

"THIS LITTLE LIGHT" - TRANSCRIPT OF RADIO PROGRAM, 1966

THIS LITTLE LIGHT Part I The New Negro

Singing...This Little Light...

CA We present part I of this Little Light, a series of documentaries on Mississippi in 1964.

Mr. Will the delegates please be seated. The state convention for Aaron Henry the Freedom Democratic Party is now in session. We ask ~~Albert~~ ^{Donaldson} Donaldson...

CK This is Aaron Henry, a Negro druggist from Clarksdale, Miss. bringing almost a thousand delegates to the Freedom Democratic Party State Convention in Jackson to order.

Henry The National Anthem will be led by Mrs. Fannie Lou Hamer. Singing.....

CK I begin this series of programs with sounds from the Freedom Party Convention because that convention is a symbol of changes taking place today in Miss. Negroes have not participated in the political processes of that state since the breakdown of Reconstruction in 1877. In fact, if we except those few brief years after the Civil War, Negroes have never been able to help shape the institutions that control them in Miss. This condition is now changing. Negroes are becoming politically active. The Freedom Democratic Party State Convention and the political steps that have followed it and will follow it will inevitably reconstruct Mississippi. Black Mississippians are beginning to understand that, White Mississippians fear it, and we in the North hardly yet believe it. Yet in Mississippi as James Foreman, the Executive Secretary of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee put it at a rally in the Delta, "There is a new Negro..."

Foreman I want to tell our good/sheriff here that it seems to me that he ought to spread the word around in the Delta that there ain't no need in trying to beat us 'cause we going to come. Ain't no need

....applause....ain't no need in putting us up in jail in Drew, Miss., and Greenwood 'cause we going to stay us down to the courthouse. And it ain't no need in trying to make us get our rest at night. I see but the reason they want us to go to bed at twelve o'clock is they don't want us to know what they doing at one o'clock 'cause as Mike said and I don't know... as he said when he said singing the freedom song and I tell you this is one of the best mass meetings that I've been in in the state of Miss. and I've been in many of them. And the reason that it's a good mass meeting is because there's so many young folks. You know there ain't too much we can do with those Uncle Toms and it ain't too much we can do with them Aunt Nellies, listen to me know, ain't too much we can do with Aunt Nelly who's scared to get up off her rocking chair. You go up to talk to her and she say, "No dere, you get away from me with that mess." But there is something, there is something that young people like you and MacLauren and myself, although I'm getting along up there in age ... I got my walking stick.... can do about the situation. And one thing it seems to me that every child ~~there~~ in this room ~~tonight~~ has got to say tonight is that he's not going to run away from Sunflower County and go up to Chicago and live in no slum, he's not going to run away up to Harlem in New York, but that he's going to stay here in Indianola and fight for his freedom! And that's why I said...that's why I said the future lies with you. The future lies with you. Let nobody fool you. They going to do everthing they can to ship us off as maids, to ship us out to California, to ship us to Chicago, and they going to say there ain't no jobs. But we can eat. Now I want to go on with a couple things, you see, that I think the sheriff ought to know. That there's a new Negro ~~and~~, you see, and we want to talk about the

new Negro. Ther's a new Negro who's represented in the kids in this room and the people that are working for change. Along with this new Negro is a new American because there are White people who have the same feelings as you and I who are down here. And not only do we want to freedom register that Negro policeman but we want the sheriff to join the Freedom Democratic Party and get some religion and start, you know, being a good man and tell all the other sheriffs... that the old Democratic Party is not right and he ought to get in the Freedom Democratic Party. Now what is the new Negro... now what is the new Negro? Seems to me that one of the things about a new Negro is that he is proud to be a Negro, that he feels there ain't nothing ~~wrong~~ wrong with being black, ain't nothing wrong with having nappy hair, ain't nothing wrong with having a big, fat nose, ain't nothing wrong with burly lips, 'cause he's still aman, see, now I'm 'fraid that, ~~see~~ ^{, see,} 'cause the White folks have made us think that we were ugly. That's right, and the reason that they have made us think that we were ugly is that they done sold us all this hair straightener and everything else trying to make us look like we White. We 'buy more bleach.... Every Negro who ain't here got some sort of bleach upstairs trying to look like a White man. Now that's very important you see, because as long as we as young people can feel that there's nothing wrong in being a Negro, nothing wrong with being black and being brown, then we can make some strides. Now one of these, ~~now~~ you know how it is, now you know I know what I'm talking about 'cause not only have I all over this country, and I know what the saying goes. You know, I was up in Clarkdale and I told this story, I heard it from a folk singer once and he said there is a song that if you're White, you're right and the White man's been believing that and if you brown you can get aroun' but if you black you got to git back.

