

The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

Objective: Students will learn essential information regarding the development of the 1964 Freedom Summer Project, including the application process. Students will practice extracting key details and messages from the text.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Materials: Pen/pencil, a link to a copy of the “Development of Freedom Summer” pamphlet or photocopies of the transcribed document provided in this activity, and pamphlet questions; a copy of the Freedom Summer volunteer application, interview questions

Additional Reading:

The Wisconsin Historical Society has a suite of resources on Freedom Summer including background information, primary sources, and lesson plans on Freedom Summer:

<http://wisconsinhistory.org/freedomsummer>

Procedure: Provide students with a copy of pamphlet “Development of the Mississippi Project” and the following scenario: *It is the summer of 1964. You are a Northern college student who is interested in volunteering for the 1964 Freedom Summer Project. You do not know many details. However, some members of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating (SNCC) have put together a three-page pamphlet with a brief overview of projects for the summer. What can you learn about the project from the pamphlet?*

Have students complete the comprehension questions related to the pamphlet individually or with a partner, then share their choice with the class. Include a discussion of the primary projects of Freedom Summer. Ask them to speak to which project(s) they would have wanted to affiliate with and why if they chose to participate. Discuss the rationale for having Freedom Summer in Mississippi as opposed to another state.

Next, have students consider the skills and background necessary to become a Freedom Summer volunteer by completing the activity “Reflections on a Freedom Summer Application” beginning on page 8. Upon completion of that portion of the lesson, summarize the activity as follows:

Ask the students: Would you participate or not? If students choose to participate, have them write a letter to a parent explaining why they would do this and what is important about this project, what aspect of the project they plan to join, and persuading them to let the student join. If the student chooses not to participate, have them write a letter to a friend explaining why the student is not going to participate.



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

“Development of the Mississippi Project,” Koenig Collection ACNMAH0558 series 2 box 1


DEVELOPMENT OF THE MISSISSIPPI PROJECT

Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has active projects in thirteen Southern states, it has achieved its most dynamic success in the state of Mississippi. A state where individual political life is non-existent, where the economic condition of a vast majority of the population is appalling, the home of white supremacy, Mississippi has become the main target of SNCC's staff and resources.

In August, 1961, SNCC went into Mississippi under the leadership of Project Director Robert Moses. Overcoming violence and hardship, SNCC workers have been able to expand their activity into all five of Mississippi's congressional districts. By fall, 1963, SNCC had joined with CORE, SCLC, the NAACP and many voting and civic groups in forming a statewide organization, the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), and through COFO conducted a Freedom Vote campaign in which 80,000 disenfranchised Negroes cast ballots for Aaron Henry for Governor.

Preparation for real democracy calls for additional programs in the state. Literacy projects have been instituted, and food and clothing drives. But much more comprehensive programs are needed to combat the terrible cultural and economic deprivation of Negro communities in Mississippi.

This summer, SNCC, in cooperation with COFO, is launching a massive Peace Corps-type operation in Mississippi. Students, teachers, technicians, nurses, artists and legal advisors will be recruited to come to Mississippi to staff a wide range of programs that include voter registration, freedom schools, community centers and special projects.

