

Partners in Struggle

**The Legacies of Michael Schwerner,
James Chaney and Andrew Goodman**

Study Guide

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PREFACE

IN MANY WAYS, AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY is a continuously unfolding mosaic of intricately connected human designs and patterns. Individual stories contribute to the dynamic whole. The result is an expression of the awesome creativity of God. That is the focus of this four-part study. This particular series features Americans of European ancestry who partnered with African Americans in the fight for freedom and equality. It focuses on the intriguing beauty that these particular elements bring into this unfolding mosaic. The design of this guide allows readers to “exegete” the lives of John Brown, William Lloyd Garrison, Viola Liuzzo and three college students (Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman). It provides the opportunity for exploration, reflection, critique and dialogue.

This is the fourth in the series of standalone study guides, with each focusing on the life of a different person. These particular people were selected for study for their outstanding contributions to the abolition of slavery and to the mid-20th Century Civil Rights Movement. Each study contains background information, questions for review, and discussion, and reflection, resources for further study, sample lesson plans and a reproducible participant handout.

The sample lesson plans contain suggested activities for various time frames. The publications in the series can be used as texts for church school classes, small group studies, church-wide retreats and interfaith events. They can also be used for occasions such as Black History Month and Women’s History Month.

Partners in Struggle

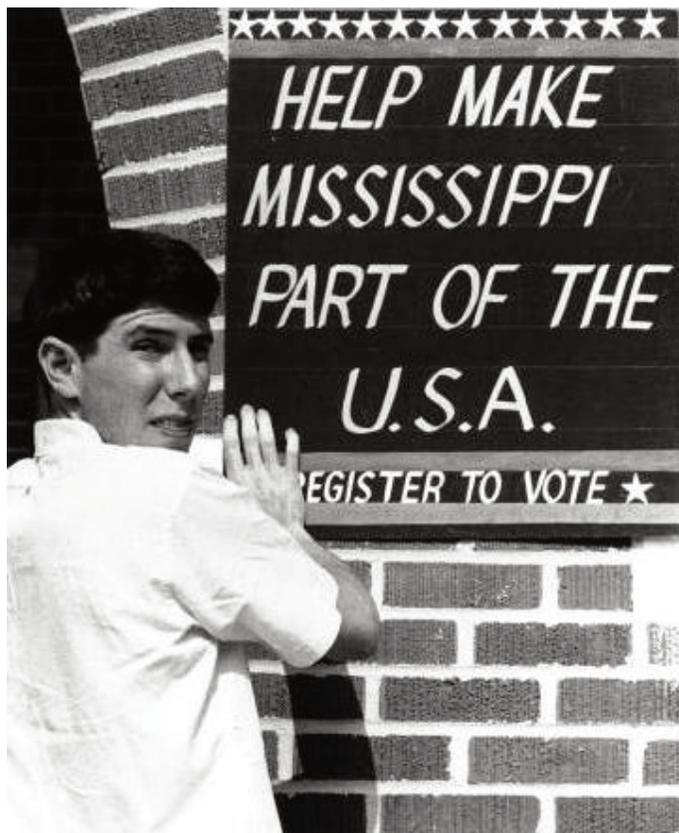
The Legacies of Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman

INTRODUCTION

ARGUABLY, THE 1960'S OPENED WITH A TYPE of enthusiasm that was unmatched in American history. African Americans walked into the decade, proudly, having won the landmark Supreme Court 1954 *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* decision. After almost a century, that decision had made segregated facilities unequal and illegal. It had nullified the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision that had given the old Jim Crow laws legal standing. By the time that Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman met in Meridian, Mississippi, people expected this revolution to continue to gain momentum.

At the beginning of the decade, on February 1, 1960, young people in Greensboro, South Carolina had already conducted a "sit-in" at a Woolworth lunch counter. In April of that same year, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded. A year later, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized over 1,000 volunteers to conduct "freedom rides" throughout the South to test laws against segregation in transportation. A year later, James Meredith became the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi, with the help of 5,000 troops sent by President John F. Kennedy. Then just one year later, in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King would write the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" which would become the non-violent charter of the civil rights movement.

In that same year, over 250,000 people would march on Washington, to be electrified by Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. In that year, also, Vivian Malone and James Hood registered for classes at the University of Alabama, to test the ban on segregated education. At mid-point of the decade, President Lyn-



don Baines Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, making all forms of discrimination illegal and authorizing the federal government to enforce it.

It was in that historical context that Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, in the summer of 1964, met in Meridian, Mississippi, to set up "Freedom Schools for "Freedom Summer". There, they hoped that African Americans would take the classes that would prepare them to use effectively their right to vote. Unfortunately, only months later, all three would be found buried in a river, murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. The last of their murderers would not be prosecuted until 40 years later.



Michael Schwerner, James Chaney, and Andrew Goodman.