So we here, we are here to tell the state of Mississippi that the new Negro...we are here to tell the state of Mississippi that the new Negro is not afraid of being black and he's not going to get back but is going to get up front.

CK In 1962, then new Negro was not around James Foreman said. And indeed, workers with the Council of Federated Organizations, COFO, which is directing Mississippi's civil rights activities told me time and again that something had happened in the state. It was evident wherever I went. It was evident for example in the words of a Negro marine, Clarence McGee, who returned to Greenwood on a furlough and then helped his brothers integrate a movie theatre.

McGee When I went in the army in April of 1952, I raised my right hand and they told me that I was fighting for my country and my brothers, my sisters, my mother and my fellow-man, my neighbors, so after approximately four months of basic training to teach me how to fight they sent me to a place called Korea. Now when I come back here and tried to go to the Leflore(?) theatre, I went to the theatre, me and my two brothers, when I got ready to leave there was a whole mob out there. Well now, I've seen mobs before, I've seen mobs when there... there was about fifteen of us approximately September 1952 at a little place called Sunchon about three miles from the demilitarized zone which is commonly known as the 38th Parallel in Korea. We got orders to hold with approximately 1500 people attacking us. We held. We stayed. Fourteen of us was Negroes and one White man. We stayed. So... when I got ready to leave that theatre I told my two brothers, I said, "Now look, we've got two points. This is a theatre. There sits a taxi. We're going to walk from point one to point two. We're not going to run. We stick together." There was three of us. My brother Jake, my brother Silas

That wasn't a White man ~~mm~~ that ran across the street and run up and attacked us. No, he didn't do that. We walked to this car. I opened the rear door of this taxi, let my two brothers in, I stood outside for approximately thirty seconds looking around, nobody threw a brick at me. They could have, they could have knocked my brains out. I'm the same as anybody else, I can be killed, very easy. But they didn't do it. Why? Because I showed that I didn't mind being hit. That if I could get the man that want to hit me within my thirty-six inch reach, we will prove, I'll prove to him that I'm a better man than he is. We left from the theatre ~~but~~ for there were incidents. When you go to that theatre you've got to expect incidents. Why? Because the White man is scared of you.

CK

The new Negro was evident at the district and county conventions where delegates to the state convention were selected and as you will hear, not all the new Negroes were young and some at least had worked for their people for years. But without exception they pointed to something new in the atmosphere, something new that they believed they would have to seize now or lose.

Walter
Jones

To the honorable Chairman and this congregation, I'm sure we all know by this time what we're here for. If we don't know, I'm sorry but I happen to be Walter Jones from Clarksdale, Miss., County, the father of seven children and one has been teaching in Indianola for quite a bit, better known as Mrs. Alma Jones Palmer. But I want to tell you this, I been in this for a long time, ever since in the Thirties, you know, when the NAACP had to walk up to a fellow and touch him to see if he wanted to be a member.. But during the Scottsboro case in Alabama, I thought if an organization went to nine boys as they did them, I wanted to belong to it and been a member ever since. Well, I'm telling you right now, friends, if we don't

do now, if we lose the opportunity that we have, we'll be back in the days when President Hayes took over this thing in 1886. When Negroes were sold, four million, back down into slavery all that Abraham Lincoln had done and the use of that and Thomas Jackson, Johnson, we lost it and we're about to get back and for God's sake, don't anybody retreat. Do all you can to foster this business where we can keep progressing.

J W
Wright

Ladies and gentleman, I am J. W. Wright, Clarksdale, County, Miss., Just a few years after the proclamation of emancipation was signed, a few Negroes was admitted into the government of the state of Mississippi and to the United States and after a little while they were banished. What we need today are men that are going to be able to stand on their feet and do the things that they ~~xxx~~ conscientiously believe are the best things for all the people. You know some of us want to hate the White folks and the White folks want to hate us but there's no time for that. We must love everybody. We must do unto all men as we would be done by. Thank you.

Dewey
Green

Mr. Chairman. I'm Dewey Green from Greenwood, Miss. I'm the father of Dewey Green that applied for admission to Old Miss. His application to Mississippi, the University of Mississippi, caused them to shoot in my home. But when they shot in my home they didn't dampen nothing. He was the only one then active in civil rights work. I have seven children. When you shot in there you got seven more. The White people of this state pushed me into politics, shot me into politics, and if they get me out, they'll shoot me out.

