

This book is dedicated to:

All the people who have fought and died in the struggle for racial justice.

Acknowledgements

Mississippi Notations was written and designed by Adrian Castillo, Shawn Hall, Linden Harrigan, Charlene Hicks, Raymond Hill and Carmen Pizarro, students in the Through Our Eyes Video and History Project at Satellite Academy High School.

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Introduction

In April of 1990, eight students and two staff members from Satellite Academy High School in the Bronx spent a week in Mississippi. The group was part of the Through Our Eyes Video and History Project and traveled to Mississippi to do research and shoot footage for a video documentary on the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement and its portrayal in the film Mississippi Burning. The documentary is entitled The Road To Mississippi: Reclaiming Our History.

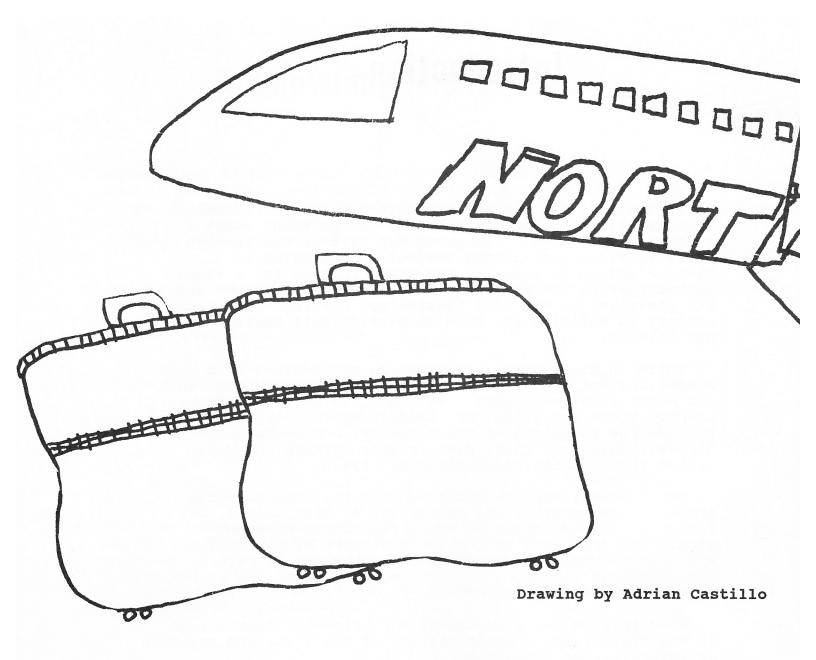
While in Mississippi, we spoke to and learned from high school and college students, former civil rights activists and other local residents. We spent two days in Neshoba, County, where our guide, Mr. Leddrew Moore, helped us retrace the footsteps of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, three civil rights workers who were killed there during Freedom Summer, 1964.

Our hostess, Marilyn Houston, from the Afro-American Studies Department at the University of Mississippi, was intent on us understanding the Civil Rights Movement within the framework of the whole history of Mississippi. With her, we traveled from the shady streets of Oxford, to the recreated Florewood Plantation, to present day share-cropping fields near Greenwood.

What follows are glimpses of our trip--our impressions of the history and present reality of the state and segments of interviews we conducted.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to Marilyn Houston and Leddrew Moore for devoting several days of their lives to us; Beatrice and Bud Cole, Ernest Kirkland, and the members of the Sportsman's Club for granting us interviews; and the members of the Mt. Airy Baptist Church in Philadephia for opening their doors to us. We learned a great deal from you all.