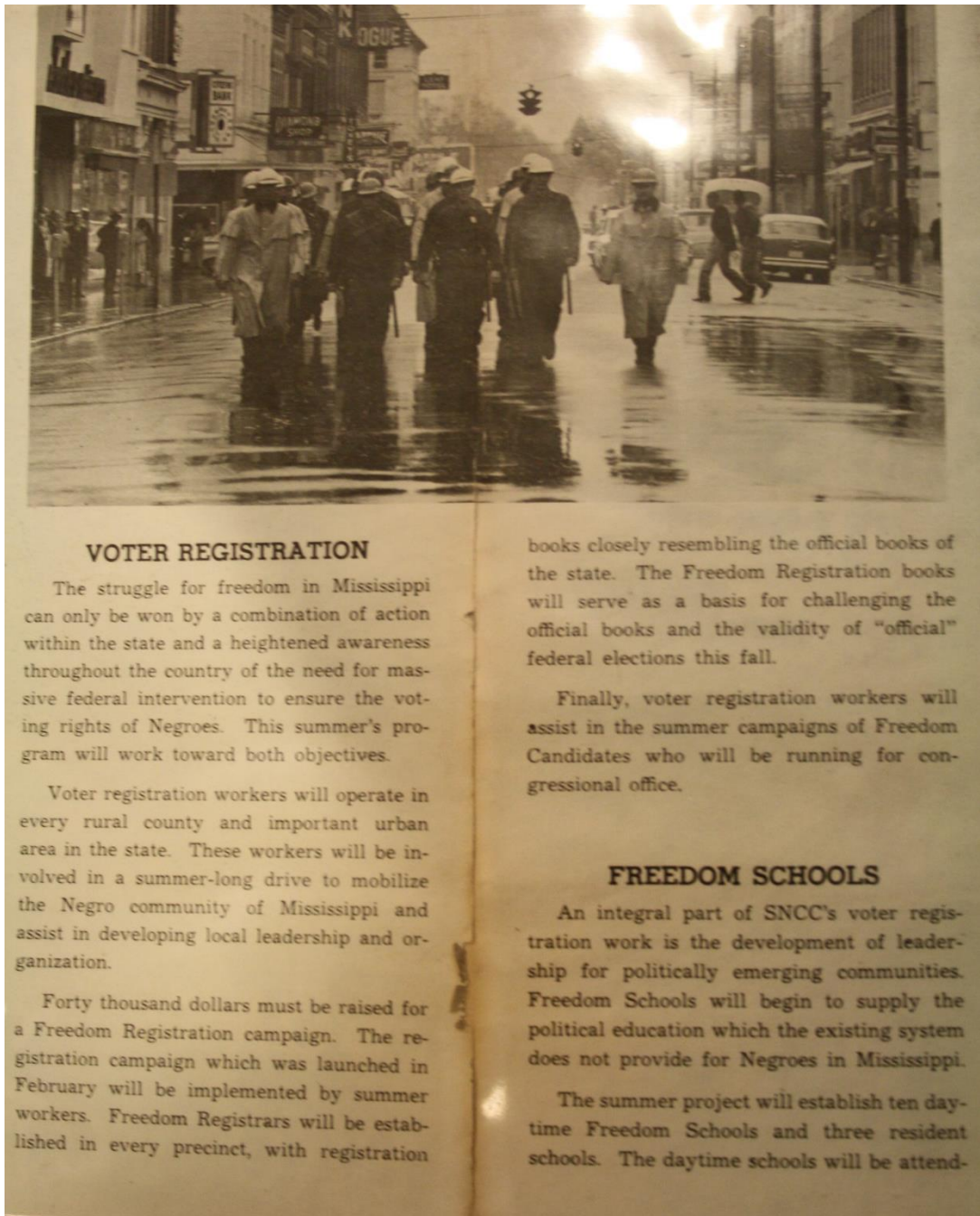


All photographs were taken during Freedom Day at Hattiesburg, Mississippi, on January 22, 1964. Above photo by Norris McI Namara, other photos by Danny Lyon.

1. Which organizations were involved with the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project?
2. Why do you think Mississippi was targeted for change?
3. What types of professionals did SNCC representatives recruit to serve during Freedom Summer?



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading



VOTER REGISTRATION

The struggle for freedom in Mississippi can only be won by a combination of action within the state and a heightened awareness throughout the country of the need for massive federal intervention to ensure the voting rights of Negroes. This summer's program will work toward both objectives.

Voter registration workers will operate in every rural county and important urban area in the state. These workers will be involved in a summer-long drive to mobilize the Negro community of Mississippi and assist in developing local leadership and organization.

Forty thousand dollars must be raised for a Freedom Registration campaign. The registration campaign which was launched in February will be implemented by summer workers. Freedom Registrars will be established in every precinct, with registration

books closely resembling the official books of the state. The Freedom Registration books will serve as a basis for challenging the official books and the validity of "official" federal elections this fall.

Finally, voter registration workers will assist in the summer campaigns of Freedom Candidates who will be running for congressional office.

FREEDOM SCHOOLS

An integral part of SNCC's voter registration work is the development of leadership for politically emerging communities. Freedom Schools will begin to supply the political education which the existing system does not provide for Negroes in Mississippi.