Wm.
Douglas

I am William Douglas Scott, Sunflower County, Indianola, Miss. The first thing I would like to say is ~~xxxxxx~~ it's just good for us to be here. This is the first time in over 100 years that the black people in the state of Mississippi or anywhere else in the southland have become very active in politics. When I was growing

up down there in Sunflower County on the Johnson Barnett Barrett
and Robert ~~Barrett~~ plantations a lot of things went on, you know, that
didn't quite ring a bell with me and I would often ask mother about it
and she say, "Well, you'll understand this better bye and bye, you
know". So I started understanding, you know, that every time I saw
Mr. Charlie it was time for me to get faster, you know, or run or do
things like this. And I thought like that in High School and there
was this principal, you know, who wouldn't let anything go right,
I mean, not the way we figured it should be right. Fact I got
kicked out of high school 'cause of political agitation as they
call it. But I deeply convicted in my heart, in my mind, that it's
time for a change in Mississippi, it's time for a change in the
United States, because this problem's no only in Mississippi, you
have Harlem and Rochester and everywhere else. It's time for a change
in Congress. Not only do we have to fight to unseat the Mississippi
delegation to the Democratic Convention, we going to have to do a lot
of more fighting. We got to have people in that Convention who'll be
able to stand up to all sorts of pressure. I know we have eight
state's delegations say they are going to support us but what about
the rest? There are forty-one more somewhere. So we're going to
have to send delegates to this Convention who're going to take your
problems to that Convention, who's going to say when that lily-white
delegation get up and say, "We represent the people of Mississippi,"
who'll say, "You're wrong, brother," who'll say, "I represent the
people of Mississippi and we're going to present all these freedom
registration forms. These are the people that I represent from
Mississippi." That's why our platform. We're not going to be talking
all this wishy-washy that Stennett and Whitner talking for the last
14 or 15 years. We going to say, "We want the school buildings.
We want some paved roads. We want some street lights. We want the
right to vote."

Turnbow This is Hartman Turnbow, from Holmes County and I'm an active worker in the Movement. I believe it and all of it's works is right. I believes Negroes everywhere in the USA needs freedom and wants freedom. For that reason I've stuck my neck out in many places and I runned, took many chances working to try to help get Negroes free, trying to help them be first class citizens, trying to help them get they feet out of the mire and in Holmes County where I live in '63 in March a little Movement started there, And I was one of the first men that ventured out into the county to spread this movement over the county 'cause I felt like just we few peoples who went to the courthouse to regist' wasn't enough. I felt like it took every lady and every gentleman in Holmes County to help wag(?) with this burden, to help fight for freedom. And, too, in that I got involved in many things, my house was fire-bombed, it was shot in, I was 'cused of arsoning it, I was throwed in jail and I was bombed out. I had I had a Federal trial in Jackson and they dropped it. So in that I got a chance to go to Washington, DC, to represent Mississippi and when I went there all of you peoples who I never seed 'til today I was representing you, too, simply because I knew in the first place that you was a Negro as I am and I felt like you was being 'pressed, I felt like you done endured long suffering, deprived of your rights in just (?) in court and for that reason I tried my very best to make a good talk in Washington before Congress and before the Senate. So they say I did a good job and I was the first that went, I were the onliest man that had a seat at the round table with the Congressmans and the Senators. And I told great stories about the suffering and the condition of colored people in Mississippi.

When we were walking up here to begin the interview you said something about the fact that Mississippi is on the verge~~of~~ of the dawn of a new day. Would you explain that?

Claude
Moore

Oh, well. I would think Mississippi's on the dawn of a new day. This is something here I think would be new entirely with this generation of people, something they never have been able to participate in, a political movement of this kind, I do think it is a new birth to Mississippi.

CK

Are you optimistic about it's results?
of course

Moore

Well, I do think this that from the statement from Sen. Eastland and Sen. Stennis, they have been... the propaganda which they have been shooting to the Senate and House of Representatives is that the Negroes in Mississippi have been perfectly satisfied at their present standing and it was outsiders who was stirring up or doing this. I think from this movement that we're making here, attempting to send the delegates to the Freedom Democrat Convention will be our spokesmen to the Convention that we are not satisfied and that we are eager to take a actual step towards freedom.

CK

Do you think this movement's going to work?
do

Moore

I believe and I have this belief about it if it doesn't work particular this time we have the courage to go forward and see if the next best thing won't work.