BACKGROUND

Michael Schwerner was from New York. He had attended Pelham Memorial High School, Michigan State University and Cornell University where he had joined the Jewish fraternity, Alpha Epsilon Pi. By the time that he had come to Mississippi, he had gained experience in civil rights activism. He had led “Downtown Core” in New York and had helped to desegregate Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Maryland. With his wife, he came to Mississippi to work for CORE.

James Chaney was from Meridian, Mississippi. He had attended Catholic schools. He also had civil rights activism experience. As a child, he had worn patches to solicit support for the NAACP. Later, he had begun an apprenticeship with his father at a trade union. He had also taken freedom rides from Tennessee to Greensborough, Mississippi and back to Meridian. He also gained experience working in a variety of non-violent demonstrations and had helped to organize voter education classes. One of his specialties was getting local CORE leaders involved with local church leaders. In anticipation for the arrival of Schwerner and Goodman, he had met with leaders at Mt. Nebo Baptist Church so that they could set up a freedom school there.

Andrew Goodman had grown up on the Upper

West Side of New York. His entire family was devoted to social justice, with his mother being a psychologist and his father a businessman. He had graduated from Walden School, had completed the honors program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and had enrolled at Queens College. He also did some acting off Broadway. In 1964, he decided to join Schwerner and Chaney in Mississippi to work on voter registration drives during “Freedom Summer”.

The three joined a network of seasoned African Americans who had formed an umbrella of local Mississippi civil rights organizations. They trained with people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds with great enthusiasm. On the surface, though, their experiences were not that different from those of creative projects taking place all over the South at that time. Their project was also not unique in the violence that it evoked from segregationists. Unfortunately, their deaths in the struggle would also not be unique. As workers searched for them, they uncovered hundreds of bodies, some of whom have never been identified.

What made their situation and work so extremely difficult and significant was the extremely closed and dangerous community in which they were working.

By many indicators, Mississippi could be considered a state that has exhibited more hostility against

African American progress than any in the country. For example, according to figures of the Tuskegee University archives, between 1882 and 1968, there were 4,743 lynchings in the United States. Of those, 3,446 had been of African Americans. Mississippi had lynched 539 African Americans (16% of the total for African Americans). That is compared to an average of 73 African Americans lynched per state for 44 states, over that period.¹

In a study of Mississippi culture during the early 1960's, James Silver found popular family newspapers with constantly negative and sensationalist headlines such as "Negro Crime and Immorality in the North", "Negro Complicity in Communism". In this same climate, there had been a shotgun blast into a Black person's home, the assassination of Medgar Evers had been described as a conspiracy to rekindle racial unrest, and that Mississippi was being victimized by hate peddlers who were jealous of the state's economic progress. It appears that volunteers were attempting to set up "Freedom Schools" in a cultural context where there was what Silver and Harris identify as a "closed society", with a very rigid orthodoxy of "place".²

Silver's research, compiled in 1964, found leaders in the public sector and still expressing resentment about the 1954 Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education decision that made segregated educational facilities illegal. He found them describing how that decision was really a conspiracy to destroy the Mississippi way of life. He found the church divided, with most religious leaders supportive of the closed society that argued based on antebellum pro-slavery arguments (such as the Curse of Ham,³ Mark of Cain,⁴ Separation of the

Nations⁵ and the Ordained Powers⁶) that had been set forth prior to emancipation.⁷

Harris', writing about 30 years after Silver, underscored the same phenomena, and identified it as more excessive than in other Southern states.⁸ She traced its roots at least as far back as the aftermath of emancipation. She noted that, in Mississippi culture, everything had its place. There was an aura around "whiteness", and African Americans were expected to defer to it. Underlying the resistance to desegregation, that Black people were impure, and that sexual interaction should be avoided because of that.⁹ She noted that lynching, in Mississippi culture and history was done in an effort to keep Black people "in their places. These "places" were supported by their biblical interpretations. While these beliefs might have permeated Southern cultures in general, both authors found it much more pervasive in Mississippi culture.

It is into that environment that Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman partnered with African American leaders to carry out "Freedom Summer". It was in that environment that the

Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission regularly paid spies to keep track of all Northerners and activists who entered the state working on various projects. It was that very commission that was found complicit in the murders of the three civil rights workers.¹⁰ Public reactions to the deaths of these three young adults put more pressure on the United States government to pass the 1965 Civil Rights Act and to take actions to enforce it.



BIBLICAL PARALLEL

John 19

1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' 7 The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He entered his headquarters* again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' 11 Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' 12 From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'

13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat* on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew* Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' 15 They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.

So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew* is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth,* the King of the Jews.'

