

CURRICULUM VITAE

Edwin King: Civil Rights Work in 1960s, Summary

I was an undergraduate student at Millsaps College in Jackson, Mississippi, 1954-58, and observed the formation of the white racist resistance to the Supreme Court school desegregation decision. As a student I met Medgar Evers and other black leaders through interracial student meetings at Tougaloo College. I attended most of the key organizational meetings of the White Citizens Council and watched as the white moderates were forced into silence, as white violence killed Emmet Till and several black voter registration leaders.

While in New England for seminary from 1958 on I attended key meetings of religious, pacifist, and civil rights groups. Through common seminary teachers I became a friend of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1958. I participated in the planning that culminated in the sit-ins of 1960. I was very active in that effort and arrested several times in Alabama. I assisted in the Freedom Rides but avoided arrest in Mississippi, then still hoping to return to be pastor of a white church. That was not possible and in 1963 I returned to the South to be chaplain of Tougaloo College, center of the Civil Rights Movement in Mississippi.

I was a participant in most of the major campaigns of the period; worked with most organizations--with Bob Moses and others in SNCC, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; with Medgar Evers in the NAACP; with James Farmer and David Dennis in CORE; with Dr. Martin Luther King in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; with Fannie Lou Hamer, Annie Divine, Victoria Gray, Lawrence Guyot, and others in Mississippi in COFO, the Council of Federated Organizations.

I worked in the Jackson Movement with John Salter and the murdered Medgar Evers. I was the 1963 Freedom Vote candidate for Lt. Governor in Mississippi with Aaron Henry for Governor. This effort, inspired by Allard Lowenstein, was a grass roots effort led by SNCC but assisted by outside college students. I helped lead campaigns for church desegregation and for desegregation (or boycotts) of concerts and public events in Mississippi in 1963-64. I was a founder of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, national committeeman, delegate to Democratic National Conventions of 1964, 68, and 72, and on the Democratic National Committee, 1964-68. I was a leader and organizer of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer, speaking at colleges around the US for support. I was a peace candidate for U.S. Congress in 1966 on another interracial ticket of MFDP. I worked to promote cooperation between civil rights groups and the AFL-CIO led by my friend Claude Ramsay. I helped organize the initial interracial ecumenical clergy meetings in the spring of 1963 out of which eventually developed the current Mississippi Religious Leadership Conference. As with my friends, I was jailed and beaten, sometimes hospitalized. I was under constant surveillance from the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission, the FBI, U. S. military intelligence, and who knows what else. I was active in the local and national struggle against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War and worked in the "Dump Johnson" movement in the Democratic Party. From 1967 to 1974 I was on the board or staff of the Delta Ministry of the National Council and World Council of Churches, chiefly working in school desegregation and anti-poverty efforts.