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"An Emergency Job Well Done"

FRIENDS OF FREEDOM LIBRARIES AND THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM LIBRARIES

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ABSTRACT: During the civil rights movement, more than eighty Freedom Libraries were established throughout the Deep South, with the vast majority in Mississippi. They provided library services and materials for many Black citizens who had no access to public libraries that, even if desegregated, found ways of refusing service. In October 1964 the Freedom House in Vicksburg was bombed and its Freedom Library effectively destroyed. Volunteer librarian Bryan Dunlap wrote to his father, Joseph Dunlap of Leonia, New Jersey, for assistance in rebuilding the library. Dunlap responded by sending eight boxes of books and forming the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee to support the work in Vicksburg. Early the next year, members of the Committee and others formed the Friends of Freedom Libraries "to disseminate information about these libraries and to encourage assistance for their needs." This article examines their motivations, activities, and results utilizing social dominance theory and identity theory.

KEYWORDS: Freedom Libraries, civil rights, African Americans

Introduction

Many historians point to the 1957 meeting of sixty Black pastors and civil rights leaders, among them Martin Luther King Jr., in Atlanta, Georgia, as the beginning of the civil rights movement, which challenged race-based inequality and injustice in the United States. That same year the Voting Rights Act of 1957, which made voter suppression a federal offense, was made law. While the movement's aims included equal access to public spaces and public services, a primary goal with to increase voting among the Black population. However, by 1964, "fewer than 5 percent of blacks living in Mississippi—the state with the largest black population in the South—were registered to vote."[1] Whites in the South claimed that this was evidence that Blacks did not want

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to vote, not that they were prevented from voting. In order to disprove this, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and local organizers in Mississippi held an unofficial "Freedom Vote" in November 1963 in which nearly 80,000 Black Mississippians voted in a mock presidential election, demonstrating their desire and willingness to participate in the process. Within two years, voter participation among Black voters had increased to 50 percent.[2]

As a consequence, four leading Black civil rights organizations—SNCC, Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)—joined forces as the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO). They formed a new Black political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), and issued a call for northern white college students to work with Black residents of southern states during what was officially the Mississippi Summer Project, but would come to be called Freedom Summer. Nearly 1,000 students responded. COFO organizers trained the volunteers at Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, in nonviolence, voter registration, and teaching literacy, civics, and Black history in Freedom Schools located in community centers or Freedom Houses.[3] Each of these schools necessarily included some form of a library, if only a shelf of books, known as a "Freedom Library."[4]

Although there is a significant body of scholarly and popular literature for adults and children on Freedom Summer, including more than 100 books published in the past decade, a graphic novel trilogy, a 2014 documentary film, and The Mississippi Freedom Summer 50th Anniversary Conference in June 25–29, 2014, at Tougaloo College in Jackson, Freedom Libraries have received scant consideration from historians of the period until recently.[5] Cheryl Knott's *Not Free, Not For All* is focused solely on public libraries and segregation during the Jim Crow period, and ends roughly with the beginning of the civil rights movement in 1964, so Freedom Libraries are outside the scope of the work.[6] Patterson Toby Graham includes one paragraph about Freedom Libraries in an appendix to his work on Alabama's segregated public libraries in which he identifies Freedom Libraries as the result of "the idealism toward the library as an agency of social change."[7] Stephen Cresswell in 1996 concluded that "efforts spent on the freedom libraries were efforts often misspent," but Douglas Davis and Cheryl Knott Malone documented that "Freedom Summer libraries provided the information that underlay the accelerating voting effort; they also supported the combined recreational

and educational functions of the community centers."[8] Karen Cook, in her 2008 dissertation on Mississippi's Freedom Libraries, established that "freedom libraries engendered a love of books and reading, and strengthened the local people's desire for access to libraries," while civil rights leader John Lewis stated unequivocally, "Libraries played a significant role in the Civil Rights Movement."[9] Wayne and Shirley Wiegand's *The Desegregation of Public Libraries in the Jim Crow South*, which picks up where Knott's work ends, recognizes Freedom Libraries as motivating Blacks to demand the desegregation of public libraries in their communities and full access to collections and services, but a detailed consideration is tangential to their work.[10] Mike Selby provides the most thorough exploration of Freedom Libraries—the Selma Freedom Library and Hayneville Freedom Library—in a scholarly article and his 2019 book *Freedom Libraries* is the most complete published treatment of Freedom Libraries throughout the South to date.[11]

Rather than retread the ground covered by Cook, Selby, and Wiegand, this article will critically examine one organization dedicated to supporting Freedom Libraries in Mississippi, the Friends of Freedom Libraries. Its membership and their motivations, activities, and results will be interpreted utilizing social dominance theory and identity theory.

Social Dominance Theory

Social dominance theory (SDT) "argues that . . . human societies organize themselves as group-based hierarchies, in which members of dominant groups secure a disproportionate share of the good things in life . . . and members of subordinate groups receive a disproportionate share of the bad things in life." The theory posits three stratification systems, one based on age, one on gender, and one on arbitrary socially constructed categories, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, nationality, or social class. "At the societal level the degree of group-based social hierarchy is effected by and affects two mutually antagonistic set of forces: (1) hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing ideologies and (2) hierarchy-enhancing and hierarchy-attenuating social institutions." Hierarchy-enhancing ideologies justify group-based social inequality, while hierarchy-attenuating ones challenge it. Consequently, hierarchy-enhancing social institutions privilege the dominant group at the expense of all others, while "hierarchy-attenuating social institutions have the opposite effect." Hierarchy-attenuating social institutions include "human rights and civil rights organizations, charities, and legal aid groups." At the group level, social hierarchies are maintained through discrimination and

because "members of subordinate groups tend to behave in ways that are less beneficial to themselves and their in-groups than dominant members do." This "behavioral asymmetry" "implies that group-based hierarchies are not solely maintained by the oppressive actions of dominants, but also by the agency, albeit constrained agency, on the part of subordinates." At the individual level, certain "values, personality variables, political ideologies, and temperaments, including openness, conservatism, authoritarianism, and empathy make certain people more or less likely to be prejudiced or to discriminate against subordinates." This likelihood is characterized as "social dominance orientation" or SDO.[12]