CK

In other words, you think people now are on the move.

Moore

I think they on the move. I think...in other words...I think the other people eyes are coming open to the fact that the people in the South or in Mississippi, rather, has been really brutally treated and has been denied the freedom that the United States do offer to its citizens. I do think that.

CK

Throughout the state people are active and moving inside and outside of the formal political activity and despite the fact that there have always been leaders anxious to improve the condition most people relate the changes to the coming of CORE and SNCC, to the new generation of young field workers.

I believe ...seem like for the last.. these last few weeks that these workers has been in here, seem like the Negroes have began to wake up in this section and other sections of the community, too.

And I just believe it will in the future be a better place.

Yeah, I think so, too. It like we done more here for the last month...two months than we've done in these many years that I remember. And if things keep going fast like they are now well, I think... some says it'll be a long time but look like to me, I think, it'll be right away, be pretty soon

The young civil rights workers find their major support among young Mississippians for as James Foreman said, "The future lies with them." Traditionally the most active and vital Negroes, the most courageous and highly educated, have left the state. As Gov. Johnson bragged, "Under Gov. Barnett, over 260,000 Negroes fled Mississippi." Many Negroes still wish to do so and many will but there are other young people who want to stay and fight.

the path of my education will follow from here, I'm sort of undecided but whatever I do I don't intend to, you know, run away from home and stay and take what I call a selfish attitude, well, this is for me and I'll stay away and I'll use it. I intend on coming back home to Mississippi if I go away and try and see what, try to see what can I do, you know, here and what can be done here to improve our conditions.

Well, I plan to finish first four years of college and then I want to go on to graduate school and I want to teach English in the public schools, something, I want to get a Master's degree so I'll be better equipped to teach as my teachers wasn't. And not only do I want to teach school I want to teach the Negroes that they aren't inferior.

I think that the onliest peoples they don't have, they don't have,

take leadership in there, but they are for, now is only children and these students, children are not gone take what the older people might take so it'll be left to them. That's what I feel about it. I think we can solve the crisis.

I think if a mob come across here it'll be something like Harlem. You know, Boom boom. Something like that because most kids they have said that, I mean this is supposed to be a non-violent movement, right? And it's hard to stay non-violent when a mob is coming on you, see, and if a mob come, well, I think it's just going to be a downright brick-throwing, shooting war.

I would like to say, too, that if they do come over here it already has been stated that non-violence can go so far and then you can turn violent. You can take so much and then you stop. Then you just act violent ~~taxfarx~~ two for two(?). Like that, they fight -- we fight.

Foreman

We got to look them dead in the eye and say, "I'M a new Negro. I'm a new Negro, I ain't ~~Tom-ing~~ Tom-ing no more." I ain't saying ~~new'm~~ naw'm and yessum and no, mam, and all of that. I'm a new Negro and that I got a right to be free and I got a right to the same things that the White people have. And tell them that no longer is black going to get back, but White better get right, 'cause the time is here. Now, I see here you ~~got~~ got a map that says "Uhuru". Now that's a Kenyan word, an African Swahili word, Freedom. And over there in Africa when they have these mass meetings and they were struggling for their independence, they started talking about "One man, one vote". You see these buttons, we talking about "One man, one vote". And they used to give some chant at the end ~~of~~ of the rally and sometimes the spokesman would get up and he would yell the word and the people would echo it and they would echo it with a whole lot of strength so that all the White folks

around could get the word and that word was "FREEDOM!"

All FREEDOM!

Foreman FREEDOM!

All FREEDOM!

Singing "Woke up this morning with my eyes set on freedom"

CK When field workers for the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee first came into Indianola where this rally was recorded they were unable to find homes in which to house their workers. They were unable to find Negroes to feed them, introduce them to the community or work with them. That was two years ago. When I recorded these tapes in the Summer of 1964, this rally alone contained over 300 people. But the process of transition is only beginning. While there is unquestionably a new Negro in the state, and while steps are being taken, at the beginning of transition there is more of the old than the new. The series of programs which will follow in the coming weeks will tell the story of the summer of 1964, that which is old as well as that which is new.

Annncr This has been part I of THIS LITTLE LIGHT, a series of documentaries on Mississippi in 1964. The programs were produced from field recording made in Mississippi by Chris Koch, Dale Minor and Dave Welsh. Production assistants were Kathy Dobkin and Willie Ross. The programs were written and produced by Chris Koch for Pacifica Radio.