Pam Sporn May 29, 1990

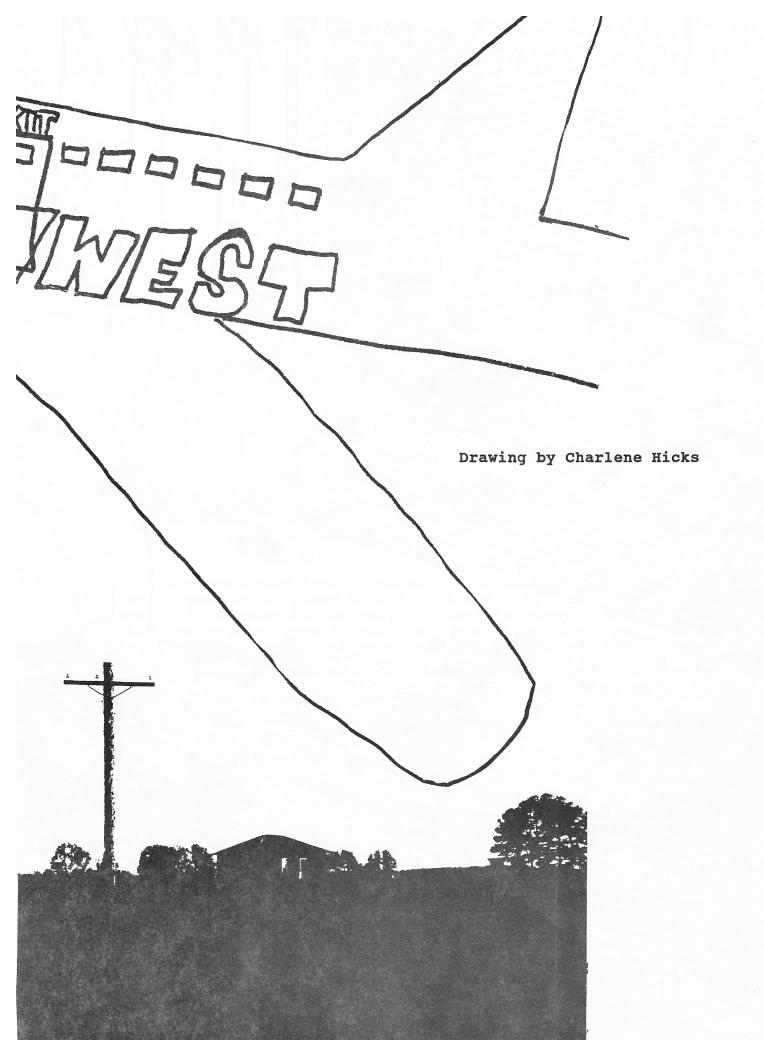


My Adventures In Mississippi

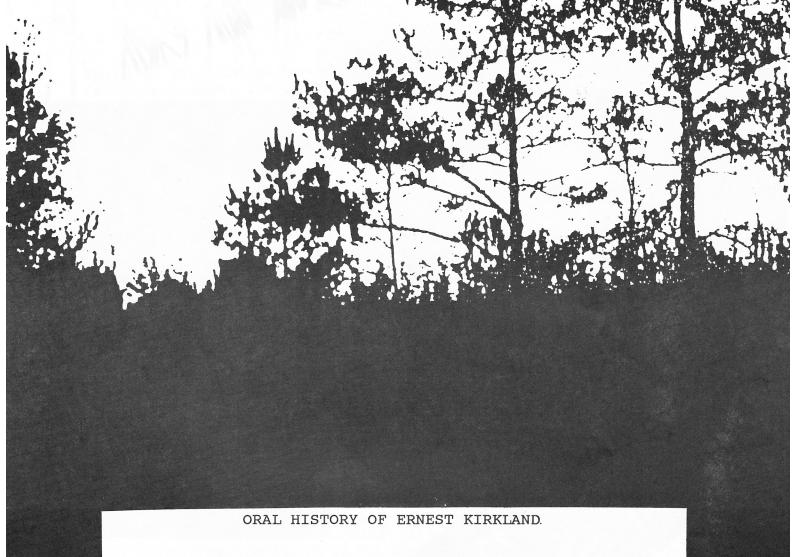
By Linden Harrigan

It was a rainy day and we were all excited about going to Mississippi, all we could think about is getting there, but the plane was on everyones mind. We were given a send off by the students and the staff at the school before leaving. We had three drivers to take us to the airport, Judy, Richard and my grandfather. When we arrived at the airport we checked our bags and then went inside. We were then greeted with some bad news, Ben Chaney called the airport and left a message that the conference had been cancelled. I was very upset by this news and I thought we would then have to turn around and go back.

Later on that day we got on the plane and headed to Mississippi, the plane ride was nice. Everyone seemed to be getting along just fine and no one had any complaints. The lunch on the plane was bad so I didn't eat it. When we arrived at Memphis our bags had already been put on the second plane to Jackson Mississippi, so our bags were taken off of the plane, all except two that belonged to Pam. She then would have to go back the next morning to claim them.