Societies justify and legitimize their hierarchies through what SDT calls "legitimizing myths (LMS) . . . consensually shared ideologies . . . that organize and justify social relationships." SDT "does not assume that all such myths are false, nor that they only reinforce social hierarchy."[13] They can work against the social hierarchy, such as the civil rights movement in general and Freedom Summer in particular, or professional standards such as the American Library Association's (ALA) Library Bill of Rights, which was amended in 1961 to read "the rights of an individual to the use of a library should not be denied or abridged because of his race, religion, national origins, or political views." The membership of the ALA also voted in 1962 to require all affiliated state library associations to cease discrimination against Black librarians or lose affiliation, and in 1964 to prohibit ALA officers from attending chapter conferences in such states.[14] Such ideologies and the power that accompanies them can be not only oppositional, but transformative. Such power "can be used to enable people to grow, thrive, develop, and to change relationships."[15]

Identity Theory

Identity theory intersects with SDT at the level of the individual and the group. Identity theory "postulates that self reflects the wider social structure insofar as self is a collection of identities derived from the role positions occupied by the person." The self is a "multifaceted social construct that emerges from people's roles in society." Such roles are "self-conceptions, self-referent cognitions, or self-definitions that people apply to themselves as a consequence of the structural role positions they occupy and through a process of labeling or self-definition as a member of a particular social category." Individuals derive meaning from their role identities, and distinguish themselves from others who occupy complementary or oppositional roles. "Identity is the pivotal concept linking social structure with individual action; thus the prediction of behavior

requires an analysis of the relationship between self and social structure."[16] The roles that individuals occupy both prescribe and proscribe social behavior. These roles and the identity derived from them, then, can be equated with the various factors that result in the individuals' SDO. For example, a person who identifies with the role of librarian and member of the ALA can be assumed to accept the legitimizing myths of that profession and organization, and so will challenge existing hierarchy-enhancing social institutions and legitimizing ideologies and employ hierarchy-attenuating activities to transform a discriminatory social hierarchy.

Freedom Libraries

Under Jim Crow laws in the American South, all public spaces and public services were segregated according to race under the doctrine of "separate by equal," legalized in the Supreme Court decision *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896. However, it would be difficult to find a single public service that truly was both separate and equal, and that includes public libraries. Southern communities with public libraries either did not provide any service for Black citizens at all or provided inadequate and poorly funded service through "Negro branches" or "Negro bookmobiles." These collections often consisted primarily of the discards from the white branches and, due to a lack of funding, could not be developed to meet any of the needs of the Black community they purported to serve.[17] Rural public libraries seldom met even the needs of the white community.[18] These segregated public libraries were hierarchy-enhancing social institutions that supported the segregationist ideologies and systemic racism of the Jim Crow South. One observer called the Vicksburg Public Library a "wretched library" and wrote that the history section ran "heavily to books on the War Between the States, and the inevitable stars and bars hangs on a coat hanger frame, beside a small equestrian statue of some Rebel officer, in a corner of the Cataloging desk."[19]

Freedom Libraries were established by COFO in the mid-1960s as transformative hierarchy-attenuating institutions, meant not only to challenge the existing social hierarchy, but to empower Blacks in the South by providing them with access to relevant informational and educational materials of high quality. They were also safe community spaces where children could do homework and avoid the dangers of walking in the white area to access public library materials in the few communities where such access was afforded to them. Although more than eighty such libraries were

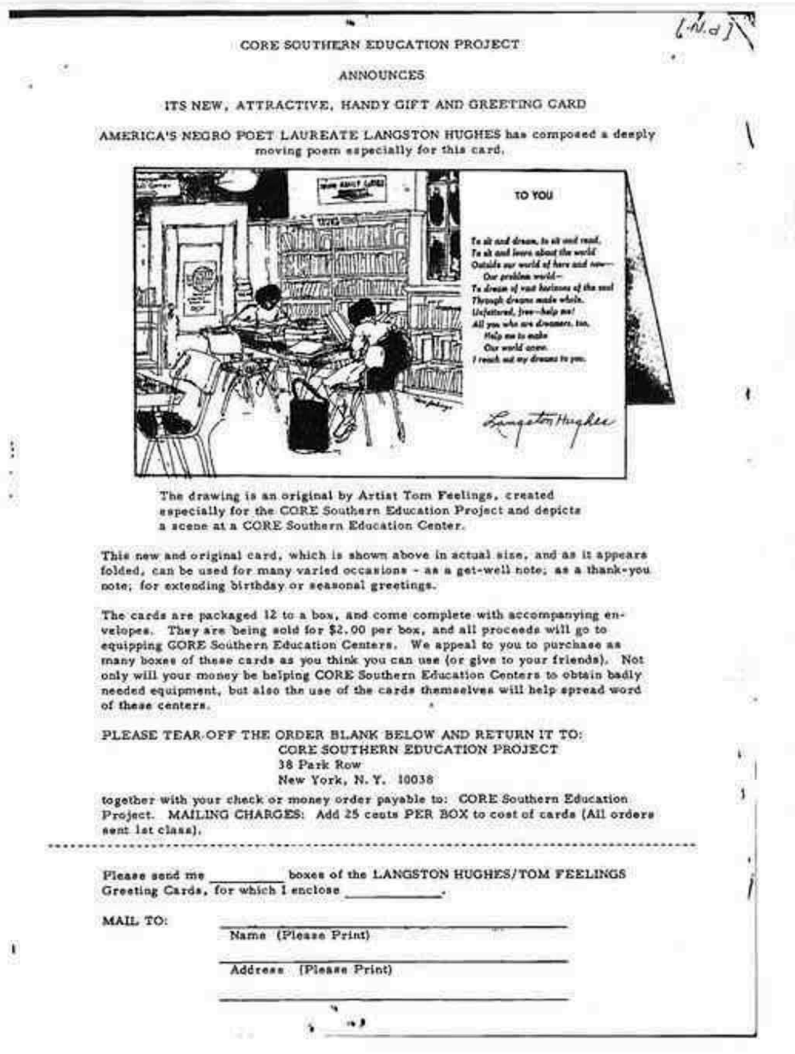
established throughout the Deep South, the vast majority, approximately fifty, were located in Mississippi.[20] Initially they were staffed by white members of civil rights organizations, but, as soon as possible, local Blacks took control in a show of agency that challenged the existing behavioral asymmetry.