When Jesus entered Galilee of the 1st century, it was a closed society, occupied by the Roman Empire. Everything had its place. Its caste system had roots that extended at least as far back as the Roman Republic., with its strict rigid patronage system. By the time of Jesus' birth, however, it had transitioned into an Empire. It had done this by conquering vast lands, subjugating people and plunging them into poverty so that they could use their resources to support the Roman treasury. Rome was then a bipolar society of the extremely rich and the extremely poor. Rather than even out the economy by redistributing the wealth, emperors had decided to take resources they needed from surrounding lands. The resulting caste system kept peasants and slaves "in their places" to serve the needs of wealthy Roman citizens.¹¹

"Cognito vs. formulary" legal procedures and "dual penalty systems"¹² helped to keep the system operating. There was one criminal justice system for the wealthy and another for the poor. In this context, of course, the most serious crime, meriting capital punishment, was treason. Next to it, but also meriting capital punishment, was sedition.¹³ Even for offenses seen as that serious, there was one set of decision making procedures for the rich and another for the poor, one set for Roman citizens and another for "aliens".¹⁴

As Jesus stood facing Pilate that day, he must have realized that neither Pilate nor the Temple officials that brought him there considered him the Son of God. In their eyes, He was a peasant from Nazareth, being "uppity". They forced him to face a criminal justice system designed for the poor. Unlike his wealthy counterparts, Pilate would not send him on to the Emperor, and he would not have a right of appeal.¹⁵ Instead, his fate would be decided, even if by whim, by a judge like Pilate, who served as governor, jury and judge.

By then, Jesus must have been familiar with Rome's spy networks. Perhaps it was they who had interpreted the acts of Jesus as supportive of a redistribution of wealth, rather than the imperialist alternative.¹⁶ Perhaps it was they who had passed along the image of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Perhaps this was why Pilate seemed obsessed with the question of whether Jesus considered himself "King of the Jews". It is no surprise, then, that what happened to Jesus was more similar to vigilante justice than a trial suitable for a king.

QUESTIONS

FOR REVIEW

- What was the contrast between why Schwermer, Chaney and Goodman met in Mississippi and how they were seen by segregationists?
- In what ways was “Freedom Summer” a reflection of the Spirit of the times?
- In what ways was the climate of race relations in Mississippi reflective of the times?
- What comparisons can be made between the murders of the three civil rights workers and the crucifixion of Jesus?

FOR DISCUSSION

- What relationship was there between the Roman economy, its criminal justice system and crucifixions?
- What relationship was there between lynching and the Southern economy?

- Consider Ida B. Wells-Barnett’s comments in the side bar below. Was there anything “religious” about white supremacy and the resistance to black enfranchisement?
- Can James Cone’s comments in the side bar below relate to the situations of Schwermer, Chaney and Goodman? If so, how?
- Review the tape by Michelle Alexander or the sermon by Rev. Stephen Phelps on the “Resources for Further Study” page. Are there any contemporary applications of points made in this lesson?

FOR REFLECTION

- Have you been made to suffer due to a stance that you took for the sake of social justice?
- How far are you willing to go for the cause of Christ?



SIDE BARS

“By an amendment to the Constitution, the Negro was given the right of franchise, and, theoretically at least, his ballot became his invaluable emblem of citizenship. In a government "of the people, for the people, and by the people," the Negro's vote became an important factor in all matters of state and national politics. However, this did not last long. The southern white man would not consider that the Negro had any right, which a white man was bound to respect, and the idea of a republican form of government in the southern states grew into general contempt. It was maintained that "This is a white man's government," and regardless of numbers the white man should rule. "No Negro domination" became the new legend on the sanguinary banner of the sunny South, and under it rode the Ku Klux Klan, the Regulators, and the lawless mobs, which for any cause chose to murder one man or a dozen as suited their purpose best. It was a long, gory campaign; the blood chills and the heart almost loses faith in Christianity when one thinks of Yazoo, Hamburg, Edgefield, Copiah, and the countless massacres of defenseless Negroes, whose only crime was the attempt to exercise their right to vote.

However, it was a bootless strife for colored people. The government, which had made the Negro a citizen, found itself unable to protect him. It gave him the right to vote, but denied him the protection, which should have maintained that right. Scourged from his home; hunted through the swamps; hung by midnight raiders, and openly murdered in the light of day, the Negro clung to his right of franchise with a heroism, which would have wrung admiration from the hearts of savages. He believed that in that small white ballot, there was a subtle something, which stood for manhood as well as citizenship, and thousands of brave black men went to their graves, exemplifying the one by dying for the other.”