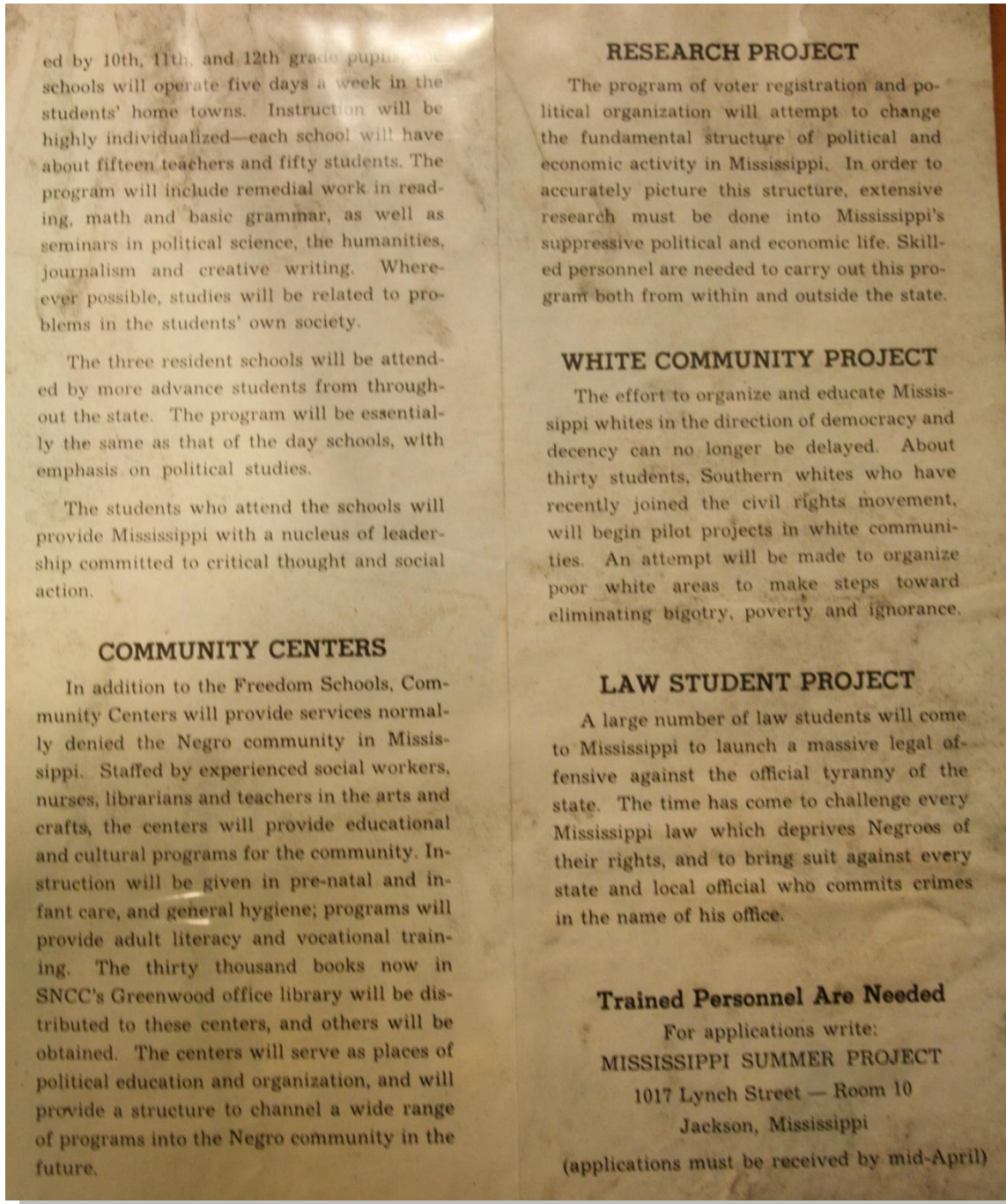
The summer project will establish ten daytime Freedom Schools and three resident schools. The daytime schools will be attend-

Koenig Collection ACNMAH0558 series 2 box 1

4. According to the announcement, which programs did SNCC envision creating as part of Freedom Summer?



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading



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5. The pamphlet specifically talks about requesting help from law students. Why is this? Why not ask attorneys to help rather than students?
6. Which of the projects of Freedom Summer do you feel you most passionate about?
7. In your opinion, which project had the potential to make the greatest impact? Why?



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

Transcription

Development of the Mississippi Project

Although the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee has active projects in thirteen Southern states, it has achieved its most dynamic success in the state of Mississippi. A state where individual political life is non-existent, where the economic condition of a vast majority of the population is appalling, the home of white supremacy, Mississippi has become the main target of SNCC's staff and resources.

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Preparation for real democracy calls for additional programs in the state. Literacy projects have been instituted, and food and clothing drives. But much more comprehensive programs are needed to combat the terrible cultural and economic deprivation of Negro communities in Mississippi.

This summer, SNCC, in cooperation with COFO, is launching a massive Peace Corps-type operation in Mississippi. Students, teachers, technicians, nurses, artists and legal advisors will be recruited to come to Mississippi to staff a wide range of programs that include voter registration, freedom schools, community centers and special projects.

