between activist and white Mississippians over the summer, Elizabeth Sutherland notes that “None of COFO’s radio installations on the

ground was destroyed by whites, although one irate policeman in Natchez bent the antenna at project headquarters there.”³⁹¹ *Newsweek* articles use similar language to refer to white Mississippians consistently throughout the summer, as in the July 13, 1964 article, “Troubled State, Troubled Time,” which refers to a “carload of whites” harassing canvassers, and to the “Klan-ridden southwest territory around Natchez and McComb,”³⁹² conjuring images of Klan members multiplying like cockroaches, infesting the area and resisting extermination. The image of white Mississippi emerges in the minds of readers as dirty, uneducated, violent, ugly, and somehow less than human. They are the loathsome foreign enemy that the brave volunteer soldiers are working to take down.

Despite, or perhaps because of their position as antagonist, white Mississippians are given a voice in national media reports, unlike their black counterparts. Most if not all of the quotes included illustrate a mentality that is unthinkable to the publication’s readers. In his *Saturday Evening Post* article, Atwater paraphrases the crowds of white Mississippians reacting to the reported disappearance of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. He says they “told reporters that it was all a publicity stunt. That nigger and those two nigger-lovers were safe up in New York, or maybe Chicago, drinking beer and reading the headlines.”³⁹³ A *Newsweek* article quotes a white Mississippian offering an alternate perspective on the disappearance: “‘I tell you how they can make ‘em come up,’ scoffed one angular, bird-necked farmer, watching the boats drag the Pearl. ‘Just wave a welfare check over the water and they’ll come right up and git it.’”³⁹⁴ Despite the cynical view toward the missing workers, the national media suggested that Mississippians were not aiming to escalate confrontation with federal authority by continuing to engage in maximum violence against the Summer Project participants. Atwater quotes a Baptist

preacher at a meeting for Americans for the Preservation of the White Race reasoning that “[t]he day we kill three or four, they’d be martial law in Mississippi. My friends, we have to make up our minds that we’re not going to run off at the head.”³⁹⁵ Despite acknowledging such urgings to check violence enough to avoid federal intervention, Atwater ensures that his readers understand the volatile nature of Mississippi culture, and the danger that volunteers still face, despite any appeals for moderation. He concludes the article with a quote from McComb mayor Gordon Burt, declaring “I don’t care what the devil happens to those people who come in here to stir up trouble.”³⁹⁶

Because of their political power in the state and the shock value of their statements, white Mississippians are given a voice in national media articles covering the Summer Project. Their outlandish quotes support the construction of Mississippi as a foreign country for readers in the northern and western parts of the country, and help to illustrate the grave situation volunteers faced. By quoting white Mississippians almost exclusively in order to provide the southern perspective, national media articles also reinforce the oppression of black Mississippians by denying them the opportunity to provide their own perspectives on the Summer Project and the volunteers. In neglecting the voices of black Mississippians, national media articles present an incomplete image of Freedom Summer to their readers and miss the opportunity to foster identification between their readers and black Mississippi residents.

Spreading the Word: Missionaries of Freedom

Although black Mississippi citizens are rarely quoted in national media articles, occasionally reporters, particularly those with *Newsweek*, characterize the volunteers in relation to them. In this relationship, the volunteers transform from soldiers to missionaries. Instead of brave heroes confronting the enemy, in these constructions they

are characterized as religious enthusiasts traveling to far off places to deliver the Good News.

After the angry tension that met them upon their arrival in the state had subsided somewhat, “into sullen hostility,” a July 13, 1964 *Newsweek* article reports, “the young missionaries found the new wall: a barrier of suspicion and fear and unlettered apathy that divides them, and most white men, from the Mississippi Negro.”³⁹⁷ This article, like most others, constructs Mississippi as a foreign country and the volunteers as explorers on a mission. In this particular construct, they appear as missionaries trying unsuccessfully to socialize the benighted natives and convert them to modern religion, embodying the image of “white savior.” An August 24, 1964 *Newsweek* article follows up on the volunteers’ progress in this role, reporting that “They had come with the beginning of summer, and for eight weeks they had evangelized the black men of Mississippi with textbooks, lectures, and calls to political action.”³⁹⁸ The students’ evangelical attempts were occasionally successful in breaking through the wall of resistance, as some black Mississippians attended Freedom Schools and registered to vote. Rather than a partnership between the activists and the community, this article and others like it position the white volunteer and the black Mississippian as active and passive, persuader and persuaded. The details of the school interactions and registration drives are passed over in favor of their results, a black Mississippi forever changed, seemingly by volunteers’ efforts rather than by the compromise, collaboration, and careful communication across differences in race, class, gender, and geography that activists say characterized Freedom Summer.

Conclusion

The same *Newsweek* article that characterizes the volunteers' work in Mississippi as an evangelical mission concludes that the Freedom Summer volunteers "had wrought no revolution in Mississippi's rigidly segregated way of life, though three of them had died trying. But it was equally certain that Mississippi would never quite be the same."³⁹⁹ This sense of finality at the volunteers' return home and assessment of moderate success sums up the national media's general approach to Freedom Summer. Media sources had behaved exactly as SNCC workers expected them too. They spotlighted the white volunteers, obscured the movement's local, grassroots origins, and largely silenced the local black citizens who made such strong impressions on the volunteers. However, they did their part by helping SNCC and COFO leaders achieve their aims of attracting attention to the plight of black Mississippians and prompting action on their behalf. This article also urges readers not to lose sight of the south. They had not, the article says, "penetrated the wall of white prejudice." And COFO certainly did not intend to leave Mississippi. "Project leaders already were laying plans to continue the campaign the year around with perhaps 100 of the summer volunteers—and to launch similar projects in sections of Arkansas, Georgia, and Alabama."⁴⁰⁰ The activists that the media had transformed into generals did not intend to retreat from enemy territory. Although they had won some battles, the national media made clear to their readers that the war was not over.

Chapter 5:
Freedom Summer Fifty Years Later: How History Constructs the Volunteers

Last summer as I was making dinner and beginning to think about this chapter, NPR's *Weekend Edition* ran a story about the song "Dancing in the Street" by Martha and the Vandellas. In the interview, Mark Kurlansky, who recently wrote a book about the song, discussed its role as a protest anthem due to its serendipitous emergence in the pivotal summer of 1964. He listed Freedom Summer as one of the events that made the summer of 1964 so crucial in America's history and particularly in American citizens' fight for social justice. I often hear the project listed in this way, as one of the important events of the tumultuous sixties, along with the march on Washington, the Vietnam war and protests against it, the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, the growing popularity of the Beatles, and so on. This is fitting, as the Freedom Summer Project was one of the most publicized events of the civil rights movement and marked a shift in racial ideologies in the United States.⁴⁰¹ But when colleagues, friends, or acquaintances ask me about my dissertation topic, unless my interlocutor was alive and aware during the summer, they generally don't know what Freedom Summer was. Those who have heard of it either learned of it in a college class or from references to it in popular culture. Because popular culture has such a strong hand in shaping collective memory, this chapter examines popular texts that represent Freedom Summer retrospectively in order to answer these questions: On the verge of Freedom Summer's 50th anniversary, what lasting impact does the Summer Project have on American rhetorical discourse? In what ways is it depicted and used rhetorically in popular retrospective representations? What aspects of the project are emphasized and which get less attention?

I begin the chapter by analyzing three films based on Freedom Summer: the 1988 blockbuster *Mississippi Burning*, which follows two FBI agents in their search for three missing Civil Rights Workers in the fictional Jessup County, Mississippi; *Murder in Mississippi*, a 1990 made-for-TV movie that depicts Chaney and Schwerner in the weeks leading up to their death, with Goodman joining them in the latter part of the film; and finally, *Neshoba*, a 2008 documentary that depicts directors Micki Dickoff and Tony Pagano's journey to Mississippi for the retrial of preacher and former Ku Klux Klan member Edgar Ray Killen. According to David Blakesley, "Film rhetoric—the visual and verbal signs and strategies that shape film experience—directs our attention in countless ways, but always with the aim of fostering identification and all that that complex phenomenon implies."⁴⁰² Continuing this dissertation's focus on the role of identification in the rhetorics of Freedom Summer, my analysis focuses on how the films direct viewers' attention, and with whom and what viewers are made to identify. I also consider the films in their function as reflective/ exploratory rhetoric. Although Beale's taxonomy focuses on written texts, I argue that the films considered here qualify as reflective/ exploratory rhetoric because, first, they exhibit two of the four features that Beale lists as defining this type of rhetoric:

1. the general purpose, not so much to persuade or inform as to stimulate and entertain an audience, while sharing and reflecting upon experience;
2. an informal, conversational, intimate, and often rambling style;
3. the cultivation of individuality, in both style and viewpoint;
4. a frequent use of narrative and dramatic modes, in ways that approach poetic.⁴⁰³

The films qualify as rhetoric by Beale's definition because they are concerned with the state and destiny of communities and influence opinion on these matters. They qualify as reflective/ exploratory rhetoric because they exhibit features one and four in Beale's list. Features two and three don't apply directly to these films because they describe the narrative voice found in written essays and short stories. The difference in medium negates the necessity for a narrative voice as it is traditionally imagined, although certainly one could argue that directorial choices like camera angle, dialogue, score, and so on cultivate individuality of perspective as well. The second, and perhaps more important, reason that the films fit into the category of reflective/ exploratory rhetoric is because they employ the conceptual patterns of paradox, enigma, and emblem, which Beale attributes to this category of rhetoric.⁴⁰⁴ These conceptual patterns play a significant role in evoking particular identifications for each film's viewers, and thus guide my analysis.

I conclude the chapter with an analysis of Alice Walker's short story, "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells," which focuses on a complicated friendship between the black narrator and her white friend, Luna, during and after their time together as Freedom Summer volunteers. In my analysis I examine Walker's use of the reflective/ exploratory form to listen rhetorically to the multitude of voices that come to bear on her relationship with Luna.

Mississippi Burning: Black Activism Takes a Back Seat

*Mississippi Burning*⁴⁰⁵ is a fictional story closely based on the disappearance of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner and the FBI search for their bodies. The film, directed by Alan Parker and starring Gene Hackman and Willem Dafoe, was a blockbuster in its day, winning an Oscar for "best cinematography" and 19 other movie awards in 1989.⁴⁰⁶

The DVD case quotes the *Los Angeles Times* as calling it “A startling history lesson. A chilling detective tale,” and that is likely how many viewers experienced it. The film’s details make clear that the film is not meant to accurately represent the events on which it is based. The names of the disappeared civil rights workers are never mentioned, and the county in which they disappear has a fictionalized name. The names of the KKK members who are eventually indicted for the murders are also fictionalized. The plot and characters are fictional, but the social dynamics they embody are historically accurate.

Despite being set during Freedom Summer and revolving around its defining moment, *Mississippi Burning* is not *about* the Freedom Summer Project, as its viewers see project participants during only a few scenes. The first scene shows a station wagon driving down a deserted, country road at night. The car holds the three civil rights workers, with the two white men in front and the black man in back. At first, viewers hear only the sound of crickets as they get the first glimpse of the car and the men inside. Then, as two cars come into view behind the station wagon, ominous music begins. The civil rights workers engage in nervous conversation, realizing that one of the pursuers is a cop. The driver takes a sharp turn into the woods, and the pursuers eventually catch up with them. During the civil rights workers’ brief dialogue, the black worker speaks only once and the driver, who looks like he represents Schwerner, directs things, asking the other two to be quiet and let him handle things. Once they are stopped, a strong, hateful, menacing white southerner peers into the driver’s side. In their dialogue, the driver calls him “man,” which angers the white man. The white southerner pulls out a gun and shoots the driver in the head. After this gruesome scene the screen goes blank and viewers hear two other gunshots, and a southern accent saying “you only left me a nigger but at least I

shot me a nigger,” and laughter following. As that line is being spoken, the caption “Mississippi, 1964.” flashes onto the dark screen.

This scene is the only one in which civil rights workers are given dialogue, and offers the only clue that viewers get into the workers’ personalities, motives, and social dynamics. For this reason, the car scene is necessarily emblematic of the Summer Project in the film. As Beale explains, the emblem “is the object, scene, or action which symbolizes or suggests some larger idea or experience.”⁴⁰⁷ As an emblem, the scene depicts the Summer Project in ways that its participants would likely find objectionable. First, the Chaney character is depicted as being in the back seat of the station wagon. Although this may have been true, in the last known reports of the three, during their arrest, Chaney was in the driver’s seat. The cinematic choice to put the white men in front and the black man in back relegates local black people to a “back seat” position in the movement and positions northern white activists as movement leaders. This was a common perception in 1964, and at times white volunteers did overshadow local blacks, which, as chapter two shows, movement leaders found to be problematic. However, most writers who were involved with Freedom Summer attest to the fact that the project grew out of a grassroots movement rooted in the local black communities. Chaney’s position in the car, as well as his lack of dialogue in comparison to the white characters, subtly suggests otherwise.

Second, the Schwerner character’s choice to address his white southern antagonist as “man” is unlikely and somewhat insulting. As a seasoned civil rights worker, Schwerner would have known not to speak to a white southerner in such a casual way, especially in a volatile situation like the one depicted here. Even Goodman, who at the

time of his death had just completed his volunteer orientation, would have known to speak deferentially because protocols for interacting with white southerners were a common topic at orientation. Freedom Summer organizers and their guest speakers constantly reiterated to volunteers that white southerners would feel nothing but antagonistic toward them, and that they were ready to act on that feeling with violence. They were taught, furthermore, to act politely and even deferential toward southern white cops, especially in roadside interactions like the one depicted in the scene. Having been prepared for interactions like this, no one in the car would have been as incredulous toward the pursuers as the Schwerner character is depicted to be, and they would have tried to be as diplomatic as possible, referring to the white antagonist as “sir,” if anything, but certainly not as “man.” The result is that viewers are left with an image of the civil rights workers as well meaning but naïve. Viewers leave the scene horrified by what has happened to the workers and feeling sympathy for them, but not fully identifying with them.

Instead, viewers’ attention is directed toward the stars of the film, Agent Rupert Anderson (Gene Hackman) and Agent Alan Ward (Willem Dafoe). These two FBI agents, who first appear after the credits, are the characters with whom viewers are meant to identify. This focus has drawn criticism from writers familiar with the civil rights movement, including Mary C. Curtis, who writes in her less than favorable review of *The Help* that “On the scale of movies of this sort, it was less obnoxious than *The Blind Side* and miles ahead of *Mississippi Burning*, which portrayed J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI men as heroes, when in reality they were too busy planting microphones near Martin Luther King Jr. to protect civil rights demonstrators.”⁴⁰⁸ This refusal of protection is well documented

in Freedom Summer organizers' and observers' commentary about the project. The PBS *Eyes on the Prize* documentary about Freedom Summer shows J. Edgar Hoover declaring that protection of demonstrators would be beyond the FBI's scope.⁴⁰⁹ Despite this, after well-publicized prodding from civil rights activists, the FBI undertook a full-scale investigation into the three workers' disappearances, and the film's tension revolves around the tension between the two head agents and the white southerners they encounter.