— **Ida B. Wells-Barnet**, *On Lynching's*, (New York: Humanity Books, 2002), 59 ²⁹

“The paradox of a crucified savior lies at the heart of the Christian story. That paradox was particularly evident in the first century when crucifixion was recognized as the particularly form of execution reserved by the Roman Empire for insurrections and rebels. It was a public spectacle accompanied by torture and shame – one of the most humiliating and painful deaths every devised by human beings. That Jesus died this way required special explanation. It made no rational or even spiritual sense to say that hope came out of “a place called Golgotha”... a place of the skull.” For the Jews of Jesus’ time the punishment of crucifixion held special opprobrium, given their belief that “anyone hung on a tree is under God’s curse” (Deut 21:23). Thus St. Paul said that the “word of the cross is foolishness” to the intellect and a stumbling block to established religion. The cross is a paradoxical religious symbol because it inverts the world’s value system with the news that hope comes by way of defeat that suffering and death do not have the last word, that the last shall be first and the first last. That God could “make a way out of no way” in Jesus’ cross was truly absurd to the intellect, yet profoundly real in the souls of black folk. Enslaved blacks who first heard the gospel message seized on the power of the cross. Christ crucified manifested God’s loving and liberating presence in the contradictions of black life that transcended the presence in the lives of black Christians that empowered them to believe that ultimately in God’s eschatological future, they would not be defeated by the troubles of this world, no matter how great and painful their suffering.”

— **James H. Cone**, *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, (New York: Orbis Books, 2001), 2.

APPENDIX

RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY

SERMONS

Phelps, Stephen, “From Prison”, Sunday, April 10, 2011, The Riverside Church, New York
<http://www.shphelps.com/se/2011/From.Prison.pdf>

WEBSITES

Miami Library Digital Collection on Freedom Summer
<http://www.lib.muohio.edu/node/1370>

Mississippi Burning Trial
<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/price&bowers/price&bowers.htm>

James Chaney Foundation
<http://jecf.org/History.htm>

Andrew Goodman Foundation
<http://www.andrewgoodman.org/>

Interview with Dr. Carolyn Goodman, mother of Andrew Goodman
<http://www.jewishcurrents.org/2005-sept-goodman.htm>

New York Times: Teaching the Civil Rights Movement
<http://learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/27/reader-ideas-teaching-the-civil-rights-movement/>

Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
<http://www.core-online.org/>

Southern Christian Leadership Conference
<http://sclcnational.org/>

National Civil Rights Museum
<http://www.civilrightsmuseum.org/>

Samuel DeWitt Proctor Conference
<http://www.sdpconference.info/>

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
<http://www.nypl.org/locations/schomburg>

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
<http://www.naacp.org/?gclid=CKaLi-3lIk4CFQkQNAod6DkYJw>

Dr. Martin Luther King Center for Non-Violent
<http://www.thekingcenter.org/>

VIDEOS

The following videos are available through several venues, including: amazon.com, YouTube, Netflix and cites listed on google.com. Some are in local library collections.

Mississippi Freedom Summer

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Op6Ylm8XxeA> (Part I: Six Minutes)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pFpbc2-Xoel> (Part II: Six Minutes)

Freedom Summer (43 Minutes)

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/c84ed22c1626c742a7b4/Freedom-Summer>

Murder in Mississippi (2:00 Minutes), Parts I-IX

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fEX7SGDAO68&feature=related>

Eyes on the Prize (Disc 3, 30 minutes)

http://www.amazon.com/Eyes-Prize-Americas-Rights-1954-1965/dp/B0031WNYHK/ref=sr_1_1?s=movies-tv&ie=UTF8&qid=1328936940&sr=1-1

Michelle Alexander , The New Jim Crow

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WX6G0ICwJ1Qm> (11 minutes)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgM5NAq6cGI> (68 minutes)
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4BSwEYyFu2E> (53 minutes)

The Murder of Emmett Till (53 minutes)

http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/The_Murder_of_Emmett_Till_American_Experience/70016472?trkid=2361637

Freedom on My Mind: Chronicle of the Mississippi Voter Registration Project

http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/Freedom_on_My_Mind/60036697?trkid=2361637

The Fabulous '60's

http://movies.netflix.com/WiMovie/The_Fabulous_60s/70066020?trkid=2361637

PBS PROGRAMS AIRED ONLINE

Freedom Riders

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1925571160>

Daisy Bates, First Ladies of Little Rock

<http://video.pbs.org/video/1925571160>

Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dKKejG4j3P0>

Howard Zinn on Civil Rights Activists

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwgOEG9-v78>

Bayard Rustin in the Civil Rights Movement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hi4AWjt9Bv0>

The March on Washington

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_c2lLYuYU1I

Civil Rights Movement Timeline

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJb0h61MIKo>

Ella Baker: Mother of the Civil Rights Movement

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a1I6n9EGM5Y>

Interview with Nina Simone

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmQ9a0yis3E>

MUSIC

Bernice Johnson Reagon

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GccfFkbzjrc>

- <http://gailpellettproductions.com/the-songs-are-free-bernice-johnson-reagon-and-african-american-music/>

SCHWERNER, CHANEY, AND GOODMAN

OVERVIEW

This lesson reviews the significance of the lives of the three Civil Rights workers the backdrop of the mid-20th Century Civil Rights Movement. Participants compare and contrast that setting with the setting of Roman imperialism in which Jesus was crucified. It is important that they see the connections between the exploitation of subject peoples and the economic systems that resist redistribution of wealth and sharing of power. It is also important that participants see underlying interpretations of the Bible that support the segregationists' arguments. It is also important that they be able to make modern day applications of some of the themes of the lesson, particularly to issues of mass incarceration and designs to redraw lines for voting districts. The lesson is adaptable for 60 minute, 90 minute and for longer periods. A companion participant handout coordinates with each session element. Instructional aids on the sheet, "Resources for Further Study" can be explored for alternative activities. See "More Ideas", on p. 24. These resources can also be used by participants for further study and to prepare for the session.

