

Transcript

Freedom Rides Map, 1961

BACKGROUND MAP FOR PMs FROM AP NEWSFEATURES

Mailed from New York Feb. 5. For Use in PMs of Thursday, Feb. 8 and Thereafter.

Head: FREEDOM RIDES BROUGHT MORE THAN VIOLENCE

(Map is 3 cols. by 4 ¾ inches)

By SID MOODY

AP Newsfeatures Writer

Last year's freedom rides traveled a highway cobbled with blood and violence. What has come of the troubled journey? Will there be more?

Scores were injured in attempts to integrate Southern bus terminals. Hundreds were jailed. But, some nine months later, a growing number of terminals have been desegregated.

Asst. Atty. Gen. Burke Marshall said in Washington last week:

"The problem of segregation in bus and rail terminals is largely behind us as a nation and as a region. I have no doubt that where there is a problem—which there is in a few cities in Mississippi and a few in Louisiana—we are going to resolve the problem. But I'm really quite hopeful we were going to be able to clean up that problem without litigation."

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which organized the freedom rides, reports its teams have recently been served in 85 terminals across the South. These tests followed the ruling by the Interstate Commerce Commission last Nov. 1 forbidding segregation in interstate bus and rail stations.

Marshall said eight or nine communities in Mississippi and less than eight in Louisiana have not fully complied with the order. He also said he expects desegregation of airport terminals to be aided by a federal court injunction against segregated air facilities in Montgomery, Ala.

CORE was a catalyst for much of the recent public ferment over the issue.

James Farmer, national director of CORE, said the organization plans to continue freedom rides this year along major U.S. highways similar to a campaign that, with CORE help, desegregated many of the restaurants and lunch counters on Rt. 40 between Washington and Philadelphia. Farmer said CORE is particularly concerned with Rt. 66 which runs from St. Louis through the Southwest. The organization will also press a campaign for more hiring of Negroes in department stores, many of which CORE claims discriminated in employment.

Farmer said CORE was pleased with the efforts of the Justice Department in seeking compliance to desegregation rulings but disappointed with its speed in securing compliance.

What is CORE, and how did it start?

It started in 1942 at the University of Chicago. Since then it has followed a course of Gandhian nonviolence that has often led to violence as it staged wade-ins at swimming areas, sit-ins at lunch counters, stand-ins at movie theaters, even shoe-ins at shoe shine stands.

Farmer formed the organization at Chicago with several students after they had been discussing discrimination. What would happen if Negroes simply refused to buy from white stores? If they went in and just sat down at restaurants that refused to serve them?

As Farmer recalls it the group, some of them Negro, adjourned to a local restaurant, the Jack Spratt, to mull things over with a cup of coffee. But Jack Spratt wouldn't take their money, throwing it into the street. So on the spur of the moment they decided to "sit in." Jack Spratt eventually integrated, says Farmer. CORE was on its way.

Today CORE headquarters in New York City claims 62 local organizations with about 50 members in each. Farmer says it has 40,000 contributors who are expected to donate \$750,000 for the year ending this May. Five years ago CORE collected but \$26,000.

The local CORE groups are self-supporting as much as possible and can embark on their own freedom rides without a green light from headquarters in New York City. If they get

Transcript

BACKGROUND MAP FOR PMs

-2-

AP NEWSFEATURES

Involved in police and legal complications, the parent organization sends funds and lawyers.

Would-be members serve a one to three-month probationary period, Farmer explained, during which they must participate in two "action" projects, such as sit-ins, bus ride or picketing.

CORE is leery of extending membership to off-beat types. One goateed man who wore shorts and sandals was told he'd either have to shave the beard and wear conservative dress or give up CORE. True to his beard, he gave up CORE.

Farmer describes CORE's approach to a discriminatory situation as fivefold. First there is an investigation to determine whether discrimination exists, then an effort is made to talk the store or restaurant owner or whatever out of it. Failing that, CORE tries to get his minister, for instance, to talk him out of it.

If this is fruitless, CORE pickets and distributes literature and, finally, resorts to sit-ins, stand-ins, etc.

If some member is fined, CORE will not, as a rule, pay it unless there are special circumstances. CORE would prefer persons arrested go to jail rather than their paying their own fines. If it's \$30 or 30 days, take 30 days.

The first Freedom ride occurred in April, 1947 in the wake of a Supreme Court decision forbidding segregated seating on buses in interstate travel. Eight persons were jailed and four others arrested but later released in the trip through Virginia and North Carolina.

Then on Dec. 5, 1960 the Court ruled against segregated facilities in interstate bus terminals. This decision came in the so-called Boynton Case and the freedom rides of 1961 were made to test its effectiveness.

The first ride, on April 22, was from East St. Louis, Ill., to Sikeston, Mo. Twenty-two persons were arrested at Sikeston but charges were dismissed (see map).

On May 4 a freedom ride bus travelling from Washington, D.C., to New Orleans was burned near Anniston, Ala.

There were riots in Birmingham, Ala., which recurred on another ride two weeks later, spreading to Montgomery. On May 20 Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy sent 400 federal marshals to Montgomery. For a time Alabama Gov. John Patterson threatened to arrest any marshal who interfered but none was.

On May 24, a troupe of Nashville students arrived in the Mississippi state capital at Jackson to test segregation. About 306 were jailed as volunteers poured into the city, including a son-in-law of New York Gov. Nelson Rockefeller.

On June 13 four rabbis, seven white and seven Negro ministers staged a freedom ride from Washington to Tallahassee, Fla. Ten were jailed in Tallahassee after they were refused service at an airport restaurant. After they were tried, the restaurant agreed to desegregate its lunch counter and was closed down by the city.

There was another ride July 8 from St. Louis to Shreveport, La., in which four persons were jailed at Little Rock, Ark.

Then, on Aug. 2, a group of freedom riders took a bus from Newark, N.J. to Little Rock. For the first time there was no violence, no arrests.

Other rides (see map) into the deep South brought renewed violence in the fall, particularly at McComb, Miss. Since the Nov. 1 ICC ruling, CORE members have been riding across the South, compiling a growing list of terminals that have desegregated.

These are all noted at New York headquarters, a musty suite of rooms near the Wall Street area.

There Farmer directs CORE's operation from his office. On the wall is a large watercolor done by a youth sentenced to a road gang as a sit-in. Also on the wall is a framed certificate of arrest from Hinds County, Miss., certifying that Farmer, not one to let others do all the work, had been an inmate during the rides.

Citation: Background Map: 1961 Freedom Rides. [New York]: Associated Press Newsfeature, [1962]. Printed map and text. Geography and Map Division. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.