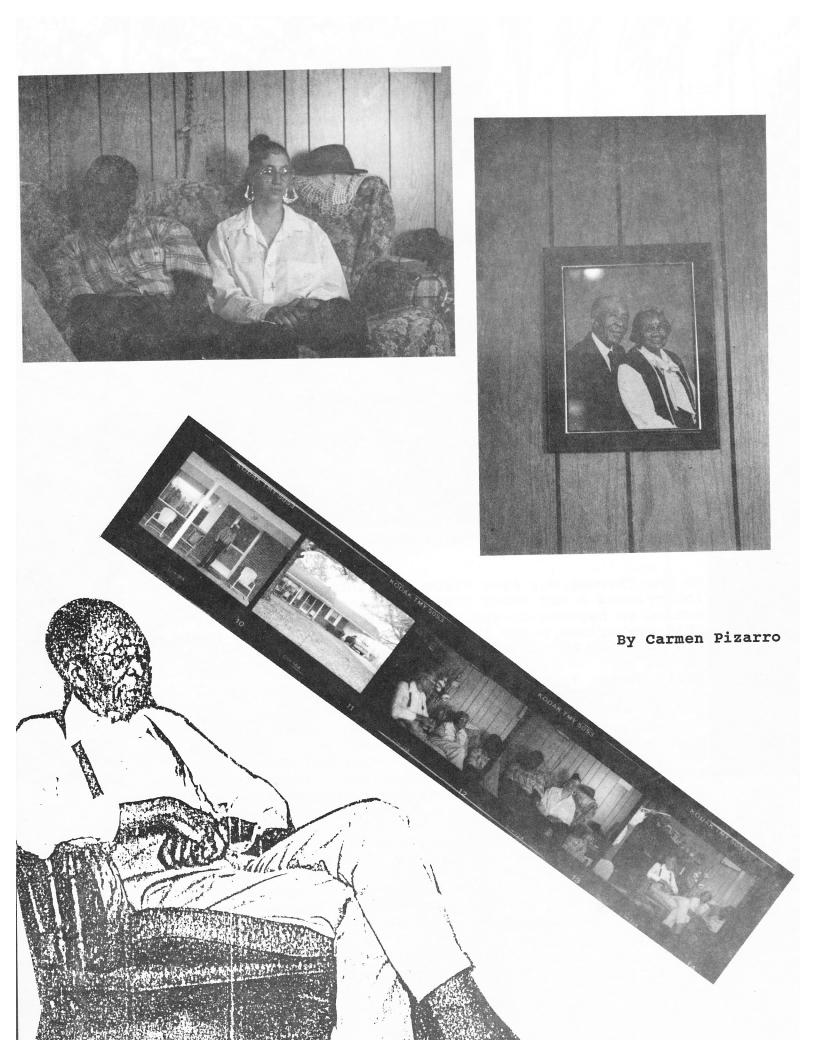






We the Through Our Eyes Video and History Project interviewed a man named Ernest Kirkland. At first this man scared me because he was very straight forward and he had this mysterious gleam in his eyes. But I decided to do my oral history on him because of his straight forwardness. He shared with us his thoughts about that fateful night the 3 Civil Rights Workers disappeared.

"I know one road, they left out on the Longdale road. The road leading from the Mt. Zion church to the 16 Highway. Which road they went after the 16 Highway. Which road they went after the 16 Highway, I can't say. I don't think they went through Philadelphia that day. They knew more about these roads than I did, and I live here. They might've went through Philadelphia, but from what I'm thinking, somebody stopped them up on the highway and led them to Philadelphia. That might not have happened, but that's my belief. They were very cautious about going through Philadelphia especially at night. There's a road here and there leading to Meridian. They never did go through Philadelphia. At least they say they didn't, let me put it to you like that."



While in Mississippi we interviewed a couple of strong, fearless people, The Coles. This couple were two of many of other black people who were portrayed as scared and lifeless in the movie "Mississippi Burning". We asked them about what happened the night that the Mt. Zion church was burned and how they felt about how the movie portrayed them.