OBJECTIVES

During this session, the participant will:

- describe the overall spirit of optimism that was characteristic of the 1960's;
- describe the closed Mississippi society in which civil rights workers attempted to create freedom schools;
- explain the role of caste systems in supporting both the Roman and Mississippi economic system;
- locate biblical interpretations that segregationists used to support their arguments;
- compare and contrast Jesus' crucifixion and those of the three civil rights workers;
- make modern applications of themes discussed in this lesson (to "homeland security", resistance against taxing the rich; war mongering);

- discuss the relationship between racism, classism and sexism.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Voters Rights
- Closed Social System
- Class Stratification
- Redistribution of Wealth
- Imperialism
- Role of Crucifixions in the Roman Empire
- Role of Lynchings in Mississippi

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Duplicated Participant Handouts
- Bibles
- If using material that is online (such as from YouTube), or DVDs, a data projector, laptop, speakers and screen will be needed. If you do not have such equipment, substitute that activity in the lesson plan by having the class take turns reading the story of Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman from the participant handout. Then use the extra time to explore in more depth with the class answers to the discussion questions.
- Pencils and Loose leaf Paper
- To make the quotes in the "Side Bars" available, either print them on poster board and display them in prominent places, print them onto overhead projector film and project via an overhead projector; project them onto a screen, using a laptop computer, data projector and screen; send them to enrollees via email during the week prior to the session with questions to guide their reading of them or duplicate them and then distribute them in the session itself. If the period is longer than one hour, it may be possible for volunteers to read each quote just prior to the discussion them.

STEP	A - One Hour Session	B - 90 Minute Session	C - Longer than 90 Minutes
Ice Breaker	“Round Robin” style, each person, within one minute, introduces him/herself, and explains one particular personal freedom for which s/he is thankful. If the group is large, participants can form small groups with no more than five people in each group, and share within those groups. (10:00)	Participants draw numbers from the plate or bag, upon entering the room. At the beginning of class, they try to locate who has their number. Then, within each pair, each person discovers the person’s name and something in which that person is most interested (hobby, television show, Bible passage, etc.). Then the larger group reconvenes and each person is introduced by his/her partner (s). (15:00)	Place construction paper, scissors, glue, chalk and crayons on each table. Ask participants to create a flag that represents their typical weekly schedule. After about 10 minutes, reconvene with the larger group and ask people to share and explain their flags with the larger group. If time allows, participants can first share the flags in the smaller groups at the table, and then volunteers can share them with the larger group. (20:00)
Schwerner, Chaney, and Goodman	Show the YouTube video, “Mississippi Freedom Summer” Parts I & II (12:00). [See “Resources for Further Study” (6:00) Ask for volunteers to briefly respond to the film, then take turns reading the short form of information on the three Civil Rights Workers in the participant handout. (5:00)	Show “Eyes on the Prize, Disc #3): listed on “Resources for Further Study” (30) Ask for volunteers to briefly respond to the film, then take turns reading the related information printed on the Participant Handout. (10:00)	Show “Freedom Summer (43 Minutes): Ask volunteers to respond briefly to the film. Then take turns reading the background and story about the three civil rights workers from the participant handouts. (5:00)
Crucifixion	Ask volunteers to read the biblical passage and then read the short story that follows it. (5:00)	Ask volunteers to read the biblical passage and then read the short paragraph that follows it. (5:00)	Ask volunteers to read the biblical passage and then read the short story that follows it. (5:00)
Review Questions	Discuss the Review Questions in small groups with each group having a different set of questions from among those listed. One reporter from each group then reads his/her group has assigned questions and reports the group’s answers to the larger group. (15:00)	Have them select numbers and each person answers a different question in the larger group. If it is a large group, then people with the same number form groups and answer the assigned question together. The recorder reports to outcome in the larger group. (20:00)	Answer the review questions together in the larger group. (15:00)
Discussion Questions	Return to the smaller groups, with each small group having been assigned a different set of discussion questions. One person from the group reports out to the larger group when it reconvenes. (15:00)		Break into smaller groups. This time, each small group has the same group of discussion questions. After discussing them in the smaller group, a recorder reports the answers to the larger group when it is reconvened. Each question would be reported upon separately for purposes of comparing answers. (25:00)
Additional Activity, if time allows.	Reflect on the entire session in the larger group.		Invite parishioners or others who lived through and/or participated in various civil rights marches, and activities during this period to share their experiences. Be prepared to interview them and ask specific questions in order to fit the presentation into the available time frame.