Collections ranged in size from a few dozen volumes to more than 20,000 and were located everywhere from church basements to private homes to Freedom Houses, often in conjunction with Freedom Schools. They were funded through private donations of cash and materials from individuals and organized groups. In 1964 the CORE Southern Education Project announced a campaign to "collect thousands of books on Negro and African life, history, literature and culture" for these Freedom Libraries. A year later, the Southern Education Project proudly announced that it was shipping "approximately 2500 new books about the Negro people, Africa, and social commentary" to CORE centers in the South, along with "300 Hootenanny records." The Bergen County Chapter of Englewood, New Jersey, donated more than 20,000 books that same year.[21]

In order to raise funds for the Project, CORE sold note cards that were designed for this purpose.[22] They featured a drawing of a "scene at a CORE Southern Education Center" by Tom Feelings, creator of the comic strip *Tommy Traveler in the World of Negro History* and illustrator of multiple children's books, including 1969's award-winning *To Be a Slave* and *Moja Means One: Swahili Counting Book*, a 1972 Caldecott Medal Honor book. The drawing depicts two Black students studying at a table in a room lined with books on shelves. Langston Hughes, "America's Negro Poet Laureate," wrote an original poem that was printed on the card as well (see fig. 1).

The Vicksburg Freedom Library

In the summer of 1964 College of Wooster (Wooster, Ohio) sophomore Bryan R. Dunlap volunteered to work as a teacher and librarian in a Freedom School in Vicksburg as part of Freedom Summer. He would eventually remain in Vicksburg through May 1965, working at the Freedom House and, in particular, with the Freedom Library. He had spent several summers working in the City College Library in New York City, and so had some familiarity with library processes and procedures. In August of 1965 he was arrested for protesting the Vietnam War and sentenced to ninety days in jail, so his identity as a social activist did not end with his work in Mississippi.[23]



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CORE SOUTHERN EDUCATION PROJECT

ANNOUNCES

ITS NEW, ATTRACTIVE, HANDY GIFT AND GREETING CARD

AMERICA'S NEGRO POET LAUREATE LANGSTON HUGHES has composed a deeply moving poem especially for this card.

TO YOU

To sit and dream, to sit and read,
To sit and learn about the world
Outside our world of here and now—
Our problem world—
To dream of vast horizons of the soul
Through dreams made whole.
Unfettered, free—help me!
All you who are dreamers, too,
Help me to make
Our world come
I reach out my dreams to you.

Langston Hughes

The drawing is an original by Artist Tom Feelings, created especially for the CORE Southern Education Project and depicts a scene at a CORE Southern Education Center.

This new and original card, which is shown above in actual size, and as it appears folded, can be used for many varied occasions - as a get-well note; as a thank-you note; for extending birthday or seasonal greetings.

The cards are packaged 12 to a box, and come complete with accompanying envelopes. They are being sold for $2.00 per box, and all proceeds will go to equipping CORE Southern Education Centers. We appeal to you to purchase as many boxes of these cards as you think you can use (or give to your friends). Not only will your money be helping CORE Southern Education Centers to obtain badly needed equipment, but also the use of the cards themselves will help spread word of these centers.

PLEASE TEAR OFF THE ORDER BLANK BELOW AND RETURN IT TO:
CORE SOUTHERN EDUCATION PROJECT
38 Park Row
New York, N. Y. 10038

together with your check or money order payable to: CORE Southern Education Project. MAILING CHARGES: Add 25 cents PER BOX to cost of cards (All orders sent 1st class).

Please send me _____ boxes of the LANGSTON HUGHES/TOM FEELINGS Greeting Cards, for which I enclose _____.

MAIL TO:

Name (Please Print)

Address (Please Print)

Figure 1 Congress of Racial Equality Papers, Southern Regional Office, 1959–1966, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI. Reproduced permission Wisconsin Historical Society.

As did all volunteers, Dunlap first spent a week training at Western College for Women., The training was permeated with hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing ideologies, including racial equality and justice and the desegregation of public spaces and services. He described a "spirit of brotherhood" among

the trainees. In his words they were "awake and very anxious to find out where all the noise and confusion is coming from." The racially diverse group of 250 volunteers learned "how to teach remedial reading" as well as "what to do when kicked in the face or clubbed." It was "a matter of staying alive in Mississippi this summer" by not giving the local police the excuse of "serious crime—whether a Project worker's, a policeman's, or a white supremacist terrorist's" to "loosen their much-publicized restraint," weakening morale among COFO workers.[24]

On June 21 CORE members James Chaney, of Meridian, Mississippi, and Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner of New York City disappeared near Philadelphia, Mississippi, and were believed to have been murdered, in a case which became known as Freedom Summer murders, the Mississippi civil rights workers' murders, or the Mississippi Burning murders. The remains would not be discovered for another two months. Volunteers at the training center were informed about the disappearance. In a letter dated June 23 Bryan Dunlap refers to an "enclosed sheet" that "gives an idea of what happened to at least one summer worker already." He continues, "Two days later, they're still missing and no word. Spread the news around, if it hasn't hit the news yet." Not only does he not suggest returning home, he reminds his father, Joseph R. Dunlap, a librarian at the City College of New York, to "send the books & supplies I wrapped *plus* (Dad) a book on *library cataloging systems* and (if poss.) a hot pen and white marking tape for putting call numbers on books." He noted that there was a "recently-set-up 6,000 volume library" in Vicksburg.[25] The library, school, and community center were located in the Freedom House, which also provided accommodations for Dunlap and five other male volunteers, as well as the Browns, a Black family of eight.