" Interview with the Fun-Loving Coles "

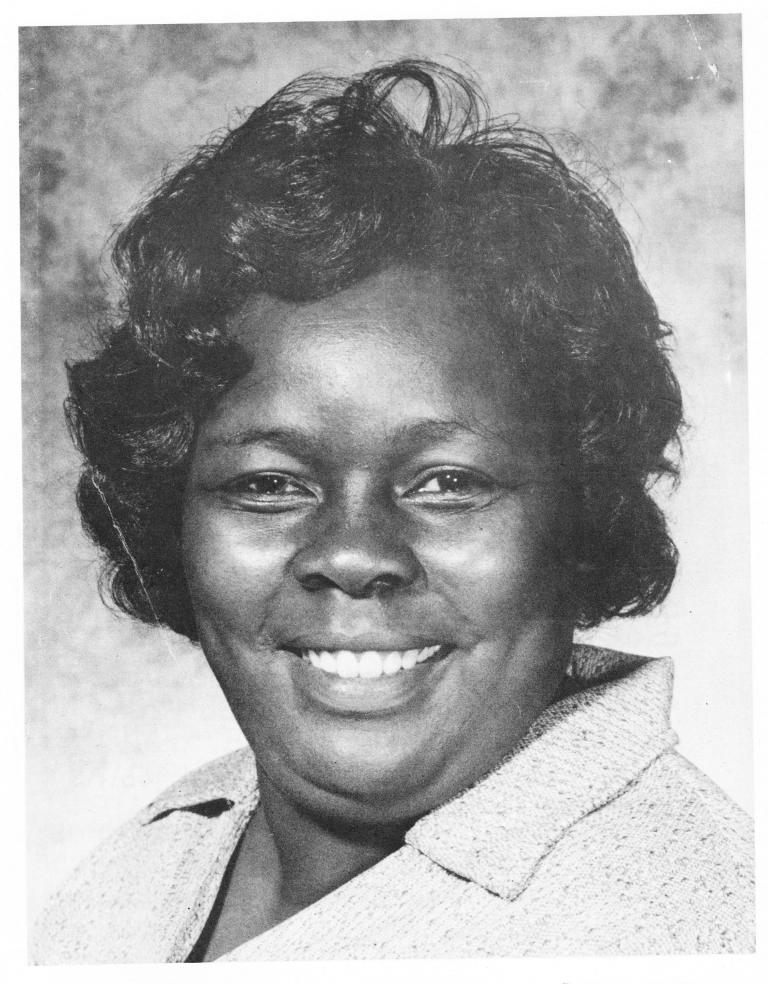
- Me Where did you get the guns from?
- Mr. C My gun? I had a gun hidden at home
- Me At that time where did you get it? Was anybody able to get a gun?
- Mr. C No, no, no, no. We weren't expecting that. We
 weren't expecting them out there. If we expected
 them out there we'd carry something out there.
- Mrs. C -I told them in court, I told them in court that if we had any idea that this was going to happen, I said look, it wouldn't of happenend like that, it wouldn't of been easy done. We would of been prepared for it, we would of been prepared for it. I told them, I said cause black folks will fight back, they will, they're too black to do anything else, they will fight back. They'll fight back.
- Me It's funny you say that, that black people will fight back, cause, did you see the movie " Mississippi Burning"?
- Mr C You asked did I see it?
- Me Yeah
- Mrs. C- Yeah
- Me Well, in the movie they portrayed blacks as being scared, now you said that black people fight back and will fight back, but in the movie they just, they portrayed you two as just scared...
- Mrs. C -scared to death
- Me ...lifeless
- Mr. C You tell them they're just lying. Tell them I've never been scared, ain't scared yet. I wasn't born scared, I'll fight you. You tell them they're just lying, that's a lie they put on that one, we ain't scared of nothing!

Muriel Tillinghast member of succ

Carmen: How where you greated by the block + white community in Mississippi?