MORE IDEAS

EXPLORING CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

Create a forum whereby what has been learned from the Civil Rights Movement can be applied to contemporary issues. Participants forming panel discussions on specific issues, with each panelists exploring how victories won and lessons learned during the Civil Rights Movement apply. Examples are:

- ***Mass Incarceration and Prison Reform***
- ***The Occupy Movement***
- ***Gay Rights and Marriage Equality***
- ***Palestinian Rights***

FILM SERIES

For each week that the series is being studied, resent a parallel film series at a different time and location. Once a week, present a film that gives more information about the Civil Rights Era. See the “Resources for Further Study” (pages 15-16), for more ideas

ON LINE DISCUSSION GROUPS

Create an online discussion group, using Yahoo, Face book, or Blackboard. Post a given video clip and related discussion question. During the week leading into the lesson, participants view the tape, then answer the discussion question, and then respond to each other’s answers of the discussion question. In the actual class session, the discussion is continued at the appropriate time.

ASSIGNING VIDEO CLIPS AND WEBSITES

Once the email addresses of enrollees are obtained, cut and paste the sheet, “Resources for Further Research” within emails and ask participants to explore some of the cites, based on their interests as preparation for sharing their discoveries in the upcoming session.

MUSIC AND DEVOTIONALS

As participants are gathering, play spirituals that deal with liberation and freedom. Then open the session with prayer, being sure to mention some of the overall spiritual goals of the study. For examples of spirituals on YouTube, see page 15. However, professional recordings are available online at Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble and other cites

PARTICIPANT HANDOUT

INTRODUCTION

ARGUABLY, THE 1960'S OPENED with a type of enthusiasm that was unmatched in American history. African Americans walked into the decade, proudly, having won the landmark Supreme Court 1954 *Brown vs. the Topeka Board of Education* decision. After almost a century, that decision had made segregated facilities unequal and illegal. It had nullified the 1896 *Plessy vs. Ferguson* decision that had given the old Jim Crow laws legal standing. By the time that Michael Schwerner, James Chaney and Andrew Goodman met in Meridian, Mississippi, people expected this revolution to continue to gain momentum.

At the beginning of the decade, on February 1, 1960, young people in Greensboro, South Carolina had already conducted a "sit-in" at a Woolworth lunch counter. In April of that same year, the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was founded. A year later, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) organized over 1,000 volunteers to conduct "freedom rides" throughout the South to test laws against segregation in transportation. A year later, James Meredith became the first African American to enroll at the University of Mississippi, with the help of 5,000 troops sent by President John F. Kennedy. Then just one year later, in 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King would write the "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," which would become the non-violent charter of the Civil Rights Movement.

In that same year, over 250,000 people would march on Washington, to be electrified by Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech. In that year, also, Vivian Malone and James Hood registered for classes at the University of Alabama, to test the ban on segregated education. At mid-point of the decade, President Lyndon Baines Johnson signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, making all forms of discrimination illegal and authorizing the federal government to enforce it.

It was in that historical context that Schwerner, Chaney and Goodman, in the summer of 1964, met in Meridian, Mississippi, to set up "Freedom Schools for Freedom Summer". There, they hoped that African Americans would take the classes that would prepare them to use effectively their right to vote. Unfortunately, only months later, all three would be found buried in a river, murdered by the Ku Klux Klan. The last of their murderers would not be prosecuted until 40 years later.

BACKGROUND

Michael Schwerner was from New York. He had attended Pelham Memorial High School, Michigan State University and Cornell University where he had joined the Jewish fraternity, Alpha Epsilon Pi. By the time that he had come to Mississippi, he had gained experience in civil rights activism. He had led "Downtown Core" in New York and had helped to desegregate Gwynn Oak Amusement Park in Maryland. With his wife, he came to Mississippi to work for CORE.



James Chaney was from Meridian, Mississippi. He had attended Catholic schools. He also had civil rights activism experience. As a child, he had worn patches to solicit support for the NAACP. Later, he had begun an apprenticeship with his father at a trade union. He had also taken freedom rides from Tennessee to Greensborough, Mississippi and back to Meridian. He also gained experience working in a variety of non-violent demonstrations and had helped to organize voter education classes. One of his specialties was getting local CORE leaders involved with local church leaders. In anticipation for the arrival of Schwerner and Goodman, he had met with leaders at Mt. Nebo Baptist Church so that they could set up a freedom school there.

Andrew Goodman had grown up on the Upper West Side of New York. His entire family was devoted to social justice, with his mother being a psychologist and his father a businessperson. He had graduated from Walden School, had completed the honors program at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, and had enrolled at Queens College. He also did some acting off Broadway. In 1964, he decided to join Schwerner and Chaney in Mississippi to work on voter registration drives during "Freedom Summer".