Dunlap's next letter was sent from Vicksburg, where he was writing "while a couple of kids are looking through the stacks and probably about to take out books," and called himself "head reference librarian, cataloger, and circulation clerk of the Vicksburg Freedom Library." He described the collection as "very good . . . especially in fiction," although it had dropped from 6,000 to "between 4- and 5,000" after the "mountains of ratty, broken-down surplus textbooks unloaded on us by well-wishers." The library would later be credited with improving literacy among children and adults.[26]

In response to a query by his parents as to how they could contribute to the cause, he indicated that the library needed "a newspaper reading rack" and subscriptions to magazines such as *Saturday Review* and *New Republic*, "that don't usually penetrate into Miss." He also requested "worthwhile

adult fiction . . . substantial academic-type non-textbooks and . . . books on religion, politics, and literary criticism, history and biography." He joked that "with the figure-it-out-as-you-go system of library science being practiced here, we may even invent our own classification system."[27]

In September Dunlap wrote asking for the "titles of any books that the Leonia & Tenafly (and any others you may know) school boards" would be discarding that fall. There was a "huge shortage" of textbooks in Vicksburg, and he wanted to ensure that "supply and demand can sort of intertwine."[28] Science books were in particular demand. In "News from the Vicksburg (Miss.) Project," written that month, he reported that they had "around 8,500 or 9,000 books." The library had seventy-two feet of shelf space and a circulation desk, and they planned to set up branch libraries in private homes the rural areas with the duplicate books.[29] They also hoped to be able to buy a used bookmobile in the near future and, "as soon as the municipal ordinance requiring segregated libraries has been removed," planned to cooperate with the Vicksburg Public Library system. The existence of the Freedom Library would "testify that Negroes are helping themselves without having to depend only on the town's outmoded library facilities" and provide evidence of a growing behavioral symmetry. They were also talking with "public librarians and local Negro leaders about the best means of pointing out the present inequality in the public libraries," so at least some local public librarians were challenging the existing social hierarchies. One strategy was for teachers in the segregated Black school to give assignments that required students to use reference books that were only found in the white branch.[30] These goals and activities were in every way designed to challenge and transform the existing hierarchy-enhancing institutions and their legitimizing ideologies.

In addition to the previously mentioned inadequate public library collections, there was no central card catalog for the system and Black citizens were not permitted to browse the shelves, so that "while Negroes are officially entitled to take books out of the white library (by giving the name of the book desired to the Negro librarian, who picks up the book herself) they have no way of knowing what books are available to them there."[31] This was yet another way that the public library served as a hierarchy-enhancing social institution.

At the end of the month, Dunlap wrote that he had "met an English kid in Batesville" who was working in McComb, where at least fourteen buildings had been bombed that summer, "but, having been RAF in Cyprus, is not scared."[32] Then, on October 4, 1964, after frequent threats for months, the

Freedom House in Vicksburg was bombed.[33] Although none of the fourteen people living in the house was killed or seriously injured, possibly because the mass of books on the ground floor absorbed the brunt of the explosion, the bombing "pretty well took care of our library."[34] About half the books were salvaged, but the building and shelving were a total loss. In a letter dated October 10, Dunlap suggested to his father that he send the "really messed up volumes" as "souvenirs of the Vicksburg bombing" to "a select group of supporters" in exchange for a new copy of the same work in order to rebuild the library.[35]

Leonia-Vicksburg Committee

Within a week, Dunlap's father had sent a shipment of eight boxes of books and on October 21 Joseph also sent a letter to the community of Leonia, announcing the formation of the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee.[36] This was not the first hierarchy-attenuating social organization to be formed in Leonia. Six churches (All Saints Episcopal, Calvary Lutheran, Holy Trinity Lutheran, Leonia Methodist, The Presbyterian Church, and St. John's Roman Catholic) and one synagogue (Congregation Sons of Israel) had formed the Leonia Interfaith Committee on Civil Rights, to "speak as one voice on the civil rights of Americans . . . [and] eliminate discriminatory practices in our town," including the practices of redlining (refusing to sell property in white areas to black buyers) and "white flight" (moving out of the neighborhood if a black family moved in).[37]

Joseph Riggs Dunlap, organizer and prime mover of the Committee as well as the later Friends of Freedom Libraries, had experience both as a librarian and as an organizer of voluntary organizations. He had earned a BS from the College of Wooster (1936) and a BS in Library Service (1937) and MA in Medieval History (1943) from Columbia University. He began working as a librarian at City College Library in 1937 and would retire from there in 1973, shortly after earning a Doctor of Library Service from Columbia in 1972. A leading international scholar of William Morris, he organized the William Morris Society of North America, and served as secretary of the New York City area chapter. His mentoring, lecturing, and publication activities increased after his retirement and after his death the Society renamed their Annual Fellowship to the Joseph R. Dunlap Memorial Fellowship.[38]

On October 22 Bryan sent his father a list of titles to be replaced. These included "Carter Woodson's *Negro Orators and Their Orations*, Robert Kerlin's *Negro Poets and Their Poems*, and Eva Beatrice Dyke's *The Negro in English*

Romantic Thought."[39] He noted that "we've received too few *worthwhile* books," including a lot of unneeded duplicates and "large numbers of disreputable-looking texts . . . that kind of thing tends to remind the kids of the cruddy books they get in school." He requested reference works, modern authors, poetry, literary criticism, "Negro authors," "Books which feature Negroes . . . de-emphasize the *Uncle Tom's Cabin* genre, but send some along for laughs," history, political science, English, literature, sociology, government, and recent editions of textbooks (but no more than ten each). Also requested were records, "a few really expressive classical pieces; easy on the pre-1800 type stuff . . . good jazz" and "money wouldn't hurt, either."[40]