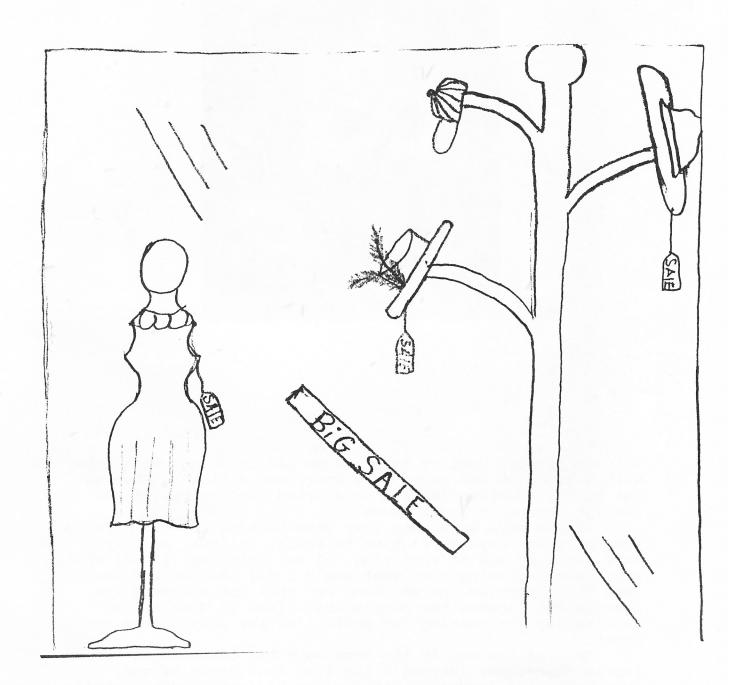
Muriel: Well, I have to tell you alittle bit about how we were prepared to go south. Most of us was worthern bred blocks and in fact college students both black and white. In turns of preparing up we had to go to axford lets see, it was in oxford, onio but I don't remember the name of the University there but, we were there for a week of orientation and in that week we listened to the experiences of succ staff people and I guess you can say we were acutally put in touch of the reality of Mississippi, and to tell you the truth I was basically petrified. I remember us getting a phone call at least one from mississippi we didn't huma at the time, telling us to come on down there was 24 plit waiting

for us. And there would be other threatening hinds of messages that came on the telephone. We were basically trying to work through that vail of four. When we left Oxford, Onio we went south by bus and we were singing and giggling like youth People act and when we got to the mississippi state live, which was about 3 or 4 o'cloch in the morning, it was pitch black outside, we literally everybody Stop singing and reality of being in mississippi and huasing that some of the people who were on the bus with 45 were probably not going to return. son in and I was drop of in Greenville which was my area of worth and for the first week, I stayed on the second floor of our office, I wouldn't come out. I really felt frightened. There were people who we called local forms who had to get use to us.



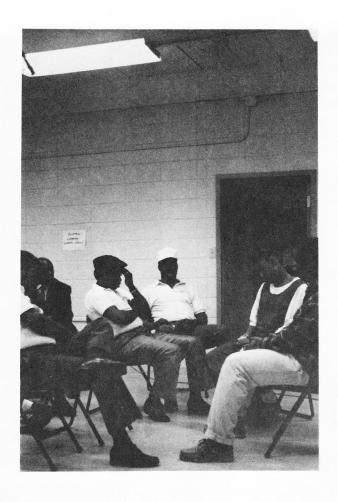
By Raymond Hill

I interviewed my mother, Mrs. Hill, who was a sharecropper in North Carolina. She says that the teenagers were rebelling and saying "Why can't we buy what we want to buy?, because we have the right to buy what we want!"



"When I learned about racism was when I was about 14 or 15 and my mother said no more farming and we moved to another town.

That's when we found about about racism. They used to have white and black stores, some wouldn't sell to you because you were black."



April 1, 1990

It started getting late and we had to do one more interview with a group of men named "The Sportsman's Club". When we got to the Sportsman's Club we started setting up. I was looking around at their faces.

These guys knew what they were talking about. Also some of these guys were going to school in 1964, so they were about my age at that time. I was thinking, if all this stuff was happening now, what would I do? But we got more into the interview and we found out that the movement was non-violent because the people that lived in Mississippi were taking the beating and protecting the people from the North.

Most of the men in the room were old teachers, so that impressed me. We learned a lot from that group of men, they were also impressed with us. It had gotten dark outside and all that told me was it was time to eat.

Raymond Hill