Voter Registration

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The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

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Freedom Schools

An integral part of SNCC's voter registration work is the development of leadership for politically emerging communities. Freedom Schools will begin to supply the political education which the existing system does not provide for Negroes in Mississippi.

The summer project will establish ten daytime Freedom Schools and three resident schools. The daytime schools will be attended by 10th, 11th, and 12th grade pupils; the schools will operate five days a week in the students' home towns. Instruction will be highly individualized—each school will have about fifteen teachers and fifty students. The program will include remedial work in reading, math and basic grammar, as well as seminars in political science, the humanities, journalism and creative writing. Wherever possible, studies will be related to problems in the students' own society.

The three resident schools will be attended by more advance[d] students from throughout the state. The program will be essentially the same as that of the day schools, with emphasis on political studies.

The students who attend the schools will provide Mississippi with a nucleus of leadership committed to critical thought and social action.

Community Centers

In addition to the Freedom Schools, Community Centers will provide services normally denied the Negro community in Mississippi. Staffed by experienced social workers, nurses, librarians and teachers in the arts and crafts, the centers will provide educational and cultural programs for the community. Instruction will be given in pre-natal and infant care, and general hygiene; programs will provide adult literacy and vocational training. The thirty thousand books now in SNCC's Greenwood office library will be distributed to these centers, and others will be obtained. The centers will serve as places of political education and organization, and will provide a structure to channel a wide range of programs into the Negro community in the future.

Research Project

The program of voter registration and political organization will attempt to change the fundamental structure of political and economic activity in Mississippi. In order to accurately picture this structure, extensive research must be done into Mississippi's suppressive political and economic life. Skilled personnel are needed to carry out this program both from within and outside the state.



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

White Community Project

The effort to organize and educate Mississippi whites in the direction of democracy and decency can no longer be delayed. About thirty students, Southern whites who have recently joined the civil rights movement, will begin pilot projects in white communities. An attempt will be made to organize poor white areas to make steps toward eliminating bigotry, poverty and ignorance.

Law Student Project

A large number of law students will come to Mississippi to launch a massive legal offensive against the official tyranny of the state. The time has come to challenge every Mississippi law which deprives Negroes of their rights, and to bring suit against every state and local official who commits crimes in the name of his office.

Trained Personnel Are Needed

For applications write:

MISSISSIPPI SUMMER PROJECT

1017 Lynch Street—Room 10

Jackson, Mississippi

(applications must be received by mid-April)



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

REFLECTIONS ON THE FREEDOM SUMMER VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Procedure: Ask students if they have ever completed an application whether it was for admission to a school, a competition, employment, etc. Ask them to share their experiences with a partner. Ask students to consider the following questions prior to sharing their experiences: Was the application for a local, state, or national position? Was apply a difficult process? If so, how? Was it simple? If yes, what made it simple? Was there an application fee? Did you need parental permission prior to submitting the application?

Next, ask students to view a blank copy of the Freedom Summer volunteer application, available at http://crmvet.org/docs/fs64_app.pdf. Explain that the application form is a primary source document and that their first task will be to imagine who would be an ideal volunteer for the Freedom Summer Project. Provide them with the sheet including “Background, Assignment #1, and Instructions” and have them complete the questions.

When students have completed the questions, discuss which skillsets and experiences students believe were necessary for Freedom Summer volunteers to possess. Afterward, provide them with information about Freedom Summer applicants who later became Freedom Summer volunteers using the profiles below. If time permits, ask them to answer the questions listed below based on the information provided in the volunteers’ profiles.

Note: Freedom Summer volunteers were often (though not always) Northerners, white, and upper class college students or recent graduates with political connections. Volunteers of this pedigree were actively recruited because Freedom Summer organizers sought to bring national attention and publicity to the struggles and injustices blacks in Mississippi faced. Organizers understood that the brutality and attacks against blacks garnered little attention yet they believed that help from white volunteers would provide them with the exposure and momentum they needed for change.

Follow-up activity: After your students have analyzed the Freedom Summer volunteer application, encourage them to apply the knowledge and skills they have gained to apply for an internship or scholarship program in their field of interest. Examples of national competitions and scholarships are listed below.