In a letter to Committee member Ruth Smith, he requested a volunteer to start an adult literacy program and a "medical person . . . interested in civil rights . . . who would do some medical research in town." He also suggested that the Committee "keep a file of literature and clippings on the Miss. struggle" that could be used to educate others in the community on "what really goes on here." He also suggested a program of correspondence "on subjects of mutual interest" between high school students in Vicksburg and Leonia, and adults who were chosen "on the basis of their ability to be *un*patronizing and non-banal."[41] His hope was that the "Northerners" would encourage the Vicksburg teens to apply for college "at a Northern school."[42]

The goal of the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee was to support the transformative hierarchy-attenuating work in Vicksburg, "designed to help the Negro people gain the dignity of full freedom and equality." Officers were Joseph Dunlap, chairman; Ruth Smith and Nancy Cumming, co-secretaries; Riva Aaron, treasurer; Alice Davidson fundraising; Dr. and Mrs. Lovell book collections; and Fritz Silber, publicity and special projects.[43] The size of the Committee is unknown, as no membership list seems to have survived. The Presbyterian Church also provided financial support. The group organized a book drive and adopted "the Mississippi River city to encourage and support the efforts of the youthful civil rights workers." This included raising funds for the Freedom School and community center, and voter registration activities, as well as supporting the pen-pal program suggested by Bryan.[44]

As a consequence of a *New York Times* article on November 19 Rose Agree, head librarian of the Union Free School District in Nassau County, offered "some children's books which I have available from time to time," and mobilized the Nassau and Suffolk school librarians in support of the Committee.[45] They "sent a package of new books including titles by Ezra Jack Keats, Louisia Shotwell, Hildegarde Swift, Ann Petry, Jeanette Nolan, and Langston

Hughes."[46] She also organized several book fairs and solicited donations from publishers, including Follett and Bantam.[47] In April 1965 "a ton and a half of books" were sent to the Vicksburg Freedom Library, representing the "accumulated winter contributions."[48] The next month, the Vicksburg COFO Newsletter begged, "NO MORE BOOKS, PLEASE!," explaining that "supply so far exceeds the demand that we can foresee no need for any more books for a long time." There were a few exceptions, though, including dictionaries and children's picture books. The newsletter ended "FREEDOM NOW ONE MAN ONE VOTE NO MORE BOOKS."[49]

The Committee paid for the printing of a report on the work of COFO by "a supporter of the . . . Committee" who visited at the end of January 1965. The report included a description of the rebuilding of the Freedom Library, with a "fiction collection superior to that in the segregated Negro public library," as well as a comprehensive nonfiction collection. COFO volunteer Elinor Lerner had "plans for children's story hours, for special arrangements with Negro school teachers to supplement their students' reading assignments" in addition to supporting the Freedom School, which taught "Negro history, citizenship and subjects neglected in the public school curriculum." Of special note was the progress being made in the emergence of local Black leadership, including Willie Johnson, Vicksburg COFO director, John Ferguson, Henry Hunter, and Dennis Brown.[50] Ferguson would later be elected the county's first Black supervisor since reconstruction, while Hunter was lauded as a "Civil Rights icon" at his death in 2019.[51]

Committee members were encouraged to subscribe to the *Vicksburg Citizens' Appeal*, the local Black newspaper, which "carries fascinating news not reported elsewhere, from the very frontier of the civil rights struggle."[52] Begun in 1964 by COFO volunteers, including Bryan Dunlap, it was fully in Black hands by January 1965, with Ollye Shirley and Dilla E. Irwin as editors.[53] The first issue included a column by baseball great Jackie Robinson. Mrs. Irwin wrote to the Committee in February 1966, "Thanks to the good people of Leonia . . . I am sure we have enough funds for at least two issues [of the paper]."[54]

Friends of Freedom Libraries

Members of the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee and others formed the Friends of Freedom Libraries (FFL) in early 1965 "to gather and disseminate information about these libraries and to encourage assistance for their needs, not

only in Mississippi but also in the other states where they have been set up." The formation of the group was announced at the April 21 meeting of the New York Library Club, and fifty-three people requested more information. The Ad Hoc Committee consisted of Joseph R. Dunlap as chair, Virginia Knight of the American Heritage Publishing Company as secretary, Miriam Braverman and Ann W. Littlejohn of Brooklyn Public Library, Bartlett Sigerson of Rutgers University Law Library, and Louise Heinze of New York University's Tamiment Library (which was dedicated to materials related to the histories of communism, socialism, anarchism, and utopian experiments in the United States).[55] Heinze's son, Fred, was a COFO volunteer in Jackson, Mississippi, where nine undergraduates of Historically Black Tougaloo College were arrested for staging "read-ins" at the Jackson Main Library in 1961. Their actions led the NAACP to file a class action lawsuit against the library on January 12, 1962, and in June the US District Court Judge ordered the library to desegregate.[56]

In November 1965 Dorothy Swanson, also of the Tamiment Library, replaced Knight as secretary, and Joyce Daugherty of the Brooklyn Public Library replaced Sigerson as treasurer.[57] An untitled and undated list of fifty-six names and addresses within the greater New York area may be a membership list or it may be the list of people who requested more information.[58] Regardless, it indicates the type of person to whom the FFL appealed. The addresses are all in middle- and upper-class neighborhoods, which at that time would have been primarily, if not exclusively, white. While the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee was composed primarily of residents of Leonia, the FFL cast a far wider net. More than 40 percent (23) are in Manhattan, with twelve of those on the affluent Upper East Side and the remainder primarily in Mid-Town. Another fifteen are in Brooklyn, five in Queens, and three in the Bronx. The remainder are in upper-middle-class suburbs such as Nyack, New Rochelle, and Scarsdale, as well as Montclair and Newark, New Jersey.

An employer is indicated for forty-five of the names. Of these, twenty-five worked for a public library, five for a college library, four for a medical library, five for a public school, and the remaining for a variety of nonprofit and governmental institutions, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Radio Free Europe, and the Council on Foreign Relations. The majority of these positions required at least an undergraduate college degree, while most of them required a master's degree.

The surnames are a diverse mixture of Anglo-Saxon, European, and Eastern European origin, with one Japanese surname. Some of the names are possibly

Jewish surnames, such as Shapiro, Kaufman, and Gruen. None of the names are identifiably Hispanic.