Aside from Frances McDormand, who plays the lonely wife of racist deputy Clinton Pell and the object of Agent Anderson's affection, the main representations of white Mississippi culture are mostly men in positions of authority: policemen, business owners, the mayor, etc. Most of these characters are members of the Ku Klux Klan, although they of course deny this to the FBI agents. Southern white opinion about the Summer Project and the three missing workers is also provided in "news clips" in which average citizens are depicted speaking to reporters. In a tense barbershop scene, one man tells Anderson that, "Our Negroes were happy. They never complained until those beatnik college kids showed up," to which Anderson replies, laughing, "They didn't dare." Other characters complain of being mischaracterized by the media, defend their desire to preserve the white race, and claim that the disappearance is a hoax. One citizen tells the press that if the rights workers are in the swamp, "they asked for it." Another citizen is quoted realistically saying that he has heard that "J. Edgar Hoover said that Martin Luther King is a Communist. I never saw that myself, but that's what they say." The mayor even utters one of Tom Ethridge's "Mississippi Notebook" lines from the Jackson *Clarion-Ledger*, complaining to a reporter that northerners have wrong

perceptions of Mississippians, assuming that they eat “sow-belly and cornpone three times a day.”⁴¹⁰ Meanwhile, as FBI investigation intensifies, so does KKK activity. One scene juxtaposes busses full of Navy personnel arriving to drag the swamps with scenes of a Molotov cocktail flying toward a humble house with a makeshift sign reading “Freedom” in the front, churches burning, and an old black man being ripped out of bed by white supremacists in time for them to set his church on fire. Merely ignorant or brutally violent, the film provides largely accurate portrayals of white Mississippians that cast them as formidable villains.

There to bring the villains to justice are Agent Anderson, a fifty-something agent born and raised in Mississippi, and Agent Ward, a clean-cut, tense thirty-something assigned to chair the case because he was with James Meredith when he integrated Mississippi. These two agents are emblematic of the “moderate” response to civil rights activism from both the north and the south, and of the northern, liberal response, respectively. These alignments are best exemplified in a scene near the beginning of the film in which Anderson asks Ward, “You admire these kids, don’t you?”

Ward replies, “Don’t you?”

“I think they’re being used,” Anderson says. “I think they’re being sent here just to get their heads cracked off.”

“Did it ever occur to you they believe in what they’re doing?” Ward asks.

“Did it ever occur to them they’re gonna end up dead?”

This dialogue nicely sums up the public debate about the volunteers’ participation in the Summer Project in 1964. As both agents are flawed but likable, viewers are free to identify more strongly with either one or the other. Despite the philosophical and tactical

differences, Ward and Anderson agree on one thing, as do film viewers, and that is that the villains of the KKK need to be brought to justice. Viewers grow to despise the KKK characters more and more as they respond to increased FBI pressure with increased violence against black Mississippians. This makes it ultimately satisfying to watch the film's heroes decide, after discovering the three bodies, to get information from the white Mississippians by any means necessary.

In one particularly vindicating scene, an undercover black FBI agent, far more muscular and intimidating than agents Ward and Anderson, is flown into Mississippi in order to abduct the mayor and bring him to a dilapidated shack, tell him a story about white men cutting off a black Mississippian's balls and depositing them in a coffee cup, and threaten to do the same to him unless he comes clean about the murder. This scene appropriates the image of black hyper-masculinity, which according to Jeffrey A. Brown, rose to prominence in the mid-20th century "as a means to resist the emasculation of racism."⁴¹¹

Problematic and stereotypical as it is, this is the only scene in which black resistance to Mississippi's impervious Jim Crow system is portrayed as successful. Average black Mississippians are portrayed almost exclusively as victims of white violence in the film, rather than as agents of a grassroots movement marked by endless debate, strategizing, and organizing that resulted in small victories. For this reason, viewers are not encouraged to identify with these characters, but with the nameless black agent whose larger-than-life image of otherworldly strength is fortified by his association with the FBI. Like sentimental portrayals of black characters that position them as unbelievably noble, this portrayal is dehumanizing because it fails to recognize black

characters as people with both strengths and weaknesses. The black character is pure strength that appears to do the white agents' bidding and disappears after this task is completed. Because this agent is acting with and therefore identified with the FBI, this gratifying scene directs viewers' identification toward the federal establishment rather than toward the average black Mississippians whose efforts are responsible for the reluctant FBI presence in the state.

After the mayor reveals the facts of the murder under duress, the white FBI agents engage in various forms of retribution against and manipulation of the known murderers that eventually lead to their indictment. In the midst of these events, the agents are called to investigate a white southerner's suicide. Anderson wonders why the man committed suicide, as he wasn't among the murderers, at which point Ward states the movie's moral in a sentiment often expressed by the Freedom Summer volunteers in their letters home. He responds that "Anyone who watches this and lets it happen is as guilty as those who pull the trigger. Maybe we all are." Despite this collective indictment and the bittersweet feeling that comes with the short sentences given to the convicted men despite their heinous crimes, viewers feel a catharsis and a sense of closure at the end of the film. Identification with the FBI leads to a feeling of power and revenge against the KKK members who thought they could never be caught. And a comparison of the America portrayed in the film to that in which viewers live at the time of viewing (1988 and after), would likely leave many white viewers feeling relieved that the country successfully overcame the racial violence and injustice depicted in the film. Ultimately, the film leads viewers to feel satisfied that the federal government did its job in this case (and others like it), and that we live in a more peaceful, just world because of it.

Murder in Mississippi: Recognizing Grassroots Resistance

A made for TV movie that aired in 1990, *Murder in Mississippi*⁴¹² serves as a prequel and response to *Mississippi Burning*. The film follows James Chaney (Blair Underwood) and Michael (Mickey) Schwerner (Tom Hulce) through the weeks leading up to their death, with Andrew (Andy) Goodman (Josh Charles) joining them toward the end of the film.⁴¹³ Unlike *Mississippi Burning*, the civil rights activists of SNCC and COFO are central to this film, which challenges its precursor's portrayal of the Summer Project and the federal government's stance toward the civil rights workers and summer volunteers.

Murder in Mississippi aims for historical accuracy in its details. It is set in Neshoba County and includes as characters not only the three slain workers but also Dave Dennis, Bob Moses, Rita Schwerner, and Ben Chaney. The first scene of the film makes clear that the civil rights activists, their goals, and their struggles will be central to its plot. This time, viewers are encouraged to identify with James Chaney, Mickey Schwerner, and Rita Schwerner, as attention is consistently directed toward them. As with *Mississippi Burning*, *Murder in Mississippi* opens with gospel music, showing black and white piano keys (two of each) close up so that they look like a door. The camera then zooms out to reveal them as part of a church piano and shows a congregation of black parishioners singing hymns. The camera then zooms out across the field to show a man walking toward the church with something in his hand. Viewers who saw *Mississippi Burning* likely suspect that the man is a Klansman holding a Molotov cocktail to throw at the church. We then realize that the man is black. Then, that he is James Chaney, not a Klansman, and that he is not holding a weapon but a stack of flyers encouraging voter registration. Based on the preacher's cool response to Chaney, one

might assume that he *did* have a weapon. After the preacher's rejection, James hastily places flyers on cars and drives away in his car with a bumper sticker reading "Be a FIRST CLASS citizen REGISTER. . . VOTE!" As he is driving, a cop chases him down a dark, deserted, rural road, and James eventually dodges him by pulling his car into a barn.

Soon after, the camera zooms in on a building that the caption identifies as "COFO Headquarters Lauderdale County Meridian, Mississippi." We hear a COFO activist giving an impassioned speech to his colleagues: "As our great Governor said, 'this is not the United States of America, this is Mississippi.' A black man was arrested in Jackson recently for reckless walking. The reason I say this is to point out that we are being picked up one by one, and that's why we need their help." They, viewers soon learn, as the camera zooms in on a room full of young black men and women leaning in toward each other in intense conversation, are the mostly white, mostly northern Freedom Summer volunteers, as well as the Schwerners, who are on their way to the COFO office as the scene unfolds.

James is resistant to the idea of Mickey and the hundreds of northern white volunteers soon to follow him. He wonders, "Why every time we have a problem do we have to call up the white man?" To which one of his colleagues responds, "They're part of the problem, which is why we need them as part of the solution."

These scenes offer an important counterpoint to *Mississippi Burning*'s minimizing approach to the Summer Project, and particularly to black Mississippians' role in that project. In the Hollywood blockbuster, Chaney's character is relegated to the back seat and given only one line. The dynamics in the doomed car and the dialogue in the barbershop suggests that civil rights activism in Mississippi was initiated by white

activists from the north. *Murder in Mississippi* offers a corrective to this, positioning Chaney's character as the film's protagonist and making him emblematic of the local black contingent of the civil rights movement. As the opening scene indicates, the well-publicized Summer Project grew out of grassroots efforts toward racial justice in which black Mississippians had been engaged long before the Project began. The scene in the COFO office is represents the tension that surrounded the Summer Project when the idea was introduced. While project leaders like Bob Moses argued that such a project was necessary to get results, despite its inevitable drawbacks, many people, and particularly leaders from the local black community, were hesitant to invite white college students into their communities for a variety of reasons, including those that James mentions in the film. Civil rights activism in Mississippi, these scenes emphasize, did not begin and end with the northern whites. Instead, their presence was a well thought out, though hotly contested, tactical move on the part of black activists.

In the middle of the tense conversation about the need for their presence, the Schwerners arrive at the COFO office, to the alarm of Ben Chaney who, upon seeing them enter, runs up the stairs yelling "The white folks are here!" A beaming Mickey and a nervously smiling Rita enter the office, and Dave Dennis informs James that he will be Mickey's assistant. Mickey, of course, represents the northern white workers and volunteers, with all of their education, idealism, and ignorance of southern culture. *Murder in Mississippi's* viewers see the troubled interracial dynamics described in discourses by full time civil rights workers, volunteers, and observers of Freedom Summer play out between the two characters in what Beale describes as a paradox. "Paradoxes," he explains, "are wonderful reflective instruments, startling writers and

readers into discoveries of new truths and rediscoveries of old ones. The course of paradoxical reflection is the creation and resolution of emotional or intellectual conflict, and the startling perception of reality in the coalescence of opposites.”⁴¹⁴

The film’s emotional and intellectual conflict is developed through the evolution of James and Mickey’s relationship, which goes from one of wary distrust into one of mutual respect and friendship. The tension between the two is caused largely by James’s pragmatic resistance to Mickey’s naiveté, which is evident in his greeting southern whites and engaging them in conversation when he passes them with the Chaney’s on the street, suggesting overly simplistic solutions to difficult problems, and refusing to accept just how violent southern whites can be. At one point James chastises Mickey for being the type of person who can go back to Brooklyn when he’s tired of the hassle. “But I’ll still be here.”

After several brushes with death and disheartening defeats, Mickey starts to understand and share James’s point of view, and James begins to respect and appreciate Mickey after several unexpected successes. These successes include the Schwerners’ enlistment of a local judge to extend support of voting rights for black citizens, which results in Hollis Watkins’ successful registration on his third and well-publicized try, to the chagrin of angry white citizens protesting outside of the courtroom and Mrs. Flowers, the recalcitrant registrar. Another victory that the two celebrate is a commitment from a church congregation in Neshoba County to offer their church (shown in the film’s first scene) as a Freedom School venue, whose burning eventually leads to the protagonists’ death. The coalescence of opposites happens in several scenes in the latter part of the film that show Mickey becoming wary and cynical and James encouraging him to remain

optimistic, exhibiting a sense of renewed faith drawn from Mickey's tenacity and its results.

When James and the Schwerners travel to Oxford, Ohio to help train volunteers, viewers see just how much Mickey's time in Mississippi has changed him when he meets Andy Goodman, whose bright-eyed, optimistic enthusiasm mirrors Mickey's attitude at the beginning of the film. In their first encounter, Mickey sees Andy laughing at something that happens in the proceedings of a role-play session and speaks to him as so many white Mississippians spoke to him. "What are you smiling for you nigger loving Jew boy?" and so on until Andy pushes him down and then promptly apologizes. Mickey also apologizes, but emphasizes to Andy that, "this is no joke." Later, when Andy tries to befriend him, Mickey responds to him with the same "I know your type" approach with which James responded to him upon their first meeting. His refusal to encourage Andy, he tells him, has nothing to do with him. He now knows that the impending work that so excites the young recruit inevitably leads to brutal violence and only the most modest of successes.

During the Freedom Summer training, volunteers are shown watching and reacting to several original news clips from 1964. In these news clips lies another of the film's major challenges to *Mississippi Burning*. In the first clip the volunteers watch, a national reporter introduces Thompson's tank, purchased in preparation for the Freedom Summer volunteers' impending arrival in Mississippi. The reporter lists the tank's impressive technology and destructive potential as the camera shows a close-up of the massive vehicle rolling by. The volunteers groan in disbelief. Any doubts left in their

minds about white Mississippian's potential for retribution against them are surely settled by this report.

The next news clip they watch shows then FBI director J. Edgar Hoover responding to SNCC and COFO leaders' requests that the FBI send representatives into Mississippi to protect the Summer Project volunteers: "We most certainly do not and will not give protection to civil rights workers. In the first place, the FBI is not a police organization; it is purely an investigative organization, and the protection of individual citizens, either natives of the state or coming into the state, is a matter for the local authorities. The FBI will not participate in any such protection." The volunteers boo at this statement and even throw things at the screen, conveying the disgusted and incredulous reaction that all involved in the project had toward the federal government's insistence on keeping them at a distance. For viewers whose knowledge of the Summer Project had been based solely on its depiction in *Mississippi Burning*, this scene is likely jolting, given the heroic light in which that film portrays the FBI. While the FBI did succeed in their investigation of the murders, this scene suggests, those murders might have been prevented had Hoover heeded civil rights leaders' call and sent agents to Mississippi sooner.

The events that follow are well-documented history. Mickey and James learn of the church burning and leave Oxford, Ohio early to investigate. Andy, excited to be involved, convinces them to let him ride along. They are arrested on the way out of Neshoba County and held in jail until late that night. They leave the jail, anxious to escape Neshoba's law enforcement. Notably, James is driving the entire time. They are followed down a dark road by an army of vehicles and try unsuccessfully to escape.

Viewers see each man's death by gunshot, and the next scene shows the FBI recovering their bodies. They see James's funeral proceed while white cops look on, and Dave Dennis's frustrated, impassioned eulogy is depicted, as it is in *Mississippi Burning*.

The concluding captions offer a final response to *Mississippi Burning* that aligns with the identifications that *Murder in Mississippi* has fostered between viewers and the murdered activists. Although the two films' conclusions are not much different, the tones with which they are framed and the emotional responses they evoke are drastically different. Because viewers of *Mississippi Burning* identify with the fictional FBI agents, the eventual arrests and prison sentences doled out to the Klansmen are framed triumphantly and leave readers with the feeling that justice has been served, even if not entirely to their satisfaction. *Murder in Mississippi*'s viewers, who identify throughout the film with the civil rights workers' painstaking efforts to increase access to literacy, employment, and political potency for people of color in Mississippi in the face of seemingly impenetrable structural racism, are left with a feeling of insulting injustice with the first closing caption. Here, they are informed that no one was ever charged with the three murders, and that it was not until six years later that several Klansmen were convicted by a federal judge not of murder but of Civil Rights violations. "None served more than six years in prison, and all are free today." The sense of indignation at this revelation is tempered by the final closing caption, which reads: "In 1965 Congress enacted the Voting Rights Act suspending all literacy and discriminatory registration tests." This fact leaves viewers feeling that, despite the travesty of the killers' minimal punishments, the three men did not die in vain. Progress, however modest, is possible and worth fighting for. There is hope, it suggests, for young Ben Chaney, who tells a reporter

at the end of the film that he intends to carry on where his brother left off, and runs off to distribute his “Be a first class citizen. REGISTER. . .VOTE!” flyers.