The three joined a network of seasoned African Americans who had formed an umbrella of local Mississippi civil rights organizations. They trained with people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds with great enthusiasm. On the surface, though, their experiences were not that different from those of creative projects taking place all over the South at that time. Their project was also not unique in the violence that it evoked from segregationists. Unfortunately, their deaths in the struggle would also not be unique. As workers searched for them, they uncovered hundreds of bodies, some of whom have never been identified.

What made their situation and work so extremely difficult and significant was the extremely closed and dangerous community in which they were working.

By many indicators, Mississippi could be considered a state that has exhibited more hostility against African American progress than any in the country. For example, according to figures of the Tuskegee University archives, between 1882 and 1968, there were 4,743 lynchings in the United States. Of those, 3,446 had been of African Americans. Mississippi had lynched 539 African Americans (16% of the total for African Americans). That is compared to an average of 73 African Americans lynched per state for 44 states, over that period.¹⁷

In a study of Mississippi culture during the early 1960's, James Silver found popular family newspapers with constantly negative and sensationalist headlines such as "Negro Crime and Immorality in the North", "Negro Complicity in Communism". In this same climate, Medgar Evers had been assassinated. It appears that volunteers were attempting to set up "Freedom Schools" in a cultural context where there was what Silver and ___ Harris identify as a "closed society", with a very rigid orthodoxy concerning "place".¹⁸

Silver's research, compiled in 1964, found leaders in the public sector and still expressing resentment about the 1954 Brown vs. Topeka Board of Education decision that made segregated educational facilities illegal. He found them describing how that decision was really a conspiracy to destroy the Mississippi way of life. He found the church divided, with most religious leaders supportive of the closed society that argued based on antebellum pro-slavery arguments (such as the Curse of Ham,¹⁹ Mark of Cain,²⁰ Separation of the Nations²¹ and the Ordained Powers²²) that had been set forth prior to emancipation.²³

BIBLICAL PARALLEL

John 19

1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. 2 And the soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head and they dressed him in a purple robe. 3 They kept coming up to him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' and striking him on the face. 4 Pilate went out again and said to them, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no case against him.' 5 So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!' 6 When the chief priests and the police saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' Pilate said to them, 'Take him yourselves and crucify him; I find no case against him.' 7 The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die because he has claimed to be the Son of God.'

8 Now when Pilate heard this, he was more afraid than ever. 9 He entered his headquarters again and asked Jesus, 'Where are you from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. 10 Pilate therefore said to him, 'Do you refuse to speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you, and power to crucify you?' 11 Jesus answered him, 'You would have no power over me unless it had been given you from above; therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' 12 From then on Pilate tried to release him, but the Jews cried out, 'If you release this man, you are no friend of the emperor. Everyone who claims to be a king sets himself against the emperor.'*

13 When Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus outside and sat on the judge's bench at a place called The Stone Pavement, or in Hebrew* Gabbatha. 14 Now it was the day of Preparation for the Passover; and it was about noon. He said to the Jews, 'Here is your King!' 15 They cried out, 'Away with him! Away with him! Crucify him!' Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but the emperor.' 16 Then he handed him over to them to be crucified.*

So they took Jesus; 17 and carrying the cross by himself, he went out to what is called The Place of the Skull, which in Hebrew is called Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, with Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also had an inscription written and put on the cross. It read, 'Jesus of Nazareth,* the King of the Jews.'*

When Jesus entered Galilee of the 1st century, it was a closed society, occupied by the Roman Empire. Everything had its place. Its caste system had roots that extended at least as far back as the Roman Republic., with its strict rigid patronage system. By the time of Jesus' birth, however, it had transitioned into an Empire. It had done this by conquering vast lands, subjugating people and plunging them into poverty so that they could use their resources to support the Roman treasury. Rome was then a bipolar society of the extremely rich and the extremely poor. Rather than even out the economy by redistributing the wealth, emperors had decided to take resources they needed from surrounding lands. The resulting caste system kept peasants and slaves "in their places" to serve the needs of wealthy Roman citizens.²⁴

"Cognito vs. formulary" legal procedures and "dual penalty systems"²⁵ helped to keep the system operating. There was one criminal justice system for the wealthy and another for the poor. In this context, of course, the most serious crime, meriting capital punishment, was treason. Next to it, but also meriting capital punishment, was sedition.²⁶ Even for offenses seen as that serious, there was one set of decision making procedures for the rich and another for the poor, one set for Roman citizens and another for "aliens".²⁷

As Jesus stood facing Pilate that day, he must have realized that neither Pilate nor the Temple officials considered him the Son of God. In their eyes, He was a peasant from Nazareth, being "uppity". They forced him to face a criminal justice system designed for the poor. Unlike his wealthy counterparts, Pilate would not send him on to the Emperor, and he would not have a right of appeal.²⁸ Instead, his fate would be decided, even if by whim, by one person who served as governor, jury and judge.