So, the profile of the average member of the FFL is white, middle class, urban, and educated, and a (probably) single female. More than 80% (45) of the first names are traditionally female names. Of these, one-third, or eleven, are preceded by "Mrs.," leaving thirty-three with either no title or "Miss." The remaining twelve are either "Mr." or a traditionally male forename.

The mission of the FFL was not only to "gather and disseminate information about the work of the Freedom Libraries," it was also

> to encourage support for, and assistance to, Freedom Libraries by the contribution of books and other materials, by financial aid, by the visits of professional librarians, by bibliographic service, and in whatever other ways it is possible to meet their needs.[59]

Their first major project was a fact-finding visit to Mississippi by Miriam Braverman in June 1965. They also requested law books for distribution to southern civil rights attorneys, and financial support for FFL expenses and Braverman's trip, including "possible bail money." Meetings would be held every Monday night at the Tamiment Library, where "there will be books to sort, typing to be done and decisions to be made."[60]

Miriam Braverman Inspection

A recent graduate of the Pratt Institute library school, Miriam Braverman, a daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, was the ideal candidate for the inspection. She had been involved in the socialist movement since the 1940s and remained active in labor and antiwar movements throughout her life. In 1964 she was a Young Adult Librarian for Brooklyn Public Library, where she worked closely with fellow librarian and CORE member Major Owens, who would later be elected to the New York State Senate (1974–82) and the US House of Representatives (1982–2006) as, in his words, "the only librarian in Congress."[61] In 1969 Braverman, Major Owens, Anne Littlejohn, and six other local librarians founded the New York State Library Association's Social Responsibilities' Round Table. She worked at the BPL until earning her doctorate in library science from Columbia in 1974, where she would teach until 1982. Her dissertation formed the basis of her 1979 work, *Youth, Society and the Public Library*, a historical study of the impact of the social factors shaping adolescence on

the development of youth services. A professional colleague and personal friend of Dr. E. J. Josey, she campaigned for his election as president of ALA in 1983. She was also a founder of the ALA's Social Responsibilities' Round Table and, in 1990, the Progressive Librarians Guild, which established the Miriam Braverman Memorial Prize in 2003.[62]

In preparation for her visit, Braverman sent a letter to workers in Freedom Libraries throughout Mississippi, explaining the purpose of her visit and mentioning that "two members of our committee are librarians . . . whose names may be familiar to you," meaning Dunlap and Heinze.[63] COFO workers' responses testified to the Black communities' desire for books, saying they were "starving for knowledge, and treating books . . . with the reverence and the care and the respect of a millionairess for her finest diamonds." All noted that children were the most frequent and enthusiastic users, as they "haven't yet had the desire to read extinguished." Fred Heinze and Bryan Dunlap both requested that a team of two or more professional librarians spend a year in the state, training local staff and residents in "a kind of make-shift library organization," so that COFO's goal of turning over the libraries to local control could be realized.[64]

On her return, Braverman reported her findings at the ALA annual conference in Detroit at the FFL meeting, and later published them in *School Library Journal*.[65] Although she found that the Freedom Libraries in general had no catalogs, and were "rows of unattractive stacks" reaching up to the ceiling, "when a civil rights worker is present, the youngsters flock in." Since most of the volunteers lacked Dunlap's experience with librarianship, most of the collections consisted of outdated and inappropriate textbooks with broken bindings, including *Esperanto for Americans*, annual reports of the Smithsonian (which could have been sold for $200–$300, and saved shipping costs), and pre-1929 books on the American economy." Few libraries had subscriptions to any current periodicals, and the reference collections were likewise meager. The need was for books by and about Blacks for every age, adult fiction and classics, and children's books of every kind for every reading level. She credited the Freedom Libraries with creating a demand for integrated public library service among Blacks in the southern cities where they were located. In addition to serving as a model of what a public library could provide, the Vicksburg Freedom Library explicitly encouraged hierarchy-attenuating activity through a sign, reading "Do *you* have a card for the (heretofore) white library? Why not? Go get one. One Man—One Book."[66]

One of the outcomes of Braverman's trip was an agreement with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) Freedom Schools Project (under MFDP) that the FFL would serve as their liaison in New York "for the gathering and selection of library materials for the Freedom Project Schools" in Mississippi. The project coordinator also provided a bibliography of needed books, with the understanding that the FFL would add "any books or other materials dealing with the Negro in America and Negro history on all levels."[67]

As a result of Braverman's observations, the FFL also instituted a magazine subscription drive in early 1966. Contributors could send a gift subscription for *Ebony*, *Negro Digest*, *Scholastic Scope*, *Calling All Girls*, *Boys Life*, *Jack and Jill*, or *Humpty Dumpty's Magazine* to a Freedom Library in Mississippi. At least twenty-three members contributed, for a total of $155.20.[68] Many of the gift subscriptions were maintained through at least 1969.[69] The FFL also created, printed, and distributed a "Bibliography of Books on the Negro" for use in selecting books to donate. Lisa Hicks of the American Jewish Congress also provided a Negro book list "for inclusion in or as an addition to" the FFL list.[70] She and three others also prepared MFDP fact sheets.