Neshoba: The Price of Freedom

Fifteen years after *Murder in Mississippi* left its viewers seething at the freedom of their protagonists’ killers, lawyers prepared to bring one of those killers to belated justice. In the documentary *Neshoba*, the directors return to Neshoba County 40 years after the murders to find a population still deeply divided and fraught with grief.⁴¹⁵ It documents events leading up to the 2005 murder trial of Edgar Ray Killen, the preacher and Klansman thought to have organized and ordered the murders. It features interviews with important stakeholders, including family members of the three slain workers, civil rights veterans, and a host of Neshoba County natives, including Killen himself. When viewed alongside them, the divergent viewpoints expressed mimic the tension evident in texts from 1964. The film documents Killen’s indictment, his anticipation of the trial, the trial, and his conviction. Much less publicized than *Mississippi Burning* and probably even lesser known than *Murder in Mississippi*, this film in some ways reinforces and in some ways challenges viewers’ belief in a post-racial society.

The film opens with black and white footage of Jim Crow Mississippi. It includes footage of John F. Kennedy condemning segregation; a shot of then-governor Ross Barnett declaring “I’m a Mississippi segregationist and proud of it;” a white southern woman calmly stating her view that “God forgives murder and adultery, but is very angry and actually curses those who integrate;” clips of the Klan; and black people living in shacks, their ceilings papered with newspaper. To viewers in 2008, especially those who did not live through the mid 20th century, all of this looks like ancient history, like images of an unbelievable and unenlightened past well passed. By the end of the documentary,

the opposite is revealed to be true. That distant past is still alive and well in Mississippi, and if racial dynamics in Neshoba have changed in forty years, the changes are minimal and hard-won.

After the credits, viewers see modern day Philadelphia, Mississippi, with rows of brick buildings that look like they haven't changed much in 40 years. It then zooms in on the Neshoba County courthouse, running a series of Mississippi voices expressing a variety of opinions on the possibility of reopening the murder case. Some declare that the truth needs to be told. More express sentiments like, "Why dredge up the past when it's not going to bring anybody back?" Another voice explains "Some people don't understand that the burden is better lifted by the trial than leaving it alone." Another muses, "People are afraid that their families' names will come up." Yet another predicts that if the case is reopened, "Something bad might happen again."

The film recounts the murders in heart-wrenching and stomach-turning detail, juxtaposing 1964 news clips with contemporary interviews in order to tell the story. At one point, it shows rarely publicized images of the bodies as they looked when they were discovered, as family members narrate their final moments. Goodman's brother reveals that dirt was found in his mouth and nostrils, indicating that he was buried alive. Chaney's daughter, who was eight days old when her father died, says that, "murder was a good word for what they did to him. He was *brutally* murdered." Commentators confirm this by explaining that Chaney's body was in much worse shape than the those of other two activists, and showed signs that he had been tortured before he was killed. James's brother, Ben Chaney, reminds viewers that that was a tradition of southern white on black murders. "The black person," he says, "is always beaten or castrated."

Seeing these images and hearing the stories instills in viewers a desire for belated justice and an admiration of the Philadelphia coalition, the group of Mississippians upon whom the film centers. The group, made up of black and white Philadelphians who meet to discuss race relations, helped to convince county officials to retry Killen. The optimistic storyline in the film revolves around two of the coalition's members, Jewel and Deborah. Jewel's mother and brother were beaten by the Klan before they burned down the Mount Zion church, the incident that brought Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner back to Mississippi before the end of the volunteer orientations in Oxford, Ohio. The people who beat them were relatives of Deborah's husband. The women recount that after Jewel first told her story in a Philadelphia coalition meeting, Deborah approached her and apologized to her for what her city did in 1964. Jewel says in an interview that she was surprised to learn that some white Mississippians, like Deborah, also wanted justice. The film shows the two women together, talking in the park and at Philadelphia coalition meetings, and supporting each other as they wait for the Killen trial verdict. The two women represent the possibility for real change in racial dynamics in Mississippi. In revisiting their shared history honestly, the two are working to heal old wounds that festered in the county for forty years.

However, Jewel and Deborah's story is notable because it is clearly unusual. As director Micki Dickoff observes in an interview about the film, "Race relations have gotten better in Mississippi in 40 years, but like in most places in this country, there's a long way to go. That proverbial railroad track still divides the black and white community in terms of housing in Philadelphia, Mississippi."⁴¹⁶ Segregation still exists there, as do other anachronistic attitudes about race and the murders of Chaney,

Goodman, and Schwerner. Philadelphians' pride, the Neshoba County Fair, is central to the film, and black commentators note that in 1964, black people could not go to the fair without taking their lives into their hands. In shots from the fair 40 years later, few if any black faces are visible. A commentator from the Philadelphia Coalition tells the filmmakers that the cabins seen around the fairground are privately owned, but that they can still be voted out of their property if they don't follow its rules. "This is the definition of the closed society. In the old days it was meant to control. . . what it was meant to control. I don't believe that's the case anymore, but there are no black cabin owners."

It is not hard to see why black Mississippians might be uncomfortable at the fair. Interviews with white citizens there indicate that while younger generations may not be as maliciously racist as their predecessors, they are clearly not eager to seek justice in cases of unpunished, race-based hate crimes. In the interviews, one white Mississippian after another insists that the case should be left alone. "What good will it do?" One man wonders. "Edgar Ray Killen's the only one of them that's still alive, and he's a preacher." This is the first indication that to Philadelphians, Killen's involvement in the murders is no secret. This revelation is followed by another citizen's thoughts on retrying him: "His life is almost over and he's probably suffered enough worrying about what he's done. The good lord will take care of him." Even one woman who at the beginning of her quote seems likely to support the retrial, saying that "no crime should go unpunished. If it was my family I would be hunting somebody up," concludes that "you just kinda have to let it go."

These interviews suggest that younger generations of white Mississippians, like younger generations of white Americans nationwide, have shifted from a Jim Crow racist

ideology to a color-blind racist ideology.⁴¹⁷ The consensus that the murders are a thing of the past and are therefore irrelevant to life in present-day Mississippi are examples of minimization of racism, one of the four central frames of color-blind racism that Bonilla-Silva identifies. According to Bonilla-Silva, minimization of racism arises from the fact that, “in general whites believe discrimination has all but disappeared, whereas blacks believe that discrimination—old and new—is alive and well.”⁴¹⁸ This results in the common sentiment among white Americans that any conversation about race is just dredging up the past, and that such matters, including the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner, should be left in the past.

But the Philadelphia coalition and the attorney general don't leave the murders in the past. The trial proceeds and *Neshoba* shows the mothers of Goodman and Chaney, both frail but determined, traveling to Neshoba to testify, along with Schwerner's widow, Rita Bender. As the trial approaches, the film's directors achieve what decades of reporters could not: they convince Killen to sit for a series of interviews. Dickoff explains that after the indictment, Killen wanted the chance to air his views about the situation and they were there to provide him with the opportunity. He explains that “We told Killen we wanted to tell his story, his truth, in his words, and we meant it. His huge ego and his belief system did all the rest.”⁴¹⁹

This is certainly true, as Killen spouts the same red-baiting, anti-Semitic, racist justifications for the murders in 2005 that he and those like him used in 1964. And he is not the lone racist voice in the documentary. The brother of another Klansmen tied to the murders explains to the documentarians that, “Most of white Mississippi was in the Klan. I was in it. Keep sticking your nose in the damn business and you'll get it chopped off,

and that's what happened here. They kept on agitating and agitating. They didn't want to get the hell out. They didn't do it. So they wound up in the earthen dam. Damn good place for 'em." He chuckles, as does his friend. "That's my opinion."

These interviews leave viewers with mixed messages about the state of race relations in Mississippi. On one hand, inflammatory quotes come from Killen and his contemporaries, old men approaching the end of their lives. This could imply that such views and any influence they may have are dying out with the greatest generation. On the other hand, younger white Mississippians' insistence on sweeping the murders under the rug, as well as the results of the trial, suggest that white Mississippi has not fully acknowledged its racist past and, by way of its collective denial, still condones Killen's sentiments and actions.

The eventual conviction of Killen on charges of manslaughter is bittersweet for all involved. Ben Chaney insists in *Neshoba* that he will not stop seeking the retrial of other living conspirators in the murder, particularly Olen Burrage, on whose property the bodies were found. Rita Bender says of the trial, "That some members of the jury could sit through, indeed could have lived here all these years could not bring themselves to acknowledge that these were murders, that they were committed with malice, that means that there is a lot more yet to be done." This is the message with which the directors leave their audience as well. The elation that viewers might feel at Killen's long overdue trip to prison is tempered in the final scene by a long list of unprosecuted civil rights-related murders, driving home the point that the many victims of Jim Crow racism and their families are still waiting to experience justice.

Tragic and pivotal though they were, there is much more to the Freedom Summer story than the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner. But popular coverage tends to focus only on the murders, obscuring the struggles and successes of those who continued their work in Mississippi despite their fears that they might meet the same fate as the three missing workers. Historian Bruce Watson argues in a *Democracy Now* interview focusing on the *Neshoba*:

We mentioned briefly that [the murder incident] was part of Freedom Summer, but often the story of Freedom Summer is overshadowed by the murders, and it makes it seem as though the men died in vain. In fact, they were part of an enormous and incredibly inspiring effort in which 700 college students went to Mississippi, went to the dangerous hellhole of Mississippi that summer, to live with black people, to register—to live in their shacks, sit on their porches, talk to them, register them to the vote, when that was possible, and teach in Freedom Schools, hundreds of Freedom—dozens of Freedom Schools, with 2,000 students, teaching them black history, black literature, things that had never been taught in Mississippi. It was a revolutionary effort. Very important not to forget that part of the story.⁴²⁰

Despite the work done by writers like Watson and Doug McAdam to remind Americans about the lesser-known details of the Summer Project, popular texts tend to direct audiences' attention primarily toward the murders, with any mention of other aspects of the project provided as only background information. This is certainly the case with *Mississippi Burning* and *Neshoba*. In these texts, the rhetorical agency of local black Mississippi activists and the student volunteers they recruited from across the nation to

join them in their efforts are obscured. The Hollywood film obscures them in favor of a fictional, heroic FBI; the documentary obscures them to a lesser degree in favor of the aging murderer. Those activists' voices are an absent presence in these texts, however, as their work was the impetus for the belated FBI investigation depicted in the former, and was arguably the precursor for the interracial collaboration that characterizes the Philadelphia coalition featured in the latter. That three films are dedicated to the Summer Project illustrates that the black and white activists' efforts toward intercultural understanding made history. As Carmichael observes, both black Mississippi and the volunteers emerged from Freedom Summer forever changed,⁴²¹ but their efforts also opened up difficult questions about the nation's long history of racism and its lasting impact on interracial interactions on macro- and micro- levels. Alice Walker grapples with these questions in "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells," a story about friendship between two Freedom Summer volunteers.

"Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells": Case Not Closed

While each film does important rhetorical work with the Freedom Summer Project, as a reflective/ exploratory text, Walker's short story, "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells," has the most to offer scholars and teachers interested in using the legacy of Freedom Summer in contemporary contexts. Unlike the films, Walker's story looks beyond the tragic murders to consider in depth the experience of Summer Project volunteers, and engages with its most difficult questions. In order to grapple with these questions, Walker uses the reflective/ exploratory essay genre to practice prolonged rhetorical listening, imaginatively engaging the voices of her past and present selves, her friend Luna (although Luna's voice is minimal considering her prominence in the story), black Southerners, Ida B. Wells, and others. In her reflection, Walker considers questions

of rhetorical and ideological ancestry, the impact of cultural logics and socializing discourses upon cross-cultural identification, the privileges and blind spots that accompany whiteness, the impact of white advocacy for people of color, and the ethics of activism.

Although the other chapters in this dissertation have focused solely on the 1964 Mississippi Summer Project, the original Freedom Summer, I am expanding my focus slightly in this chapter in order to include Walker's story. In 1965, COFO expanded on the 1964 Summer Project by hosting Summer Projects in Mississippi as well as in several other southern states. Walker's narrator is a volunteer in the Georgia Freedom Summer Project of 1965. Between the two projects, there are some obvious differences. In 1965 some of the project's novelty had worn off, and the Civil Rights Law had been in effect for a year. The social climate also differed from one southern state to the next, although probably no more than it varied between Mississippi's counties.

I argue, however, that the Summer Projects in Mississippi in 1964 and in Georgia in 1965 were similar enough to merit the inclusion of "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells" in this dissertation. The dynamic of overt white supremacy, economic exploitation, and voter suppression brought civil rights activists to Georgia as well as Mississippi. Volunteers in the Georgia project lived in the homes of local black people, registered voters, and attended mass meetings, as they did in Mississippi. The volunteers in Georgia, like those in Mississippi, feared the wrath of southern whites. Walker's narrator confirms this by alluding to the murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner the year before and the shadow they cast over her trip to Georgia.⁴²² Most importantly in this case, black and white volunteers and workers had to attempt to collaborate across

racial lines in order to work for racial justice in hostile environments in Georgia, as they did in Mississippi. Such an attempt is at the center of Walker's narrative. While many volunteers write about the struggle to connect with black activists in their letters, none of them analyze the web of historical, social, and emotional factors mediating these attempts to the extent that Walker does. Similarly, while other retrospective reflections upon the Summer Project exist in newspapers and in the archives, few go beyond recounting events, commenting on the project's political impact, and offering "where are they now?" type updates in order to reflect in depth upon the project's place in American history and its implications for American cultural life and national identity. Walker's story, then, fills a vast gap in the rhetoric of Freedom Summer, and its applicability to the themes that have emerged in previous chapters outweighs its slight difference in temporal and geographical context.

Through use of the three conceptual patterns that Beale describes as "particularly congenial" in reflective/ exploratory rhetoric, "the paradoxical, the enigmatic, and the emblematic,"⁴²³ Walker explores the complicated attempts to identify across racial lines among Freedom Summer volunteers and workers, and lends weight to the assertion that the Summer Project's biggest success lied in the cohabitation between black and white people by addressing the many issues that these relationships brought to the surface. These include black perceptions of whites and vice versa, rich entitlement to the poor, the relationship of the north to the south (black northerners with black southerners, white northerners with black southerners, white northerners with white southerners, etc.), the mobility of the middle class vs. immobility of the poor, the tentativeness of white activist identity, the lack of self criticism among white activists, white family relationships,

cultural tourism, interracial sexual relationships within the movement, interracial friendships, questions of black and white masculinity and femininity, the efficacy of the project, politics within the movement, media coverage, government suppression of the movement, the existence and nature of evil, and identification. In confronting all of these issues, with “Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,” Walker tries to answer the question that several volunteers posed in their letters—why do black activists keep them at arms’ length, even when they are on the same side?

Walker’s story is a fitting end point for this discussion because it takes on the elephant in the living room, acknowledged but not fully explored in texts composed during the Summer Project. That is, Walker’s story takes as its subject the unyielding tension that stood between black and white Summer Project activists. Too unwieldy to be addressed amidst the pressing problems at hand at the time of the project, the impact that the long history of American white supremacy had on black and white Summer Project activists’ ability to trust and connect with each other is given its due in Walker’s reflective story. Walker’s genre choice of literary fiction facilitates this task because it allows Walker the freedom to consider the summer from multiple perspectives, incorporating imaginative elements that would not be possible were she attempting to portray objective “truth.”