By then, Jesus must have been familiar with Rome's spy networks. Perhaps the spies had interpreted Jesus' acts as supportive of redistributing the wealth rather than the imperialist alternative.²⁹ Perhaps they had passed on the image of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Perhaps that was why Pilate kept asking the same question over and over – whether Jesus was "King of the Jews". It is no surprise, then, that the justice for Jesus was more like vigilante justice than like that suitable for a king.

QUESTIONS

FOR REVIEW

- What was the contrast between why Schwermer, Chaney and Goodman met in Mississippi and how they were seen by segregationists?
- In what ways was "Freedom Summer" a reflection of the Spirit of the times?
- In what ways was the climate of race relations in Mississippi reflective of the times?
- What comparisons can be made between the murders of the three civil rights workers and the crucifixion of Jesus?

FOR DISCUSSION

- What relationship was there between the Roman economy, its criminal justice system and crucifixions?
- What relationship was there between lynching and the Southern economy?
- Consider Ida B. Wells-Barnett's comments in the side bar below. Was there anything "religious" about white supremacy and the resistance to black enfranchisement?
- Can James Cone's comments in the side bar below relate to the situations of Schwermer, Chaney and Goodman? If so, how?
- Review the tape by Michelle Alexander or the sermon by Rev. Stephen Phelps on the "Resources for Further Study" page. Are there any contemporary applications of points made in this lesson?

FOR REFLECTION

- Have you been made to suffer due to a stance that you took for the sake of social justice?
- How far are you willing to go for the cause of Christ?

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END NOTES

- ¹ They argued that white supremacy is founded on the “curse of Ham” (Genesis 9).
- ² Tuskegee University Archives
- ³ Silver, 5.
- ⁴ The “Curse of Ham” concept is a misinterpretation of Genesis 9, where drunken Noah curses at his grandchild, Canaan. Segregationists used that as an explanation for why Black people have dark skin, wooly hair, and thicker facial features. They said the outcome of the curse was for Black people to serve others forever. First the service was to the Jews (descendants of Shem), but, after the Jewish people did not accept Christ as the Messiah, allegedly they lost their “chosen” status with God, and it was taken over by the European based descendants of Japeth. That, supposedly is how Black people came to serve white people and it should remain that way forever.
- ⁵ This is a misinterpretation of Genesis 4. The “mark” that Cain was to bear has been interpreted by segregationists as the physical traits that distinguish people of African descent from people of European descent. Cain is explained as the progenitor of the “angry black man”. Both pro-slavery and segregationists arguments also included the question of where Cain got his wife. According to them, supposedly there was another cradle of civilization that birthed aliens. Cain married one of them and gave birth to black people who bore his mark and the traits of the alien group. That accounts for why some believed that black people didn’t have souls – they were supposed to have come from a group that wasn’t quite human.
- ⁶ This came from a misinterpretation of Genesis 10, when the nations spread out from Africa (Garden of Eden) to other parts of the world. Modern scientists prove that there is no such thing as “race”. They say that, as a result of spreading out to different climates, physical features interacted with these environments and changed, but there is still only one human race. Segregationists, on the other hand, say that there are separate races, and these are based on the places that the human beings went after spreading out from Noah. They say that Noah and his wife gave birth to three separate races, which populated different parts of the world. They say this was ordained by God, and that it is the basis for keeping the races separate, through segregation, even if their descendants now live within the same country.
- ⁷ This is a misinterpretation of Romans 14. Based on this passage, people have argued for “state’s rights”. In this history of slavery and Jim Crow, Southern states argued that, the state had the right to determine how to treat African Americans and that the federal government could not interfere with this. That, according to them is based on Romans 14 that says that whatever governments there are ordained by God.
- ⁸ Silver 6.
- ⁹ Harris, 389.
- ¹⁰ Harris 393.
- ¹¹ Garnsey, 4; Silver, 5; Harris, 389.
- ¹² Garnsey 11
- ¹³ Garnsey 13
- ¹⁴ Schwartz, 502
- ¹⁵ Garnsey 14
- ¹⁶ Garnsey 14; Barrington, 18.
- ¹⁷ Mark 8:5-6; Barrolle, 174, 180.
- ¹⁸ Tuskegee University Archives
- ¹⁹ Silver, 5.
- ²⁰ See note #3.
- ²¹ See note #4.
- ²² See note #5.
- ²³ See note #6.
- ²⁴ Silver 6.
- ²⁵ Garnsey, 11-14.
- ²⁶ Garnsey 13.
- ²⁷ Wallasky, 84.
- ²⁸ Garnsey 13.
- ²⁹ Garnsey 14.
- ³⁰ Barrolle 177-180; Mark 8:5-6; John 12:12-15.