The FFL also "assisted two northern libraries" to "adopt" Freedom Libraries and set a goal of having "every Freedom Library adopted by a supporting institution." Other goals included finding librarians to "spend several months visiting Freedom Libraries and helping with their problems," including presenting workshops for those running such libraries and acquiring bookmobiles for use in rural southern areas.[71]

Another project suggested by COFO worker Susan Weld was the provision of bookcases for home libraries as a means of making books more accessible to the community. The FFL began a campaign to encourage interested groups to purchase core collections of books for these home libraries and pack them into boxes that could serve as bookcases, similar to the traveling libraries of the previous century. Suggested books included a one-volume encyclopedia, a dictionary, a world atlas and a US atlas, Black history on the junior high level, and magazine subscriptions.[72] Following Braverman's suggestion about inappropriate books, FFL sold three lots of books to Barnes and Noble in New York in 1966—one on May 5 for $77.00, a second on July 1 for $25.00, and a third on October 12 for $11.00.[73]

Books for Equal Education

Shortly after Braverman's 1965 visit, Vicksburg desegregated its public spaces, including the public library, and the Freedom House was converted to a Head

Start Center. By February 1966 the Freedom Library was "being operated daily by Henry Coleman . . . with the help of high school students who work after school." With the addition of a pinball machine, the library served as an educational and recreational center.[74]

The civil rights movement also was shifting its focus from Mississippi to Alabama.[75] Perhaps as a result of these changes and the ban on new books, in late 1965 the FFL partnered with Books for Equal Education (BFEE). That organization was created in 1964 when students at the Historically Black Miles College in Alabama were prevented by Birmingham police commissioner, Bull Connor, from soliciting money for books from the public. When the story appeared in the national press, thousands of books were sent in from around the nation. BFEE was formed to deal with the donations, with Frank S. Millspaugh as national director and Harry L. DeLung Jr., a Miles student, as assistant director. They placed the college textbooks in southern Black colleges that were unaccredited or in danger of losing accreditation due to inadequate library collections. Textbooks suitable to elementary and secondary schools were sent to those institutions.[76] Four members of the FFL, Mordine Mallory, Judy Cohen, Martha Claggett, and Joyce Daugherty, spent a week in Atlanta, sorting and categorizing books in the BFEE warehouse.[77]

Librarian and FFL member Minnie Rubin spent several months in 1966 at Miles College organizing the library, cataloging materials, and training staff. The gates to campus were locked at 7:00 p.m. and a guard posted due to continuing threats of bombs and arson. She requested donations of books in the social sciences, sciences, humanities, and foreign languages, "and most important of all, books by or about Negroes."[78]

Solon De Leon, an FFL member, volunteered at the Historically Black Kittrell College, in Kittrell, North Carolina, as a French teacher and librarian. Born in 1883 De Leon was then eighty-two years old. He had an MA in economics from Columbia University and a degree in social work from the New School of Social Work. The son of American Labor leader Daniel De Leon, he had been involved with many American socialist organizations and written for a variety of socialist publications over the years. He had a long history of challenging the existing social institutions and attacking their legitimizing ideologies.

He reported that the dorms were unheated and he had no electricity in his office, and only one of the eight chandeliers in the library's main reading room was working. "But we're struggling along, Deweyizing, labeling, cataloging—in between checking books in and out, showing students where to find the

information they want, and only very slightly succeeding in inducing a few to do some outside reading." He reported that the "new books donated by FFL are the ones most eagerly taken."[79]

The following March 1966, the FFL sent out another appeal for "librarians willing to give part of their summer to working in the South" either processing books at the Atlanta warehouse or working in one of the colleges. Room and board were provided.[80] About a dozen librarians responded, including school librarian Virginia Maw of Santa Maria, California, reference librarian Stanley Clarke Wyllie of Dayton Ohio, branch librarian Francine Valno of Buffalo, New York, and young adult librarian Mary K. Chelton of Baltimore.[81] Chelton would co-found the *Voice of Youth Advocates* (*VOYA*), the first professional journal dedicated to the needs of young adults and young adult librarians, in 1978. After a career of nearly thirty years as a librarian in multiple public libraries, she earned a PhD from Rutgers in 1997 and embarked upon an academic career from 1996 until her retirement in 2017 from Queens College. She is known as an advocate for young adult librarians and librarianship and a voice for underserved library populations, including marginalized or stigmatized library users. Her awards include the Grolier Foundation Award for Outstanding Achievement in 1994, ALA Honoree for Intellectual Freedom in 1999, and Young Adult Library Service Association's Outstanding Achievement Award in 2018, in recognition of her contributions to the profession and advocacy for young adult library services. She "has never been afraid of challenging pre-conceived notions of library service."[82]

Freedom Information Service

The FFL also responded to an appeal from the Freedom Information Service. The FIS was established in Jackson in 1965, and soon moved to the Mt. Beulah Conference Center, about twenty miles west of Jackson.[83] The purpose was the collection, publication, and distribution of print and audiovisual materials for use with a low-literacy population, as well as a library of materials relevant to the Freedom movement for use by staff and researchers. It included the COFO archives, books, pamphlets, a vertical file with newspaper clippings and other ephemera, as well as films, filmstrips, audiotapes, and vinyl recordings.[84] FIS sent out a fundraising letter in March 1966 to which FFL responded, offering professional assistance with organizing and maintaining the library. Civil rights worker Jan Hillegas, FIS librarian, replied that FIS needed financial support more than personnel.[85] Dunlap replied that, while their "financial resources are quite limited," they would do what they could to

help.[86] Hillegas responded with general suggestions for books and materials, similar to what FFL had been recommending. She included a description of their plan to replace defunct Freedom School and community center libraries with FIS library-information centers.[87] Fred Heinze, now affiliated with FIS, followed up with a letter emphasizing that "first and foremost, we are in need of money." He also requested a subscription to the *New York Times*, and as many as possible of *Studies on the Left*, *New Republic*, *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, *Dissent*, and *Village Voice*, as well as reference books.[88] Dunlap sent out a fundraising appeal to the FFL membership, describing FIS and its needs, with information on how to contribute.[89] Nothing more is known.