All of these generic allowances make it possible to present the story in multiple contexts, first in Georgia, then in New York, then as metafiction in which the narrator/author negotiates with a spectral Ida. B. Wells and attempts to find an ending for the narrative she has just presented, which is so overdetermined that it resists conclusion.

“Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells” is told from the perspective of a nameless narrator. A young black writer involved in civil rights work, the narrator seems to be a stand-in for Walker herself as she narrates the development and destruction of her friendship with Luna, a young white woman she meets during a summer spent registering black voters in Georgia. Despite the narrator’s initial lack of interest in Luna, the two end up living together with a southern black host family and walking for miles every day together in order to register voters. During this time together the two women get to know each other fairly well. After the summer has ended and the narrator returns from a trip to Africa, she moves to New York and, out of financial necessity, moves into a run down tenement with Luna. They live mostly peacefully together and, the narrator explains that, “Over a period of weeks, our relationship, always marked by mutual respect, evolved into a warm and comfortable friendship which provided a stability and comfort we both needed at that time.”⁴²⁴ Their friendship, as well as Walker’s narrative, is fractured when Luna tells the narrator that she was raped by Freddie Pye, a southern black activist, during their summer in Georgia. As the narrator attempts to come to terms with the rape, and with what Nellie Y. McKay describes as her “ambivalences toward race *or* sex,”⁴²⁵ the narrative breaks off into a series of alternative endings and an imagined dialogue between the narrator and Ida B. Wells, and her friendship with Luna deteriorates and eventually ends.

The story incorporates all three conceptual patterns that Beale identifies with reflective/ exploratory rhetoric. Walker’s unnamed narrator and Luna are emblematic of black and white Freedom Summer volunteers, and in some ways, of black and white women throughout American history. Luna’s revelation that she was raped by Freddie

Pye serves as the enigma that fractures the story, as the narrator engages in what Beale calls “paradoxical reflection,”⁴²⁶ moving from one perspective to another in attempt to make sense of the rape and how she, as a black woman writer, should respond. As McKay explains, “In ‘Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,’ two narratives develop simultaneously: a frame story with three choices of an ending, the third taking shape a decade after the first and second, and a story within the story: the narrator’s internal debate over the psychological and moral conflicts that the frame story raises for her. This gives the piece its ‘essay’ quality.”⁴²⁷

From the second sentence of “Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,” it is clear that Walker’s narrator will present Freedom Summer activism in a less idealistic light than that offered by most authors and journalists. She refers to herself and her fellow volunteers as “temporary civil rights workers,” and explains that she found herself participating in the 1965 Georgia Freedom Summer Project because she knew that revolution was afoot and “did not intend to miss it. Especially not this summery, student-studded version of it.”⁴²⁸ Voter registration in the south, for Walker’s narrator, is dire and dangerous, yes, but also exciting, sexy, and even trendy. This description is drastically different from the white volunteers’ attitudes upon entering into the summer, terrified but excited and optimistic that they will do some good.

This self-deprecating tone pervades the story, indicating that the narrator intends to present every event, conversation and person she describes through a critical lens, not least of all herself. As the narrator both criticizes the person she was during Freedom Summer and establishes her own and Luna’s characters as emblematic of black and white women of the period, she identifies important issues surrounding Freedom Summer and

thinks through the roles and perspectives of various participant groups, including the volunteers, local black people, local white people, and the national media.

In terms of identity and identification, the narrator is in a liminal space. Having grown up a black child in Georgia, the narrator is more connected to the area in which she is volunteering than are many of her counterparts, yet it is clear that in the context of this story the narrator identifies more immediately with the other volunteers than with the people of Georgia whom the volunteers aim to help. Having received a scholarship to Sarah Lawrence College, the narrator has made her way out of the south and become part of the privileged class. Like the other volunteers, she knows she will leave the south at the end of the summer. Like the other volunteers, she feels empowered by a sense of generational potency. “We believed we could change America,” she says, “because we were young and bright and held ourselves *responsible* for changing it. We did not believe we would fail.”⁴²⁹ Like them, she is harassed by cops and afraid to meet the same fate as Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner.

Also like the other volunteers, the narrator is confident and unknowingly reckless. She confesses that, “approaching new black people every day taught me something about myself I had always suspected: I thought black people superior people. Not simply superior to white people, because even without thinking about it much, I assumed almost everyone was superior to them; but to everyone.”⁴³⁰ As Keith Byerman notes, this belief in the superiority of black people leads her to “[take] for granted the hospitality offered to her and other workers by local blacks, though she knows they are putting themselves in danger with their kindness.”⁴³¹ The narrator, looking back on the events from a responsibility logic in order to consider how her words and actions impacted others,

admits that she indeed took people for granted, and expresses deep regret. She questions the unmitigated hero status often attributed to the Freedom Summer volunteers by painting an unflattering picture of herself and her counterparts in relation to the local southern black people, saying of them that “Even their curiosity about the sudden influx into their midst of rather ignorant white and black Northerners was restrained and curious.”⁴³² Similarly, looking back the narrator seems to be embarrassed of the way that she treated the local population, and commends in retrospect the people whose views and experiences she had not fully acknowledged previously. Describing the family who housed Luna and herself, she remembers, “I did not expect his family to complain, no matter what happened to them because of us. Having understood the danger, they had assumed the risk. I did not think them particularly brave, merely typical.”⁴³³ Although it is understated, the narrator admits her ignorance in assuming that the family that housed them was typical, commending their bravery at the same time that she acknowledges the ignorance and presumptuousness of her younger self.

The white southern perspective is also given voice in the story when the narrator recounts a confrontation between the volunteers and a Georgia state trooper:

This member of Georgia’s finest had followed us out into the deserted countryside to lecture us on how misplaced—in the South—was our energy, when ‘the Lord knew’ the North (where he thought all of us lived, expressing disbelief that most of us were Georgians) was just as bad. (He had a point that I recognized even then, but it did not seem the point where we were.)⁴³⁴

Here, as in the passage in which Luna is introduced, the narrator puts the thoughts that she seems reluctant to acknowledge in parentheses. In the first set of parentheses the

narrator corrects the trooper's assumption that the group of volunteers he is speaking to are northerners. This statement represents a shift in identification for a rhetorical purpose. Only one page earlier the narrator, like the state trooper, characterizes the group of volunteers as "Northerners," likely in order to characterize them as different from the local black people who were so kind to them. Although she is from Georgia, the narrator includes herself in the "Northerner" grouping, emphasizing that she is not in fact a resident of the Georgia neighborhoods in which she worked, in order to include herself in her critique of the volunteers' entitlement to neighborhoods that were not their own. But in the scene with the state trooper, the narrator's identification shifts drastically, as she now identifies herself and her fellow volunteers as primarily Georgian in order to show that assumptions that people like the state trooper made about the activists were misguided and based on prejudice.

Despite her resistance to the trooper's characterization of the volunteers as northerners presumptuously meddling in the affairs of the south, in the next set of parentheses just a few words later, the narrator begrudgingly grants the trooper his point that the north has its own race problems. The part of Walker's story set in New York less than a year after their summer in Georgia illustrates these problems. But they, as she puts "did not seem the point where we were."⁴³⁵ The point of the summer, as the narrator sees it, was not to engage in debate about where the problems were worse. Instead, the point for the volunteers was to work together to ensure that every citizen was guaranteed basic freedoms. Jim Crow racism is a tangible barrier to this, and working systematically against that was the point where they were. Nonetheless, the narrator validates the trooper by acknowledging that he has a point. Because white southerners used that argument so

consistently to validate bigotry and violence against civil rights workers and local black people, it is jolting to see its validity acknowledged by the narrator, a black Freedom Summer volunteer. In fact, the narrator backs several claims used by southern whites to discredit the Summer Project, although obviously from a very different perspective. First, she admits that the excitement of participating in a “student-studded,” history-making revolution constituted much of her motivation to participate in the project. This echoes white southerners’ characterization of the volunteers as fickle, immature kids traveling south because it was trendy. Also, after narrator declares the volunteers’ true sense of purpose, she explains that the belief that they really could change things “lent a sweetness to our friendships (in the beginning almost all interracial), and gave a wonderful fillip to our sex (which, too, in the beginning, was almost always interracial).”⁴³⁶ Another accusation that white southerners frequently made against the Summer volunteers was that a major motivation for traveling south was the opportunity to engage in interracial sex, a practice that was taboo even among northern whites at that time. While the narrator does not say that that was a *purpose* for going south, she states flatly that it was a perk. These claims about the Summer Project that seem so sensationalist from the white southern perspective, and therefore not touched by most moderate commentators of the time, appear here as simple facts that readers are free to interpret as they please. The narrator has little emotional reaction in one direction or another as she acknowledges the truths behind white southerners’ hateful accusations, but her neutral stance utterly breaks down when she is forced to see a morsel of truth behind one of their most vehement and vilifying accusations—that black activists would rape white volunteers.

It is when she learns of the rape that the narrator reflects on the national media's role in the Summer Project's fate. Like many commentators on both sides, the narrator constructs the media as spin-doctors of sorts, distorting information in order to create "Movement stars" who would be palatable to the public. She claims that Freddie Pye, the meek, unattractive local activist who raped Luna, "was among the first persons to shout the slogan everyone later attributed solely to Stokely Carmichael—Black Power! Stokely was chosen as the originator of this idea by the media, because he was physically beautiful and photogenic and articulate."⁴³⁷ This quick statement, in aligning the Black Power movement so closely with the rapist in her story, serves not only as a critique of the national media but also as a critique of sexist undertones of that movement, indicating the narrator's identification along gendered lines.

In her summative assessment of the Summer Project, the narrator suggests that the Freedom Summer movement is more significant for the questions it raised among its participants than for any concrete or lasting changes the volunteers made in the south. "I don't know if we accomplished much that summer. In retrospect, it seems not only minor, but irrelevant. A bunch of us, black and white, lived together."⁴³⁸ With these three sentences, Walker is employing *isocolon*, or "phrases of approximately equal length and corresponding structure."⁴³⁹ Moving from one short sentence to the next, their similar length and rhythm indicate that their meanings are interconnected and equally important, but the exact relationship is ambiguous. The last sentence could be read as being directly modified by the first two sentences, indicating that black and white people living together is neither relevant nor an accomplishment. But in the context of the story I read this pairing as *antagonogue*, "ameliorating a fault or difficulty implicitly admitted by

balancing an unfavorable aspect with a favorable one.”⁴⁴⁰ While the volunteers may not have accomplished many of their stated goals, such as attaining political power for southern black people, fully exposing the damage that overt racism does to the nation, educating the citizenry about history, and exposing the horrors of the south to the people of the north, black and white people *did* live together on more or less equal terms, something that hadn’t happened on a significant scale before Freedom Summer. The black and white civil rights workers’ ability to live with each other despite the presence as uninvited guests of a host of issues, suspicions, and unanswered questions resulting from generations of separation, inequality, and antagonism, was a real accomplishment. The narrator’s painstaking analysis of the dissolution of her friendship with Luna provides some insight into this accomplishment’s historical significance.

Throughout the entire narrative, the two women’s friendship is marked and marred by racial difference. Luna’s whiteness manifests itself through cultural tourism, economic inequality, fashionable downward mobility, and, at times, dangerous minimization of white privilege and white supremacy. The narrator’s perception is also heavily impacted by her own preconceived notions about race, and she views Luna through a racist terministic screen, making assumptions about her based on race and viewing her as a stereotypical white woman. Because racial and gender dynamics are so central to the story, critics tend to view each woman as merely emblematic of her respective subject position. They are the white woman and the black woman in America, and their story is a foil for a discussion of larger ideological and historical questions, not one about two real people with experiences and emotions outside of these categories. Byerman argues that in this story the narrator is “ultimately concerned with the

ideological underpinnings of her story rather than with the people and experiences of the South,”⁴¹ and makes similar claims about her approach to Luna.

While ideology is certainly central to the story, I argue that it does not completely drown out the characters’ humanity. Instead, the narrator’s and Luna’s struggles to come to terms with the ideologies that frame their friendship make them all the more human. Far from personally distant and politically self-serving, I see the narrator as someone who feels deeply responsible for herself, and for the impact that her words and actions can have on those around her. By proceeding from a responsibility logic and grappling with her socializing discourses and her relationship to them, the narrator reminds readers that human relationships are always shaped by ideology. Her love for her friend Luna and her distress over their estrangement inspires the narrator to confront this fact, and over and over she experiences the pain that comes with confronting the ideology that she embodies.

Luna, although central to the story, is given few direct quotes, and readers are given little insight into her perspective. This silencing is upsetting to white critics like Byerman, Mary Eagleton, and (at least initially) me, although this silencing does not come up in African American critic McKay’s piece. The absence of Luna’s perspective reminds Eagleton of the texts by early white American writers that Morrison analyzes in *Playing in the Dark*, in which African American characters serve not as fleshed out people but merely as the Africanistic Other, in opposition to whom the white American Self is defined. According to Eagleton:

Morrison and others have pointed out how the black presence in white texts often exists so as to enable the white subject to understand him/herself. As Richard

Dyer comments: ‘white discourse implacably reduces the non-white subject to being a function of the white subject, not allowing her/him space or autonomy’ (Dyer, 1997:13). Yet we could say that Luna and the unnamed narrator in Walker’s story constitute a reverse example— namely, that Luna, the white woman, becomes the ‘unconsulted, appropriated ground’ for the interests of the black narrator or, as Foucault would suggest, the silence of Luna is ‘the condition necessary’ for a black feminist discourse to exist.⁴⁴²

The narrator certainly uses the largely silenced Luna to think deeper into questions of race and sex. However, Walker’s use of Luna in this manner cannot be just a simple reversal of the literary strategies employed by the early white writers that Morrison analyzes. Historical context makes this impossible, as early white writers are starting a new tradition, forming a new identity for a newly colonized nation. Walker and her narrator are writing within the tradition established by those writers. They, as black women, have already been placed in the role of Africanistic Other by the residual effects of these discourses, and are forced to write, think, and act within a tradition that has cast them in that light. Therefore it makes sense that the narrator in “Advancing Luna” would present a counternarrative that foregrounds the long-silenced black perspective. But she does not efface Luna’s voice or her humanity in this counternarrative, despite her consistent compulsion to do so. While Luna does not often speak directly, the narrator constantly acknowledges and often concedes to her perspective.

One example of the narrator’s reluctant acknowledgement of Luna’s perspective comes early in the story when the two women first meet. Luna is waiting in the back of a pickup truck to be driven from a rally to the home of her host family. After being

introduced to her by someone assuming she will also need a ride, the narrator refuses the ride and says she will walk. Guessing at Luna's reaction, the narrator imagines, "She assumed of course (I guess) that I did not wish to ride beside her because she was white, and I was not curious enough about what she might have thought to explain it to her."⁴⁴³ Here, the narrator's assumptions about Luna take center stage and Luna is silenced. At the same time though, Luna is not "relentlessly excised from the story,"⁴⁴⁴ as Eagleton feels she is. As she introduces her thought, "she assumed of course," the narrator seems about to relentlessly excise any individual thoughts or feelings that Luna might have, sweeping her into the category of "white woman," but she does not do this. The "(I guess)" shows that the narrator knows that she is denying Luna's humanity with her unsubstantiated assumption. Although Luna's humanity might be in parentheses, it is nonetheless present. Perhaps more importantly, the "(I guess)" in her narration reveals that the narrator is self-reflective. I read this halt in diction to be the narrator looking back at the situation and acknowledging the cultural blinders that filtered her experience and relationships during the summer that she met Luna. Her view of Luna then, she acknowledges, may have been a projection of her own racial prejudices rather than an accurate assessment of Luna as an individual.