Smithsonian Internships for High School Students

Yes! Youth Engagement through Science, National Museum of Natural History:

<http://www.mnh.si.edu/education/yes/>

Young Ambassadors Program, Smithsonian Latino Center:

<http://latino.si.edu/programs/youngambassadors.htm>

National Competitions and Scholarships for Youth

Chemistry Olympiad—<http://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/education/students/highschool/olympiad.html>

DuPont Challenge© Science Essay Competition—<http://thechallenge.dupont.com/students/student-awards.php>

Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholars—<http://www.jkcf.org/scholarships/young-scholars-program/>

National Young Arts Foundation—<http://www.youngarts.org/>

Scholastic Art & Writing Awards—<http://www.artandwriting.org/the-awards/how-to-submit/>



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

REFLECTIONS ON THE FREEDOM SUMMER VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

BACKGROUND: *Greetings and congratulations on being named one of the few, one of the proud, one of the Freedom Summer sleuths! As a sleuth, you have been tasked with retracing the past.*

ASSIGNMENT #1: As you are aware, volunteering and participating in Freedom Summer was considered to be immensely rewarding yet also dangerous. As such, SNCC officials carefully screened applications from Northern whites and some blacks to ensure that they would be able to handle the stresses and complications that were often associated with working directly with the Freedom Summer Project. Quite a few people applied to be part of Freedom Summer. Not everyone was accepted.

INSTRUCTIONS: If you were blasted back to the past, would you have what it took to become a volunteer? Would you have wanted to volunteer? Take 3-5 minutes to review the 1964 Freedom Summer Project application. Please visit the following site to access and/or print the application: http://www.crmvet.org/docs/fs64_app.pdf. Afterward, please answer the following questions individually or with a partner.

1. Why were applicants asked to identify their college major?
2. Why is it important for Freedom Summer organizers to know the types of activities applicants were involved with before Freedom Summer?
3. Why do you believe Freedom Summer organizers wanted to know local newspapers in applicant's hometowns? Why would this be important?
4. Why is it important to know about the type of "social" and "political" organizations applicants were involved with?
5. Why were applicants asked to identify their race?
6. There was a question about whether or not applicants can drive. Based on what you know about the project, why were driving abilities important?
7. Why were applicants asked to list the names of persons who could provide bond? Why was this important?
8. Think about the order of the questions listed in the application. What did you notice about the order? Was the order in which application questions were asked important? If so, why? If not, why not?
9. The application has "Voter registration" as the first Freedom Summer project listed and social projects were listed last. Why was this? Do you believe this was intentional?
10. Why were applicants asked to begin volunteering for the Freedom Summer project on the same date yet were given the option to leave at different times (e.g. leave on July 15 or August 25)?



The Foundations of Freedom Summer: Close Reading

NAME: Ruth Koenig
AGE: 23
RACE: White
HOMETOWN: Schenectady, NY
OCCUPATION: public school teacher
EDUCATION: B.A. Physical Education and Health, Cortland State University
SOURCE: <http://amhistory.si.edu/archives/d9558.htm>
<http://www.lib.usm.edu/legacy/archives/m362.htm>



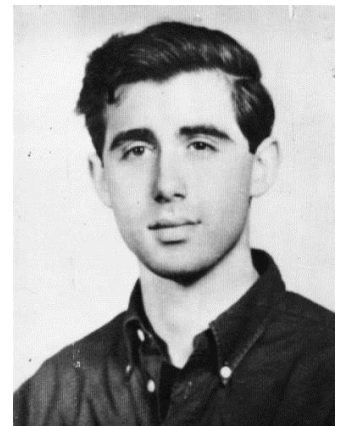
Source: Archives Center, National Museum of American History, ACNMAH 0558

NAME: Chude Pam Parker Allen
AGE: 20
RACE: White
HOMETOWN: Solebury, PA
OCCUPATION: student
EDUCATION: exchange student at Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia
SOURCE: <http://www.crmvet.org/vet/chude.htm>
<http://www.crmvet.org/info/chudexp.htm>



Source: Civil Rights Movement Veterans (CRMV)
Title: "Chude Pam Parker Allen and Freedom School student Delois Polk, Holly Springs MS"
Publisher: Westwind Writers Inc.

NAME: Andrew Goodman
AGE: 20
GENDER: Male
RACE: White
HOMETOWN: New York City, NY
OCCUPATION: student
EDUCATION: Queens College with a major in anthropology
SOURCE: <http://www.crmvet.org/docs/msfsdocs.htm>
<http://blog.aaa.si.edu/2011/06/remembering-freedom-summer.html>



Source: Goodman, Carolyn: Papers, 1964-2000
Wisconsin Historical Society

Based on the profiles featured above, please answer the following questions:

1. What do these applicants have in common?
2. What differences exist?
3. Do you believe the volunteers' ages and educational backgrounds impacted their decision to join the movement? If so, how? If not, why not?