Demise of the Friends of Freedom Libraries

By Spring 1966, just a year after its formation, cracks began to appear in the FFL organization. Louise Heinze wrote that, due to conflicts between the School of Commerce and the Tamiment Institute, she and Dorothy Swanson felt that it would be best for FFL to merge with AFT and BFEE. She further expressed her feeling that Swanson's loyalties were divided, as she was on the staff of the School of Commerce library.[90] In June Dorothy Swanson resigned as secretary of FFL, citing "a very heavy schedule this summer." She also mentioned, almost as an aside, "I do think you should try and convince Mrs. Heinze that a bank account should be opened for FFL. No accurate records are kept presently and I am afraid that this situation will lead to misunderstandings."[91]

Donations of cash and books continued through 1966, but more slowly than they had initially, and many were sent directly to Freedom Libraries in Mississippi by the donors.[92] In 1968 Dunlap attempted to revive interest in the dwindling organization by sending out an annual report. He summarized their success and noted that the bank balance was $186.20. He drew up a list of goals, including establishing the present condition of Freedom Libraries in Mississippi, of BFEE, the AFT summer project and MFDP, and continuing the other work that FFL had been involved with.[93] In April 1968, probably in response to this mailing, Heinze wrote to his mother that "Freedom Projects, Libraries and Schools (a la 1964–65) are no longer in existence. The movement hasn't stopped, but it has changed its character." In other words, the previous hierarchy-attenuating actions had, indeed, been transformative. He suggested that FFL give its remaining funds to SNCC and disband.[94] In May De Leon wrote, "my personal feeling is that the little group should disband with the feeling of an emergency job well done, as it now seems to have outlived its

usefulness." He noted that BFEE would probably not continue another year, that FIS did not have a lending library, and that Kittrell College "had practically no regard for the welfare of the library. . . . I would not recommend any large effort to consign books to it." He also suggested donating the remaining funds to SNCC.[95] Braverman, who was working on her doctorate, withdrew from the organization in July, citing "other obligations—both school and professional."[96] In response to Dunlap's query in 1969, Swanson responded rather tersely that the "F.F.L. archives were given to Fred Heinze. . . . All I know is that they are no longer at the Library."[97]

By 1970 founding member Anne Littlejohn had contracted multiple sclerosis, which would take her life in January 1972 at age forty-six, and may explain her lack of response to Dunlap's queries. Miriam Braverman wrote the obituary, which appeared in *School Library Journal*, and lauded "her warmth, her spirit, her generous, outgoing personality, her frankness, outspokenness, and courage. . . . She was a true and natural militant, an uncompromising and unselfish fighter for justice." Littlejohn first worked for the Department of Social Services but, "dissatisfied with the 'band aid' approach to solving people's problems," had worked with the Methodist Youth Fellowship in Brooklyn, joined CORE, and helped found the Brooklyn Freedom Democratic Movement. A graduate of the Pratt Institute, she worked with Braverman at Brooklyn Public Library, but "impatient with the limitations the library placed on its role," she became the inservice training coordinator for the Brownsville (Brooklyn) Community Council.[98]

Finally, in late 1972, Joseph Dunlap accepted that the organization was defunct. He wrote to Louise Heinze and Miriam Braverman for advice on how to dispose of the $172 remaining in the FFL account. He felt that, as it had been donated in the cause of civil rights, it should go to an organization or cause that was active in that area.[99] At his son Bryan's recommendation, he donated $215 to the library fund of the Tougaloo College, in Jackson, Mississippi, with the concurrence of both Heinze and Braverman.[100]

Conclusion

The civil rights movement of the late 1960s in the United States was a hierarchy-attenuating institution built on hierarchy-attenuating ideologies. Its avowed purpose was to transform society by extending equal civil rights to all citizens, in particular, Black citizens in the US South. The ALA also adopted such ideologies in this period and actively attempted to transform

the profession by requiring that those affiliated with it support the rights of all individuals to equal access to library services and materials. This presented librarians in the South with a challenge and possibly a dilemma in regard to their professional identity, where public libraries continued to function as hierarchy-enhancing social institutions. The national professional identity was being transformed into one built on hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing ideologies, leading to public libraries also transforming into hierarchy-attenuating social institutions. The Friends of Freedom Libraries contributed to this transformation of both the profession and public libraries through its support for the civil rights movement through contributing to Freedom Libraries.

The members of the FFL were primarily white, college educated, and middle class, and they utilized this status to challenge the existing group-based social hierarchy. Several of them were members of other hierarchy-attenuating social institutions, including socialist political organizations. All of the members of the governing board and the vast majority of the membership were librarians, an individual identity derived from a specific role.

The vision of the Leonia-Vicksburg Committee of helping "the Negro people gain the dignity of full freedom and equality" is clearly a hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing ideology. It challenges the race-based social hierarchies of the American South and seeks to transform them. This vision was the motivating force behind the mission, goals, and objectives of the FFL "to encourage support for, and assistance to, Freedom Libraries by the contribution of books and other materials, by financial aid, by the visits of professional librarians, by bibliographic service, and in whatever other ways it is possible to meet their needs." This ideology was not merely oppositional, but transformative, which, somewhat ironically, led to the demise of the group. While there was a distinct danger of the FFL taking on the role of "white savior," and much of the language and many of the activities are reflective of this, the Freedom Libraries that the group supported were so successful as models of public libraries and in challenging "behavioral asymmetry" by encouraging Blacks to demand and utilize integrated public libraries that they ultimately made themselves redundant. At least as important is the fact that the FFL was responding to a request for assistance from Black organizations and these organizations had the ultimate control over the FFL's activities and their outcomes.

As predicted by Identity Theory, in their roles of librarian and member of the ALA, the members of the FFL challenged existing social hierarchies and employed their power to transform, rather than support, a discriminatory

social hierarchy. Their goal was not merely to provide materials to the Freedom Libraries, but to achieve the transformative goals of the library profession as expressed in its professional standards and ethics. Their identity as librarians led them to donate personal time and money to providing equal access to library materials for Blacks and promoting the desegregation of public libraries in the South. It also led to them being far more successful in their endeavors than other nonlibrarian groups and individuals who donated materials that were useless or worse. The materials they donated were specifically selected to meet the needs of the communities that the Freedom Libraries served, and they also provided the professional technical assistance to organize the collections for use and train local Blacks to assume the duties of managing those collections.

The FFL gave the members an opportunity to participate directly in the civil rights movement in a manner that was personally and professionally satisfying. It also provided them with the means to demonstrate the value of their professional expertise, knowledge, and skills to transform society and "enable people to grow, thrive, develop, and to change relationships." Their campaigns, including acquiring bookmobiles and creating home libraries, were the result of the intersection between their identity as librarians and their social dominance orientation.

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