In several instances, the narrator acknowledges her own racial prejudice and regrets the harm that it may have caused others. For instance, she remembers that, "The black people who took us in were unfailingly hospitable and kind. I took them for granted in a way that now amazes me. I realize that at each and every house we visited I *assumed* hospitality, I *assumed* kindness."⁴⁴⁵ Her summer canvassing in Georgia, the narrator continues:

taught me something about myself I had always suspected: I thought black people superior people. Not simply superior to white people, because even without thinking about it much, I assumed almost everyone was superior to them; but to everyone. Only white people, after all, would blow up a Sunday-school class and grin for television over their ‘victory,’ *i.e.*, the death of four small black girls. Any atrocity, at any time, was expected from them. On the other hand, it never occurred to me that black people *could* treat Luna and me with anything but warmth and concern.⁴⁴⁶

The narrator’s racist viewpoints have negative implications for both black and white people. Because she assumes that black people are superior, the narrator acknowledges that she brazenly took advantage of them in 1965, subjecting them with her mere presence to increased risk of attacks like the church bombing she describes. In addition, her disgust at white supremacy and its brutal results, including people like the bombers, colors her view of all white people. This results in views of them that reflect racial stereotypes. The narrator’s view of Luna’s physical appearance, for instance, is influenced by the sexual and racial politics of the day. Describing the strained relationship between black women and white liberal women in the sixties, Michele Wallace argues that “the white woman knows that it is not acceptable to assert, even though one may still believe it, that black men are infantile, happy-go-lucky, and predominantly sexual in orientation. But when it comes to the black woman it is still all right to assert that she is sexier, more maternal, more exotic, stronger.”⁴⁴⁷ In other words, the sixties liberal woman could characterize her black female counterpart as an emasculating superwoman without understanding that that characterization was

problematic. Whether or not Luna projects this image onto the narrator is unclear. But the narrator's description of Luna indicates that she is sensitive to this stereotype, because she characterizes Luna as the exact opposite of the superwoman.

“[Luna's] chest,” we learn from the narrator, “was practically flat, her breasts like those of a child. Her face was round, and she suffered from acne. She carried with her always a tube of that ‘skin colored’ (if one's skin is pink or eggshell) medication designed to dry up pimples [. . .] Luna was slightly asthmatic and when overheated or nervous she breathed through her mouth [. . .] She was attractive, but just barely and with effort.”⁴⁴⁸ If the superwoman is sexy, Luna is undersexed and barely attractive. If the superwoman is maternal, Luna is childlike, as exemplified by breasts too small to need a bra. If the superwoman is exotic, Luna is so garden-variety that that she can buy medication to match her common-as-dirt skin tone over the counter. And if the superwoman is strong, Luna is weak and sickly, her frail body showing signs of weakness in the form of acne and asthma. The narrator is revolted by Luna's grotesque appearance because it represents white womanhood to her. Protected by white patriarchy and shielded from the world, the stereotypical white woman's body and mind deteriorates, resulting in the kind of frail helplessness that Luna's body displays.

Over the course of the summer, though, Luna surprises the narrator with her unexpected physical endurance, contradicting the frail white woman stereotype.

The summer of '65 was as hot as any other in that part of the South. There was an abundance of flies and mosquitoes. Everyone complained about the heat and the flies and the hard work, but Luna complained less than the rest of us. She walked ten miles a day with me up and down those straight Georgia highways [. . .] Luna,

almost overcome by the heat, breathing through her mouth like a dog, her hair plastered with sweat to her head, kept looking straight ahead, and walking as if the walking itself was her reward.⁴⁴⁹

Despite the impulse to construct her entirely as a stereotype, the narrator admits that there is more to Luna than that. While she is obviously revolted by Luna's appearance under the strain, in this description the narrator nonetheless reveals Luna to be admirable in her tenacity and quiet commitment to her work as a volunteer. That Luna, despite her sickly condition, presses on through the oppressive heat without much complaint indicates that she is invested in the ideals that drive the movement and cares about its outcomes.

Although Luna shows herself capable of departing from stereotypical characteristics, she continues to live up to Jane Davis's image of the white liberal.⁴⁵⁰ Luna's incapacity for self-review, a defining characteristic of white liberals according to Davis, is further evident in several observations that the narrator makes about her a year after they part in Georgia. At this point in the story, the narrator moves into a New York tenement that Luna has willingly rented, despite its squalor and her financial ability to live elsewhere, on her invitation. Thinking about the apartment she shared with Luna, the narrator muses:

I [. . .] liked the notion of extreme contrast, and I do to this day. Outside our front window was the decaying neighborhood, as ugly and ill-lit as a battleground. (And allegedly as hostile, though somehow we were never threatened with bodily harm by the Hispanics who were our neighbors, and who seemed, more than anything, *bewildered* by the darkness and filth of their surroundings.) Inside was the church pew, as straight and spare as Abe Lincoln lying down, the white walls

as spotless as a monastery's, and a small, unutterably pure patch of blue sky through the window of the back bedroom.⁴⁵¹

This description of contrast exposes Luna's downward mobility as a trendy expression of her rebellious individuality rather than anything permanent or truly meaningful. Whereas "the Hispanics" who live in the building likely *have* to live there, Luna, it seems, has enough resources to protect herself from the squalor of the neighborhood in which she has chosen to live. While the halls of the building are filthy and dark, Luna's apartment is sufficiently furnished, clean, and sparkling white. The white paint echoes the white privilege that makes Luna's life tidier than the lives of her Hispanic neighbors who, the narrator suggests, have been mischaracterized as violent. Rather than violent, the neighbors are bewildered by the condition of the tenement, probably because they understand that they have little hope of ever leaving it. If Luna is not fazed by the building's condition (which she does not seem to be), it is probably because she knows that such a lifestyle, for her, is just a phase.

The church pew, "which she had managed somehow to bring up from the South,"⁴⁵² indicates that Luna is a cultural tourist, as she has commodified southern black culture, collecting up an artifact to remind her of her summer adventure as she carries out her artsy life in New York. The narrator notices these things but does not comment on them, presumably because she, like Luna, knows that she will not be stuck in the tenement building forever, and she admitted at the outset that she participated in voter registration in Georgia as a form of cultural tourism.

While the narrator portrays Luna as a stereotypical white woman in appearance and a typical, somewhat reckless 1960s young liberal in action, her perceptions of Luna

do not take on an overtly critical tone until after the enigmatic revelation of Luna's rape. According to Beale, "the *enigma* [is] the situation that resists explanation and is out of line with the orderly flow of things."⁴⁵³ Walker's introduction of the rape makes clear that this event is entirely out of line with the flow of things as the narrator sees them, so much so that what had been basically a linear narrative up to this point fractures into pieces and parts. "It was while we lived on East 9th Street that she told me she had been raped during her summer in the South. It is hard for me, even now, to relate my feeling of horror and incredulity."⁴⁵⁴

Her revelation of the rape is the first and only time that Luna speaks directly. After Luna reveals to the narrator that she was raped in Georgia, the narrator asks:

"What did you do?"

"Nothing that required making a noise."

"Why didn't you scream?" I felt I would have screamed my head off.

"You know why."

I did. I had seen a photograph of Emmett Till's body just after it was pulled from the river. I had seen photographs of white folks standing in a circle roasting something that had talked to them in their own language before they tore out its tongue. I knew why, all right.

"What was he trying to prove?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

"Maybe you filled him with unendurable lust," I said.

"I don't think so," she said.

Suddenly I was embarrassed. Then angry. Very, very angry. *How dare she tell me this!* I thought.⁴⁵⁵

Following their conversation about the rape, the women's friendship falters and soon ends, and the story shifts from linear narrative into essayistic reflection. Byerman accuses Walker, in her response to this revelation, of turning "Luna's body [into] the site, not of acts of distorted desire, but of ideological debate," and argues that "[t]he story of Luna's suffering is reduced to an allegory of the writer's responsibility. The responsibility of one human being to another, or more specifically in this feminist text, of one woman to another, is disregarded."⁴⁵⁶ I would argue that the opposite happens. It is precisely because the narrator takes the responsibilities that Byerman mentions so seriously that the narrative becomes fractured as the narrator claims and then problematizes one foundational identification after another.

After Luna's rape is revealed, the narrator reminds readers that:

This was some time before Eldridge Cleaver wrote of being a rapist/revolutionary; of "practicing" on black women before moving on to white. It was also, unless I'm mistaken, before LeRoi Jones [. . .] wrote his advice to young black male insurrectionaries (women were not told what to do with *their* rebelliousness): "Rape the white girls. Rape their fathers." It was clear that he meant this literally and also as: to rape a white girl is to rape her father. It was the misogynous cruelty of this latter meaning that was habitually lost on black men (on men in general, actually), but nearly always perceived and rejected by women of whatever color.⁴⁵⁷

That Walker brings up the notion of rape as a revolutionary tool in order to firmly reject it indicates that Luna's pain is at the foreground of this section of the narrative. She argues that people like Cleaver and Jones are responding to one kind of dehumanization, racism, with another, misogyny, with one being just as cruel as the other. In making this move, the narrator, on the question of rape, identifies as female first. As a woman, the narrator's visceral reaction to the thought of any rape, let alone rape committed to make a political point, crowds out any intellectual response. She perceives that people like Jones and Cleaver are willing to minimize women's humanity in order to see them as men's property, engaging in violence against them in order to dominate the men who possess them. Imagining this, readers experience Luna's pain without needing it spelled out, as does Walker's narrator.

When the initial horror of Luna's revelation passes, the narrator engages with the layers of social and historical implications that accompany Luna's story. Her arrival at this point is brought about by Luna, whose laconic responses to the narrator's question reveal that she was aware of these implications as the rape was happening and, in not screaming, sacrificed herself for the movement. The narrator undoubtedly has a visceral reaction to this too. Imagining the picture of Emmet Till causes a sense of rage at the thought of all of the black men who have been brutalized in the name of southern white women's purity. She knows that Luna had the power to invoke such reactions again in Georgia and, knowing that, had suffered the rape silently. Previously aloof and self-assured, Walker's narrator becomes overwhelmed and vulnerable when confronted with the facts of the scene.

Next, she identifies as black, and considers what this means in relation to Luna's rape. "Whenever interracial rape is mentioned, a black woman's first thought is to protect the lives of her brothers, her father, her sons, her lover. A history of lynching has bred this reflex in her. I feel it as strongly as anyone."⁴⁵⁸ Socializing discourses emerging from the early 20th century, at the height of the lynching epidemic, nurtured this reflex, and the narrator returns to these in order to fully articulate her standpoint in relation to them. She evokes Ida B. Wells, a journalist who spoke out against lynching, and engages in imaginative conversation with her. In her prayer to Wells, the narrator acknowledges her efforts to protect black men from lynch mobs, and defers to her wisdom on the subject.

She reveals to the imaginary Wells that "*You made it so clear that the black men accused of rape in the past were innocent victims of white criminals that I grew up believing that black men literally did not rape white women. At all. Ever. Now it would appear that some of them, the very twisted, the terribly ill, do. What would you have me write about them?*"⁴⁵⁹ Here the narrator is struggling with the question that McKay identifies, whether it is possible to advance Luna *and* Ida B. Wells.⁴⁶⁰ While the narrator may want to deny Luna's painful experience, she cannot do it. She sees it as her ethical responsibility as a writer to give Luna back the voice that she willingly silenced as she was being brutalized by acknowledging her experience as a reality of the civil rights movement. At the same time, it is also her ethical responsibility to advance Ida B. Wells, who witnessed and recorded unthinkable acts of violence committed against black men in response to manufactured situations like that which Luna described. She does this by reminding readers of Wells's reality, and by putting Wells into conversation with contemporary perspectives. "*Eldridge Cleaver and LeRoi Jones don't know who they're*

dealing with,” the imaginary Ida B. Wells tells the narrator. Black men who see rape as a tool for resistance “*know nothing of America.*”⁴⁶¹ In the narrator’s prayer, Wells sees the misogynist revolutionaries as foolish, but reveals herself to be shortsighted as well. Luna’s reality is not important to her. White men’s propensity for violence against black men necessitated Luna’s squelched scream and necessitate the narrator’s silence. But this, the narrator concludes, “is virtually useless advice to give to a writer.”⁴⁶²

Despite their continued cohabitation, the rape revelation forever changes the women’s friendship. The narrator admits that:

the rape, the knowledge of the rape, out in the open, admitted, pondered over, was now between us. (And I began to think that perhaps—whether Luna had been raped or not—it had always been so; that her power over my life was exactly the power *her word on rape* had over the lives of black men, over *all* black men, whether they were guilty or not, and therefore over my whole people.)⁴⁶³

For Walker’s narrator, this is the crux of the tension between black and white activists. The parentheses signal this sentiment’s tendency to go unspoken in progressive interracial circles despite its lingering presence. No matter how much they believed it and tried to enact it among each other, in America black and white people were and are not equal because of the country’s history of white supremacy. In “Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,” this history is represented through the cult of white womanhood, in which violations of white women’s purity, whether real or imagined, are invoked as justification for acts of violence against black men, carried out publicly and with impunity. In a white supremacist society, whether individual white people want it or not, whether they work against it or not, white people are automatically endowed with power over black people.

This explains the confession of Joe Harrison, “a wonderful Negro man from Detroit,” to Ellen, a volunteer whose letter is featured in Martínez’s collection, that “I always feel more comfortable with Negroes than with whites.”⁴⁶⁴ Between “Negroes,” the foundational American power differential does not exist, as it does between black and white Americans.

The narrator’s description of Luna in the last months they lived together both illustrate white progressives’ connection to the white supremacist system and the danger that comes from their denial of such a connection. For Luna, the connection to white supremacy is represented by the appearance of her father in their apartment in New York:

When she left her job at the kindergarten because she was tired of working, her errant father immediately materialized. He took her to dine on scampi at an expensive restaurant, scolded her for living on East 9th Street, and looked at me as if to say: “Living in a slum of this magnitude must surely have been your idea.”

As a cullud, of course.⁴⁶⁵

Luna’s father represents white privilege and white supremacy to the narrator, and this paragraph shows that, however she insults him or distances herself from him, Luna is this man’s beneficiary. Unlike the narrator, she can quit a job simply because she doesn’t like it, knowing support will come from her father if she asks for it. He is not only rich but also clearly racist, from the narrator’s perspective. Although the downward mobility he abhors was his daughter’s idea, and the narrator was as appalled by the apartment as he was when she moved in, he sees the narrator as automatically guilty of the decision because of her race. That Luna’s father is from the north matters not at all to the narrator. She makes clear that she sees him as no different from the stereotypical white racists who

opposed the women's efforts in the south by referring to herself, from his perspective, as "cullud."

Luna's connection to the system of white supremacy via her father makes her approach to dating all the more insidious. After recounting an incident that marks the end of their friendship, in which Luna comes out of her room one Sunday and wordlessly slams the door on the narrator, her white lover, and his friend, who had spent the night, the narrator guesses at the reason for her anger. One possible explanation could be her opposition to dating white men:

My insistence on dating, as she termed it, "anyone" was incomprehensible to her, since in a politically diseased society to "sleep with the enemy" was to become "infected" with the enemy's "political germs." There is more than a grain of truth in this, of course, but I was having too much fun to stare at it for long. Still, coming from Luna it was amusing, since she never took into account the risk her own black lovers ran by sleeping with "the white woman," [. . .]⁴⁶⁶

The narrator thinks that in Luna's mind, her summer activism and leftist political leanings cancel out her whiteness and all of the baggage that comes with it. The narrator, however, sees things differently, especially in light of her recent conversation with Ida B. Wells.

However progressive Luna is, dating her openly puts black men in danger by subjecting them to the wrath of people like Luna's father and his associates.

The story's culminating enigma comes with another unexplained incident occurring in the women's final months of living together. One morning, Freddie Pye emerges from Luna's bedroom, barely speaks to the narrator, and leaves. The two women

never discuss the incident, and trying to make sense of it leads to a series of alternative endings that correspond to a series of worldviews: idealism, fear, realism, and cynicism.

In the original ending, the narrator sums up her friendship with Luna with a metaphor: “Several years later, [Luna] came to visit me in the South and brought a lovely piece of pottery which my daughter much later dropped and broke, but which I glued back together in such a way that the flaw improves the beauty and fragility of the design.”⁴⁶⁷ The fragility of the two women’s friendship was what made it both beautiful and susceptible to breaking. The act of gluing the piece of pottery together represents the narrator’s writerly reflection. Reconstructing the friendship piece by piece, examining the fissures, leads to a greater understanding of its design, and where all of its strengths and vulnerabilities lie.

But the narrator cannot leave the story at that, and explains why in the next section, headed “Afterwords, Afterwards, Second Thoughts.” Talking to a friend about the story, the narrator admits that she originally wrote two endings, the one about the vase, which she says “is the best I can afford to offer a society in which lynching is still reserved, at least subconsciously, as a means of racial control,”⁴⁶⁸ and an idealistic ending directed toward a society truly committed to justice and equality. In such a society, Luna and Freddie Pye would face each other as equals and “be required to struggle together over what his rape of her had meant.”⁴⁶⁹ Such a society would enable and value honest debate about the most difficult questions. In the imaginary debate, each participant’s voice would be weighted equally, and the two interlocutors could emerge from the debate without fear and with an expanded understanding of the issue at hand. Engaging in discussion about the rape in society as it stands, however, the narrator and her friend, a

black man, come away with a feeling of horror at “what might have happened to an indiscriminate number of innocent young black men in Freehold, Georgia, had Luna screamed, [and], it became clear that more than a little of Ida B. Wells’s fear of probing the rape issue was running through us, too.”⁴⁷⁰ This fear keeps the narrator (Walker) from publishing the story, and sends her back to it time and time again over a period of years.

She includes a section headed “Luna: Ida B. Wells—Discarded Notes,” with additional information about Luna’s modest personality. She does not clarify how these notes fit with the narrative, but provides them in hopes that they might help readers understand the story. Next comes a section with the heading “Imaginary Knowledge.” Written entirely in italics, like the narrator’s imagined conversation with Ida B. Wells, this section leads readers to experience unexpected sympathy with Freddie Pye. The section tells readers that Freddie traveled to New York with the movement. At a rally in the city, he was the featured poor, backwoods, uneducated Mississippian, and “*He had been painfully aware that he was on exhibit, like Frederick Douglass had been for the Abolitionists. But unlike Douglass he had no oratorical gift, no passionate language, no silver tongue.*”⁴⁷¹ After the rally, he called Luna and asked to see her. When, predictably, she refused:

*He had burst into tears, or something that sounded like tears, over the phone. He was stranded at wherever the evening’s fund-raising event had been held. Not in the place itself, but outside, in the street. The “stars” had left, everyone had left. He was alone. He knew no one else in the city. Had found her number in the phone book. And had no money, no place to stay.*⁴⁷²

Although it by no means provokes forgiveness or excuses his act, this depiction may make readers feel compassion for the villain Freddie Pye. Like Luna was at his own hands, he is exploited and disrespected. He also is objectified and devalued, even, in the end, by those who fought for his enfranchisement. In this light he is a pathetic figure, and even Luna takes pity on him. Relegating him, first, to sleep on the hard church pew, Luna worries about his discomfort and invites him to sleep in her bed. They cling to opposite ends of the bed and talk through the night about the rape and its meaning, a question that the two of them must resolve, according to the narrator, before honest affection and solidarity between black and white men and women can exist.

The story's final ending, headed "Postscript: Havana, Cuba, November 1976," features a conversation between the narrator and a muralist friend. He is well familiar with civil rights activism and the politics surrounding it because "During the sixties he designed and painted street murals for both SNCC and the Black Panthers [. . .]"⁴⁷³ After workshopping "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells" with a group of artists, the narrator asks her muralist friend what he thought of the story. He replies with the suggestion that Freddie Pye was paid by the government to commit the rape. After all, he reasons, "you know by now that blacks could be hired to blow up other blacks, and could be hired *by someone* to shoot down Brother Malcolm [. . .]" and to commit similar atrocious acts.⁴⁷⁴ That Freddie Pye might have been acting as an agent of the government makes sense, he says, because, "Enough blacks raping or accused of raping enough white women and any political movement that cuts across racial lines is doomed."⁴⁷⁵ As further evidence of his theory, the muralist tells the narrator that he was once offered such a "job," and was tempted due to his starvation, but turned it down. At the end of the conversation about the

muralist's suggestion and its implications for Freddie Pye, he gives the narrator a look that "clearly implied I would never understand anything about evil, power, or corrupted human beings in the modern world." In a new paragraph, she counters this assumption with, "But of course he is wrong."⁴⁷⁶ This is the conclusion with which the narrator finally settles. The last sentence gives credence to a theory that many would find outlandish, and wraps up a theme that runs through the entire story. The muralist makes an assumption about the narrator, and she sees it as wrong. The story is a quest on the narrator's part to understand the perceptions and motives of other people. She bases any conclusions on which she very tentatively settles on assumptions, which may, in the eyes of the subjects (like Freddie and Luna) may also be wrong. Right or wrong, Walker decided in ultimately publishing "Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells" that the story needed to be circulated.

Walker's multiple endings communicate two messages about Freedom Summer and the difficult questions raised by black and white activists' complicated attempts to work and live together despite racial and cultural barriers. First, the fact that they managed to live together for a short period does not make them "equal." They lived together more or less successfully by minimizing or silencing the many difficulties and questions that their cohabitation provoked. The volunteers and workers did real work that summer, but much more is to be done after the fact when, once they are not in danger of physical violence at the hands of southern whites, they can begin to confront the historical violence that made their cohabitation such an unlikely accomplishment.

Second, issues that contribute to lingering racial inequality cannot be easily resolved, and shouldn't be. The issue of interracial rape, in this instance, is so

overdetermined and has so many implications for real people that it must stay on the table, as should any question related to the nation's history of racial oppression. With the three endings that involve debate, either between herself and her friends or between Luna and Freddie Pye, Walker locates her perspective on the incident among a multiplicity of situated perspectives, considers the rape from each new perspective, and encourages readers to do the same.

**Chapter 6:
Conclusion**

Five central findings emerge from this analysis of the role of whiteness in the rhetorical genres of Freedom Summer. This study reveals, first, that the rhetorical story of Freedom Summer is a story about the play of identifications as defined by both Burke and Ratcliffe. Second, it reveals that the small and large successes that the Summer Project achieved point toward the transgressive and transformative potential of engaging various levels of identification intentionally and openly. Third, it shows that collaboration across differences in power can succeed if the collaboration is initiated and directed by the subaltern group, and members of the privileged group are open to that direction. Fourth, it reveals the tremendous rhetorical agency that college students possess due to their ability to both persuade and reflect. Finally, it reveals that transformation is a long-term goal to be sought through a recursive process of sustained and repeated rhetorical listening across temporal distances. For an individual to work toward transformation, it is necessary to listen across multiple phases in one's life. For a society to work toward transformation, it is necessary to listen across generations.

In Burke's definition, identification is shared substance. That shared substance is comprised of shared feelings and perceptions between parties that both promote and result from acting together. Identification in this sense is both necessary for and achievable through persuasion. In Ratcliffe's definition, identification occurs in relation to discourses rather than substance. It is less about persuasion than it is about understanding. For Ratcliffe, we listen rhetorically for the purpose of recognizing relationships between interlocutors and their various socializing discourses. Rhetorical listeners consider how identifications with converging and diverging socializing

discourses come to bear on a given discussion. This process makes it possible to move beyond uncritical adherence to the cultural logics into which we are socialized, to talk back to socializing discourses from an ethical position. Both definitions of identification are central to the story of Freedom Summer, as my analysis shows the project's activists and audiences vacillating between one form of identification and the other in their texts. In the Freedom Summer texts, substantial identification facilitates transgressive power, or the power to challenge oppressive power structures, and discursive identification moves writers toward transformative power, or the power to rebuild community after breaking down power structures.⁴⁷⁷

SNCC and COFO activists recognized the American mainstream's substantial identification with its white youth, and built upon that identification in order to generate identification between that audience and the movement in Mississippi for the purpose of challenging the status quo. They aimed to challenge not only the Jim Crow system in Mississippi, but also indifference to it at the federal level. The national media helped the civil rights groups to achieve this goal because they recognized mainstream audiences' preexisting identification with the volunteers and capitalized on it, appealing to their base by telling stories of these all-American young people entering unfamiliar contexts. Media sources appealed to the nation's identification with the white volunteers, and as a result they helped to foster identification with the movement. They brought financial support to SNCC and COFO's efforts, and eventually they brought federal protection to Mississippi.

The volunteers' letters and full-time civil rights activists' memoirs make clear that cooperation between these two parties across chasms of power and privilege necessitated reflection upon the causes and effects of those differences and their implications for the

movement. It was necessary for the volunteers to articulate troubled identifications with white privilege, along with the ethical implications of those identifications, in order to work responsibly with SNCC and COFO in Mississippi. Accounts of conversations that took place at orientation make clear that the full time black activists helped the volunteers to do this by pointing out disconnects between the volunteers' assumptions and the realities of activism in Mississippi. This intercultural collaboration that characterized the Summer Project was possible, then, because the black activists organized and defined the terms of the collaboration, and the white activists respected and deferred to their authority despite the fact that they were used to being in positions of authority.

That the full time activists and volunteers generated so much support for the project and also managed to work and live together across chasms of difference points toward college students' rhetorical agency. Their *ethos* as the nation's best and brightest, combined with their well-reasoned argument for the importance of enfranchisement for black Mississippians, were powerful enough to draw support from audiences across the nation and eventually from officials at the highest levels. At the same time, the students proved open-minded enough to engage their most troubling identifications in order to transform their own approaches to social interactions and expectations enough to work harmoniously with movement veterans.

While, as Carmichael suggests, Freedom Summer resulted in changed perspectives among black Mississippians and white volunteers alike,⁴⁷⁸ Freedom Summer texts also reveal that the reflective work necessary for more complete transformation was far from finished at the end of the project. The white volunteers' unacknowledged identifications with anti- and pro-slavery writers from the previous century; white

Mississippians' intransigent adherence to the "Southern Way of Life" despite evidence of its devastating impact on all of Mississippi's citizens, as illustrated in texts produced during Freedom Summer and images and commentary in *Neshoba*, filmed over 40 years later; and retrospective representations' tendency to obscure the grassroots efforts and interracial cooperation that made the Summer Project a reality, as evidenced by *Murder in Mississippi* and *Neshoba*, indicate that much of the transformative power of Freedom Summer remains yet untapped. Fifty years later, continued reflection on these texts and their identifications with past and present discourses is necessary. Walker's short story and this dissertation have begun to do that work, and texts representing Freedom Summer have the potential to generate an abundance of productive conversations both inside and outside of the college classroom about topics such as college students' rhetorical agency, collaboration across differences in power, and the social function of written genres.

What Can Contemporary Compositionists Do with These Texts?

As I begin to draft this conclusion it is Monday, July 22, 2013. A little over a week ago, after a televised and much-discussed trial, George Zimmerman was acquitted of charges in the death of unarmed African American teenager Trayvon Martin. The trial and the acquittal provoked anger, fear, and unspeakable sadness among many Americans. How, in a post-racial society, could something like this happen? There are those like *Slate* columnist William Saletan who, in the grand tradition of white colorblind racism, clambered to deny that race played any part in the death or the verdict. The evidence suggests, Saletan argues, that those who claim that racism was a factor are overreacting.⁴⁷⁹ For some, Saletan's specious reasoning may be comforting, a reassurance that we are, in fact, in a post-racial society and special interest groups just wanted to claim his death for their pet cause. But the rhetoricians know better.

In her letter to “Letter to Rachel Jeantel,” for instance, Khadijah Costley White apologizes on behalf of the nation to Jeantel, the young woman who was speaking to Martin on the phone as Zimmerman began to follow him, and the prosecution’s star witness. She apologizes for Jeantel’s loss, and for her treatment at the hands of the defense and the media sources covering the case. She apologizes that reporters and commentators minimized Jeantel for her dialect and register, for her appearance, and for her demeanor. White assures Jeantel that she is not alone in her position as victim of this kind of minimization. “In truth, you’re part of a long legacy of black women so often portrayed as the archetypal Bitch, piles of Sassafrasses, Mammies, and Jezebels easily dismissed, caricatured, and underestimated. [. . .] This rhetoric is bigger than you, older than you, deeper than you—it is *not* you.”⁴⁸⁰ Commentators, in other words, are drawing on their antecedent racist genres in order to stereotype and dehumanize Jeantel.

Similarly, rhetoric scholar Vorriss Nunley locates Martin and his death within a long American rhetorical tradition. For Zimmerman, Nunley explains, the image of the kid in the hoodie walking down the street was “Not Trayvon Martin. Not a person. Not an American or even a human being, just a Black trope—a disruptive figure occupying the anxiety-ridden terrain of his White imagination. Therefore, as it has been during and since the American Enslavement, it, the Black trope, had to be domesticated. Controlled. Put in its place. And if necessary, murdered.”⁴⁸¹ He goes on to explain how tropes work in language and culture and how they came to bear on Martin’s death. While these analyses may not be admissible in court, neither can they be quickly dismissed or easily countered.

Had Martin lived, he might have been entering college around this time. He probably would have taken a composition course or two to fill core requirements. Many of his would-have-been classmates will move into their dorms, preparing to begin their lives as productive members of a society that, they now realize, they understand much less than they thought they did. The primary texts featured and analysis offered in this dissertation could be useful to those students' composition instructors in various ways. At the level of theory, this work contributes to several conversations, including whiteness studies, genre theory, and WAC theory. At the level of praxis, ideas and texts from this dissertation could be used to discuss students' writerly identity and rhetorical agency, service learning, as well as rhetorical lineage and its implications in various contexts.

Freedom Summer and Whiteness Studies in Rhetoric and Composition

In their introduction to a special edition of *Rhetoric Review* focusing on whiteness, Tammie M. Kennedy, Joyce Irene Middleton, and Krista Ratcliff argue for the place of whiteness studies in the field of Rhetoric and Composition. They offer whiteness's function as a trope as a prominent reason for its relevance to the field. "Tropes," they explain, "are rhetorical figures that are both representative and generative; as such, they signify multiple meanings, change over time and place, and carry historical/cultural baggage. Second, bodies are troped, or marked by a culture's terms."⁴⁸² This dissertation adds to an ongoing conversation about whiteness in the field of rhetoric and composition by bringing rhetorical theory to bear on the question of whiteness and its tropological function in a specific historical and geographical context.

My analysis shows that the volunteers' bodies, for instance, signified in many ways. Most observers saw them as young, naïve products of the middle class. From their own perspective, they were descendents of the abolitionists, agents of liberation and

historical change, and patriots fighting to maintain and realize America's foundational values. From their recruiters' perspective, they were the cherished children of the privileged classes who, because of their proximity to power, would draw with their mere presence in Mississippi the kind of attention and support that SNCC and COFO could not hope to achieve otherwise, no matter how painstaking their efforts. From some local black Mississippians' perspective, they were Christ-like in their selflessness and commitment to peace. From white Mississippians' perspective, the volunteers represented everything that threatened the American values they cherished: un-Christian, un-American, self-righteous, carpetbagger Communist invaders, bent on promoting destruction, anarchy, and unrest in an otherwise peaceful state. From the national media's perspective they were America's children and soldiers fighting their way through enemy territory.

In unearthing significations like these as they emerge in the rhetoric of Freedom Summer, my analysis contributes to conversations in both rhetoric and composition as well as whiteness studies by illuminating the rhetorical role of whiteness in an antiracist movement, and its impact upon identification between activists, observers, and stakeholders.

Genre Theory and the Texts of Freedom Summer

The genre approach to composition instruction encourages students to consider how writing does real work in the world. In asking them to analyze and write within a variety of genres, instructors encourage students to see writing as a social act. They learn that genres mediate interactions between people in established and emerging communities by both reflecting and creating the values, needs, and expectations of writers and readers.⁴⁸³ They produce texts for specific communities that draw from their

understanding of readers' values, expectations, and assumptions in order to direct those readers' attention and actions in specific ways.

The story of Freedom Summer contributes to genre theory by showing how a host of interconnected genres circulated among an array of communities, resulting in a movement that made history. SNCC and COFO used speeches at campuses across the country to generate interest in the Summer Project, workplace genres like application forms and memos to coordinate, hire, and manage volunteers, and autobiographies to interpret the project's purpose and meaning as well as to generate further support for civil rights activism. They relied on the media and their television reports, newspaper articles, and feature stories to inspire readers to produce their own transactional genres, such as letters to senators, in order to encourage action at the federal level. The volunteers used diaries, letters, essays, and memoirs to make sense of the radically new context into which the Summer Project brought them, their place within it, and the project's larger meaning. White Mississippians used news articles, commentaries, and pamphlets to control the activists' image for the local white population, and flyers to instruct local whites as to how to proceed during the project. Retrospective genres like popular films and stories situate the Summer Project as a historical moment in relation to the present, and direct attention to specific events and characters. This analysis adds another articulation of genre in action to the conversation, and shows how strategic circulation of rhetorical genres enabled a grassroots movement to make history and change the national conversation about race in America.

Freedom Summer and Writing Across Communities

Connecting her research on the rhetoric of Mexican American civil rights activist Vicente Ximenes to a Writing Across Communities approach to composition instruction,

Michelle Hall Kells argues for the value of drawing upon stories of civil rights activism that took place in the past to inform pedagogical practices in the present by asserting that:

The current historical moment of healing national division and internal polarization calls for models of democratic practice that promote dissent, engage difference, cultivate debate, and negotiate the noise of dissonance. As Hannah Arendt reminds, the promise of human freedom is realized through community—by plural human beings, “when and only when we act politically.”

In brief, this is what democratized education is all about: cultivating conditions for self-governance and citizen wisdom (Woodruff). And this is the key idea behind the Writing Across Communities initiative at the University of New Mexico. My students and I have envisioned Writing Across Communities as a platform for invigorating the public sphere and cultivating civic literacy among our most vulnerable communities—creating spaces for historically excluded peoples.⁴⁸⁴

This dissertation contributes to a budding conversation that considers the possibilities of composition instruction in light of recovered stories of civil rights activists who have used everyday rhetoric to contribute to historic change. In so doing it suggests strategies for composition instructors interested in fostering increased civic literacy among our students and connecting classroom activities to communities outside of our colleges and universities.

The rhetorical strategies that SNCC workers used to recruit volunteers, the unintended consequences of bringing privileged white students into a radically new context, and the strategies the volunteers and full time activists used in attempt to

establish identification across difference during the new volunteer orientation might inform the work of contemporary advocates of the Writing Across Communities (WACommunities) approach to writing instruction. The WACommunities approach to writing instruction, according to Juan Guerra, “is founded on the basic notion that we must create conditions under which students can learn to expand their already considerable talents as rhetors and writers capable of negotiating difference,” and, further, on the belief that “Our students must also cultivate the rhetorical sensibilities they will need to take on writing or rhetorical tasks that call on their histories of participation in a multiplicity of communities both inside and outside of the academy, especially as those histories relate to their involvement in social justice issues.”⁴⁸⁵

The Freedom Summer Project enacts these goals in several ways: First, in Bob Moses and other SNCC activists’ ability to engage in what Guerra calls transcultural repositioning, which he defines as “an ever-changing set of rhetorical abilities that the disenfranchised are more likely to have at their disposal, one that they must learn to regulate self-consciously and that allows them to move back and forth more effectively between and across ‘different languages and dialects, different social classes, different cultural and artistic forms, different ways of seeing and thinking about the increasingly fluid and hybridized world emerging all around us.’”⁴⁸⁶ Second, these goals are evident in SNCC’s use of instrumental written texts and spoken rhetorical discourse to induce social action. And third, they are evident in the volunteers’ willingness to enter and communicate in communities outside of their universities, and indeed far outside their comfort zones, in order to work for social justice.

While there are important differences between the Freedom Summer Project and WACommunities (Freedom Summer grew from a grassroots activist tradition, WACommunities from an academic one, for example), an analysis of Freedom Summer can potentially inform WACommunities scholarship and practice because its participants enacted many of the principles central to the WACommunities philosophy. Although disenfranchised groups are more likely to be adept at transcultural repositioning, Guerra argues that this ability “is indispensable for any student interested in invoking the signature characteristics that underlie the kind of reciprocity, cooperation, and mutuality essential to public deliberation.”⁴⁸⁷ Many of the white Freedom Summer volunteers were not adept at transcultural repositioning when they signed on to the Summer Project because their privileged backgrounds had not previously necessitated their movement between multiple discourses. However, their descriptions of orientation indicate that they recognized such an ability in the more seasoned civil rights workers, understood its value, and tried to gain skill in transcultural repositioning themselves with limited success.

Student Agency

In classrooms following approaches to composition that focus on writing in action, such as the genre approach and the WACommunities approach, writerly *ethos* is likely to be an issue for students. Many students may be reluctant to send anything more than a Facebook post into the world to face scrutiny because they are just barely adults and have not made names for themselves, because they think that they are “not good at writing,” that no one will take them seriously, that they have nothing new to say, etc. Studying the story of Freedom Summer, and specifically the rhetorical power that students had in this context, could provide an inroad for discussing students’ own authority, identifications, and commitments.

In discussions about college students' writerly agency, instructors could assign texts like SNCC's recruitment materials and Summer Project volunteer applications, available through the University of Southern Mississippi's digital archives, along with some of the volunteer letters published in *Letters from Mississippi*. Class discussion questions to address in response to these texts might include: How are the writers of these texts positioned in relation to their readers? How are the texts likely to impact the readers? In what ways are students in the class similar to and different from the Freedom Summer volunteers? In what way is our current social climate similar to and different from what it was in 1964? Acknowledging these, students could then discuss situations in which they might be in a unique position to have a rhetorical impact on audiences, and possibly write in response to the rhetorical situations that they identify.

Service Learning and Civic Engagement

In a 2003 CCC article, Ann E. Green argues that "If service-learning takes place, as it often does, when mostly white students at predominantly white institutions serve mostly poor people of color in urban settings, then teachers of service-learning need to reflect on how whiteness and class privilege function in the service-learning paradigm."⁴⁸⁸ Green then recounts her experience trying to discuss this subject with her students, who had trouble discussing race because they, like most middle class white people, had been taught that "mention of race and of class is impolite."⁴⁸⁹ As a result, "They refused to name racism as a possible cause of the difficulties that brought people to their service-learning sites, and they could not name their whiteness as a source of privilege."⁴⁹⁰ More than a decade later, race remains an uncomfortable and almost taboo topic among middle class whites. Thus, we deny the realities of racism, even when faced with them directly, as Green's students did.

For white people who have had the luxury of not thinking about structural racism and their own complicity in it for most of their lives, acknowledging one's own oppressor position for the first time can be extremely traumatic. However, I agree with Green that white students must be able to honestly consider their own racial privilege and all that comes with it in order to ethically engage in community-based projects. In such a sensitive situation, entering into discussions of issues of white privilege, racism, and interracial advocacy by discussing them from a critical distance is likely to be much more effective than asking students to apply these concepts directly to their own lives first. Analysis of the rhetoric of Freedom Summer would be a perfect fit for this situation. The Summer Project happened fifty years ago in the era of Jim Crow racism, as opposed to the era of colorblind racism, which began to emerge shortly after the Project and which currently dominates. The historical context provides a critical distance, giving students to space to discuss issues of race and privilege without feeling defensive. Yet students of the demographic Green describes will also very likely relate to the Freedom Summer volunteers, who were also largely white and middle class, entering poor communities to work and live with poor people of color, while others are likely to relate to the SNCC activists who recruited them.

Instructors could assign any number texts discussed in this dissertation in order to prompt conversation about difficult issues. Anne Moody's autobiography, for instance, would be useful in opening up a discussion of the link between racism and poverty. Although many students might argue that things have changed so much since the mid 20th century that people of color today do not face the same kind of oppression that Moody describes, reading the text may also indicate to students that oppression is subtle and may

have been happening around some of them, without their noticing, all of their lives. Because the volunteers openly discuss racism of many kinds in their letters, from southern whites' malicious, overt racism, to structural racism that keeps people of color in poverty, to their own racism which they may have recognized for the first time at the Oxford, Ohio orientation, reading their letters will give students the opportunity to discuss this topic without having to bring it up themselves. These texts could be used as a jumping off point for conversations about the complicated relationship between the racist attitudes that white people inherit through socializing discourses and a simultaneous commitment to antiracism. It might also necessitate that the class define overt racism, colorblindness, and antiracism and interrogate the relationship of each concept to the other. Finally, reading passages from James Forman's autobiography might inspire conversation about the power dynamics that come into play when people who have benefited (or not) from varying levels of social and economic privilege work together toward the same goal, as well as the potential drawbacks of projects like Freedom Summer.

Framing service-based composition classes with discussions of Freedom Summer would likely create a safe space for students to begin addressing the difficult issues Green describes. It is also possible that otherwise reticent white students might draw courage from the volunteers' letters, seeing that those students not only worked against racial oppression, but also thought critically about and worked to articulate their positions in a racist society. The volunteers were undeniably committed to racial justice, yet not unaffected by the racist discourses through which they had been socialized. Hopefully some white students will draw strength from their imperfect predecessors and speak

about their own whiteness, which is otherwise unspeakable in a colorblind society, and its relation to their community-based learning experiences.

Rhetorical Lineage

In the rhetoric produced by the volunteers, white southerners, and national media surrounding Freedom Summer, readers hear echoes of the past. The Civil War in particular serves as a lens through which these authors interpret their reality. For the latter two groups, this connection is more or less explicit. For white southerners, fading memories of the war are traumatic, and the threat of another Reconstruction brought about by popular activism and federal legislation provokes defensiveness, denial, and minimization of the opposing view. For the national media, the Civil War frame lends a sense of drama and momentousness to coverage of the Summer Project. In black activists' rhetoric, the Civil War frame is sparse to nonexistent, likely because for them, unlike the white writers whose work I analyze in this dissertation, racial inequality is a consistently salient issue. It is something that they and their elders have observed and discussed in reference to their reality, rather than a topic that demands notice only during periods of social upheaval. For them, the moment is its own, one in a long history of grinding and brutal day-to-day racial oppression. Understanding it deeply, they address it more pragmatically.

In the white volunteers' texts, on the other hand, the Civil War lens is less explicit but just as pervasive as it is in the white southerners' and national media reports' discussions of Freedom Summer. Although they may never have consciously identified with abolitionists, sentimental novelists, or Reconstruction-era social scientists, chapter one illustrates that the volunteers drew upon these writers as rhetorical predecessors, relying on their antecedent genres as they struggled to make sense of their new lives in

Mississippi. That they did so is not surprising because such texts in some way informed the volunteers' socializing discourses. Whether or not they had read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe's voice resonated in the discourse of their parents and teachers in the rare moments that race was discussed.

Similarly, the tropes and tones of history, including those that characterized the rhetoric of Freedom Summer, resonate in the discourses through which contemporary students are socialized. Even in the fast moving, ultra-modern, de-historicized 21st century, the words and sentences that we read, speak, write, tweet, etc. are overdetermined with meaning. They carry the baggage of our collective history, even if the individuals using those words don't know what that history is, as White so poignantly points out in her "Letter to Rachel Jeantel."

For this reason, contemporary composition instructors might do well to ask students to "talk back" to their salient socializing discourses as they struggle to understand complex contemporary issues and address them in their writing. Walker offers a useful model for doing just that with her imaginary conversation with Ida B. Wells. Asking students to have their own imaginary conversation with historical predecessors, such as the Freedom Summer volunteers and workers, in class activities or assignments leading up to larger assignments for which they address a contemporary issue, could be a useful way to promote deeper understanding of those issues among students.

Notes

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- ¹ Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 41.
- ² Sally Belfrage, *Freedom Summer* (1965; repr., Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1999).
- ³ The concept of *kairos* originated with the Sophists and refers to the relationship of truth to time and place.
- ⁴ *Race Traitor* magazine editors, "What We Believe," in *Critical White Studies: Looking Behind the Mirror*, ed. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 653.
- ⁵ Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 44.
- ⁶ Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Penguin, 2010).
- ⁷ Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).
- ⁸ Mary Aikin Rothschild, *A Case of Black and White: Northern Volunteers and the Southern Freedom Summers, 1964-1965* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982).
- ⁹ Kathy Emery, Linda Reid Gold, and Sylvia Braselmann, *Lessons from Freedom Summer: Ordinary People Building Extraordinary Movements* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2008).
- ¹⁰ Elizabeth Martínez, *Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers & Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer* (1965; repr., Brookline, MA: Zephyr Press, 2007).
- ¹¹ Belfrage, *Freedom Summer*.
- ¹² Tracy Sugarman, *Stranger at the Gates: A Summer in Mississippi* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1966).
- ¹³ A few of such studies include: Deborah F. Atwater, *African American Women's Rhetoric: The Search for Dignity, Personhood, and Honor* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2009), which makes connections between centuries of black women by focusing on the role of ethos in their rhetoric; Michelle Hall Kells, *Héctor P. García: Everyday Rhetoric and Mexican American Civil Rights* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2006), which examines the rhetorical strategies Garcia employed as he advocated for the rights of Mexican Americans in the post WWII era; Elaine B. Richardson and Ronald L. Jackson, *African American Rhetoric(s): Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 2004), a volume of essays that examine a wide variety of African American texts and consider their implications for pedagogy and future research; and Gary S. Selby, *Martin Luther King and the Rhetoric of Freedom: The Exodus Narrative in America's Struggle for Civil Rights* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2008), which argues that King's use of the biblical Exodus narrative in his rhetoric was responsible in part for the success of the Civil Rights Movement.
- ¹⁴ Catherine Prendergast, "Race: The Absent Presence in Composition Studies," *College Composition and Communication* 50, no. 2 (1998): 36, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/358351>.
- ¹⁵ A few examples of texts that contribute to this conversation include: Jennifer Beech, "Redneck and Hillbilly Discourse in the Writing Classroom: Classifying Critical

Pedagogies of Whiteness,” *College English* 67, no. 2 (2004): 172-186, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140716>; Kermit E. Campbell, “There Goes the Neighborhood: Hip Hop Creepin’ on a Come up at the U,” *College Composition and Communication* 58, no. 3 (2007): 325-344, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20456950>; Lisa M. Gonsalves, “Making Connections: Addressing the Pitfalls of White Faculty/ Black Male Student Communication,” *College Composition and Communication* 53, no. 3 (2002): 435-465, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1512133>; Tammie Kennedy, Joyce Irene Middleton, and Krista Ratcliffe, “The Matter of Whiteness: Or, Why Whiteness Studies Is Important to Rhetoric and Composition Studies,” *Rhetoric Review* 24, no. 4 (2005): 359-373, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20176676>; Joyce Irene Middleton, “Talking about Race and Whiteness in ‘Crash,’” *College English* 69, no. 4 (2007): 321-334, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25472216>; Keith D. Miller, “Plymouth Rock Landed on Us: Malcolm X’s Whiteness Theory as A Basis for Alternative Literacy,” *College Composition and Communication* 56, no. 2 (2004): 199-222, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140647>; Catherine Prendergast, *Literacy and Racial Justice: The Politics of Learning After Brown v. Board of Education* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003); Jennifer Seibel Trainor, *Rethinking Racism: Emotion, Persuasion, and Literacy Education in an All-White High School* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2008); Thomas West, *Signs of Struggle: The Rhetorical Politics of Cultural Difference* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002).

¹⁶ Krista Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 32.

²² Krista Ratcliffe, “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a ‘Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct,’” *College Composition and Communication* 51, no. 2 (1999): 208, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/359039>.

²³ Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening*, 32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁵ Walter Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), 94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 113.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 115.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

³² *Ibid.*, 131.

³³ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁴ Kathleen Jamieson, “Antecedent Genre as Rhetorical Constraint,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 61 (1975): 406-415.

³⁵ David Russell, "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis," *Written Communication* 14, no. 4 (1997): 504-554, URL: <http://www.public.iastate.edu/~drrussel/at&genre/at&genre.html>.

³⁶ Richard Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1953).

³⁷ Richard Weaver, *Visions of Order: The Cultural Crisis of Our Time* (1964; repr., Wilmington, DE: Intercollegiate Studies Institute, 2006).

³⁸ *Mississippi Burning*, directed by Alan Parker (1988; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001), DVD.

³⁹ *Murder in Mississippi*, directed by Roger Young (1990; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2008), DVD.

⁴⁰ Alice Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (Orlando, Harcourt, Inc., 1981).

⁴¹ William Merrill Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 16.

⁴² Elizabeth Martínez, ed., *Letters from Mississippi: Reports from Civil Rights Volunteers & Poetry of the 1964 Freedom Summer* (Brookline, MA: Zephyr Press, 2007).

⁴³ See the discussion of *ars dictaminis* in Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg, eds., *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Bedford/ St. Martin's, 2001).

⁴⁴ Joy Ritchie and Kate Ronald, eds., *Available Means: An Anthology of Women's Rhetoric(s)*, *Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2001), 20, 84.

⁴⁵ Jami Carlacio, "'Ye Knew Your Duty, but Ye Did It Not': The Epistolary Rhetoric of Sarah Grimke," *Rhetoric Review* 21, no. 3 (2002): 253, url: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3093010>.

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⁴⁷ Jonathan Rieder, *Gospel of Freedom: Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Letter from the Birmingham Jail and the Struggle That Changed a Nation* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), xv.

⁴⁸ Krista Ratcliffe, *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2005), 17.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

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- ³⁶⁴ Carolyn Goodman with Bernard Asbell, "My Son Didn't Die in Vain," *Good Housekeeping*, May 1965, 158.
- ³⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.
- ³⁶⁶ "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," 20.
- ³⁶⁷ Trillin, "Letter from Jackson," 101.
- ³⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 101.
- ³⁶⁹ "Mississippi—Summer of 1964: Troubled State, Troubled Time," 20.
- ³⁷⁰ "Mississippi—Everybody's Scared," 15.
- ³⁷¹ Jencks, "Mississippi: When Law Collides with Custom," 18.
- ³⁷² Elizabeth Sutherland, "The Cat and Mouse Game," *The Nation*, 14 September 1964, 106.
- ³⁷³ Goodman and Asbell, "My Son Didn't Die in Vain," 164.
- ³⁷⁴ "The Evangelists," *Newsweek*, 24 August 1964, 30.
- ³⁷⁵ Atwater, "If We Can Crack Mississippi. . .," 18.
- ³⁷⁶ "Mississippi—Summer of 1964," 18.

- ³⁷⁷ “Mississippi: Allen’s Army,” 30.
- ³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ³⁸¹ Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 366.
- ³⁸² Goodman and Asbell, “My Son Didn’t Die in Vain,” 99.
- ³⁸³ *Ibid.*, 99.
- ³⁸⁴ “Mississippi—Everybody’s Scared,” 15.
- ³⁸⁵ “Civil Rights: The Invaders,” 26. This exact same phrase appears, un-cited, in Len Holt’s book, *The Summer that Didn’t End*.
- ³⁸⁶ Atwater, “If We Can Crack Mississippi. . .,” 16.
- ³⁸⁷ Roberts and Klibanoff, *The Race Beat*, 360.
- ³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 16.
- ³⁸⁹ “Mississippi—Everybody’s Scared,” 16-17.
- ³⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.
- ³⁹¹ Sutherland, “The Cat and Mouse Game,” 107.
- ³⁹² “Mississippi—Summer of 1964,” 20.
- ³⁹³ Atwater, “If We Can Crack Mississippi. . .,” 15.
- ³⁹⁴ “Mississippi—Summer of 1964,” 20.
- ³⁹⁵ Atwater, “If We Can Crack Mississippi. . .,” 17.
- ³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.
- ³⁹⁷ “Mississippi—Summer of 1964,” 18.
- ³⁹⁸ “The Evangelists,” 30.
- ³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.
- ⁴⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 32.
- ⁴⁰¹ See Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010). In this study of color-blind racism, Bonilla-Silva notes that the shift from Jim Crow racism to color-blind racism took place in the mid 1960s.
- ⁴⁰² David Blakesley, introduction to *The Terministic Screen: Rhetorical Perspectives on Film*, ed. David Blakesley (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2003), 3.
- ⁴⁰³ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 152.
- ⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.
- ⁴⁰⁵ *Mississippi Burning*, directed by Alan Parker (1988; Santa Monica, CA: MGM Home Entertainment, 2001), DVD.
- ⁴⁰⁶ IMDb, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0095647/>.
- ⁴⁰⁷ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 154.
- ⁴⁰⁸ Mary C. Curtis, “Little Common Ground at Panel on ‘The Help,’” *The Root*, Posted September 8, 2011, http://www.theroot.com/articles/culture/2011/09/the_help_dialogue_misses_the_mark.2.html.
- ⁴⁰⁹ “Mississippi: Is This America? 1963-1964” PBS American Experience *Eyes on the Prize* series, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/eyesontheprize/about/index.html>, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hgSitIXiP5Y>.

- ⁴¹⁰ Tom Ethridge, "Mississippi Notebook" June 23, 1964, Jackson, MS *Clarion-Ledger*, microfilm, J.D. Williams Library, University of Mississippi.
- ⁴¹¹ Jeffrey A. Brown, "Comic Book Masculinity and the New Black Superhero," *African American* 33, no. 1(1999): 29, stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2901299>.
- ⁴¹² *Murder In Mississippi*, directed by Roger Young (1990; Burbank, CA: Warner Home Video, 2008), DVD.
- ⁴¹³ IMDb, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0100209/>.
- ⁴¹⁴ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 154.
- ⁴¹⁵ *Neshoba: The Price of Freedom*, directed by Micki Dickoff and Tony Pagano (New York: First Run Features, 2010), DVD.
- ⁴¹⁶ Andre Soares, "NESHOPA: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM Q&A Part II: Edgar Ray Killen and the 'Mississippi Burning' Murders," Alt Film Guide, <http://www.altfg.com/blog/movie/neshoba-edgar-ray-killen-mississippi-burning-murders/>.
- ⁴¹⁷ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva distinguishes color-blind racism from Jim Crow racism in this way: "Whereas Jim Crow racism explained blacks' social standing as the result of their biological and moral inferiority, color-blind racism avoids such facile arguments. Instead, whites rationalize minorities' contemporary status as the product of market dynamics, naturally occurring phenomena, and blacks' imputed cultural limitations." *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010), 2.
- ⁴¹⁸ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 43.
- ⁴¹⁹ Andre Soares, "NESHOPA: THE PRICE OF FREEDOM: Q&A with Filmmakers Micki Dickoff, Tony Pagano," Alt Film Guide, <http://www.altfg.com/blog/movie/neshoba-the-price-of-freedom-interview-micki-dickoff-tony-pagano/>.
- ⁴²⁰ "After Over Four Decades, Justice Still Eludes Family of 3 Civil Rights Workers Slain in Mississippi Burning Killings," Democracy Now, http://www.democracynow.org/2010/8/13/after_over_four_decades_justice_still.
- ⁴²¹ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 384.
- ⁴²² Alice Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down* (Orlando, Harcourt, Inc., 1981), 89.
- ⁴²³ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 154.
- ⁴²⁴ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 91.
- ⁴²⁵ Nellie Y. McKay, "Alice Walker's 'Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells': A Struggle Toward Sisterhood," in *Rape and Representation*, ed. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), 250.
- ⁴²⁶ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 154.
- ⁴²⁷ McKay, "Alice Walker's 'Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells': A Struggle Toward Sisterhood," 251.
- ⁴²⁸ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 85.
- ⁴²⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.
- ⁴³⁰ *Ibid.*, 88.
- ⁴³¹ Keith Byerman, "Desire and Alice Walker: The Quest for a Womanist Narrative," *Callaloo* 39 (1989): 328, doi: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2931567>.

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- ⁴³² Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 88.
- ⁴³³ Ibid., 89.
- ⁴³⁴ Ibid., 89.
- ⁴³⁵ Ibid., 89.
- ⁴³⁶ Ibid., 86.
- ⁴³⁷ Ibid., 92.
- ⁴³⁸ Ibid., 88.
- ⁴³⁹ Lanham, *A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms*, 93.
- ⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 13.
- ⁴⁴¹ Keith Byerman, "Gender and Justice: Alice Walker and the Sexual Politics of Civil Rights," in *The World is Our Home: Society and Culture in Contemporary Southern Writing*, ed. Jeffrey J. Folks and Nancy Summers Folks (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2000), 105.
- ⁴⁴² Mary Eagleton, "Ethical Reading: The Problem of Alice Walker's 'Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells' and J.M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*," *Feminist Theory* 2, no. 2 (2001):194, doi: <http://fty.sagepub.com/content/2/2/189>.
- ⁴⁴³ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 86.
- ⁴⁴⁴ Eagleton, "Ethical Reading," 194.
- ⁴⁴⁵ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 88.
- ⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 88.
- ⁴⁴⁷ Michelle Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), 174.
- ⁴⁴⁸ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 87.
- ⁴⁴⁹ Ibid., 88.
- ⁴⁵⁰ Jane Davis, *The White Image in the Black Mind*, 4. According to Davis, white liberals take a paternalistic view of black people and do not consult black people themselves about their perspective on white actions on their behalf. "And no one is more defensive than liberals when blacks question their progressiveness."
- ⁴⁵¹ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 91.
- ⁴⁵² Ibid., 91.
- ⁴⁵³ Beale, *A Pragmatic Theory of Rhetoric*, 154.
- ⁴⁵⁴ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 90.
- ⁴⁵⁵ Ibid., 93.
- ⁴⁵⁶ Byerman, "Desire and Alice Walker," 329.
- ⁴⁵⁷ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 92.
- ⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., 93.
- ⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., 94.
- ⁴⁶⁰ McKay, "Alice Walker's 'Advancing Luna—and Ida B. Wells,'" 251.
- ⁴⁶¹ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 94.
- ⁴⁶² Ibid., 94.
- ⁴⁶³ Ibid., 95.
- ⁴⁶⁴ Martínez, *Letters from Mississippi*, 6.
- ⁴⁶⁵ Walker, *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*, 96.
- ⁴⁶⁶ Ibid., 96.
- ⁴⁶⁷ Ibid., 97-98.

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁶⁹ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid., 98.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid., 100-101.

⁴⁷² Ibid., 99.

⁴⁷³ Ibid., 102.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁷⁵ Ibid., 103.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid., 104.

⁴⁷⁷ These definitions of transgressive and transformative power come from Michelle Kells, shared in Writing Across Communities meeting on February 28, 2014.

⁴⁷⁸ Carmichael, *Ready for Revolution*, 384.

⁴⁷⁹ William Saletan, "You Are Not Trayvon Martin," *Slate*, July 15, 2013, http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/frame_game/2013/07/trayvon_martin_v_erdict_racism_hate_crimes_prosecution_and_other_overreactions.html.

⁴⁸⁰ Khadijah Costley White, "A Letter to Rachel Jeantel, The Prosecution's Key Witness in the George Zimmerman Trial," *Role/Reboot*, June 27, 2013, <http://www.rolereboot.org/culture-and-politics/details/2013-06-a-letter-to-rachel-jeantel-the-prosecutions-key-witn>.

⁴⁸¹ Vorris L. Nunley, "Cicero's Tongue: 'Hey! It's me, Trayvon!'" *Los Angeles Review of Books*, July 19, 2013, <https://lareviewofbooks.org/essay/ciceros-tongue-hey-its-me-trayvon>.

⁴⁸² Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe, "The Matter of Whiteness," 363.

⁴⁸³ The genre approach to composition instruction described here draws from the work of theorists such as Carolyn R. Miller, Charles Bazerman, and Anis Bawarshi. In "Genre As Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984):151-167, Carolyn R. Miller situates rhetorical genre within "the conventions of discourse that a society establishes as ways of 'acting together.' It does not lend itself to taxonomy," she explains, "for genres change, evolve, and decay; the number of genres current in any society is indeterminate and depends upon the complexity and diversity of the society" (163). Miller explains further that, "for the student, genres serve as keys to understanding how to participate in the actions of a community" (165). In "Speech Acts, Genres, and Activity Systems," in *What Writing Does and How it Does It: An Introduction to Analyzing Texts and Textual Practices*, ed. Charles Bazerman and Paul Prior (New York: Routledge, 2009), 309-339, Charles Bazerman describes genres as "Recognizable, self-reinforcing forms of communication" (316). Finally, in *Genre and the Invention of the Writer: Reconsidering the Place of Invention in Composition* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 2003), Anis Bawarshi argues that, "Genres shape us as we give shape to them, which is why they constitute our activities and regulate how and why we perform them" (25).

⁴⁸⁴ Michelle Hall Kells, "What's Writing Got to Do with It?: Citizen Wisdom, Civil Rights Activism, and 21st Century Community Literacy," *Community Literacy Journal* 7, no. 1 (2012): 99.

⁴⁸⁵ Juan C. Guerra, "Cultivating Transcultural Citizenship in a Discursive Democracy, University of Louisville, The Working Papers Series on Negotiating

Differences in Language & Literacy, last modified 2012,
http://louisville.edu/workingpapers/Guerra_Cultivating.pdf, 4.

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., 1.

⁴⁸⁸ Ann E. Green, "Difficult Stories: Service-Learning, Race, Class, and
Whiteness," *College Composition and Communication* 55, no. 2 (2003): 277, stable
URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3594218>.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid., 281.

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid., 286.

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