

Neshoba County
AFRICAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE
DRIVING TOUR
PHILADELPHIA, MS

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Roots of Struggle
REWARDS OF SACRIFICE

Roots of Struggle

TOUR SITES

Join us on the journey toward freedom. Its way was paved by sacrifice, pain, suffering, and even death. Experience the places and meet the people who brought freedom and equality to Neshoba County.

1. NESHOPA COUNTY JAIL

In 1964, the Neshoba County Jail was located at 422 Myrtle Street. This is where the three civil rights workers were taken and held when arrested on June 21. They were later released around 10:30 p.m. to return to the COFO office in Meridian. Two years later in 1966, Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. knelt and prayed at this site. Technical Appraisal is now located there.



2. FORMER SITE OF LILLIE JONES HOUSE

The Jones House was located at 241 Carver Avenue. Lillie ("Aunt Lil") Jones encouraged the civil rights movement from her front porch rocking chair across the street from the COFO office. Her house was an ideal lookout post for cars coming down the street. She also spearheaded the memorial in front of Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church. She died in 1983 and is buried in Mt. Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery.



3. FORMER SITE OF COFO OFFICE (COUNCIL OF FEDERATED ORGANIZATIONS)

The office was located on Carver Avenue. COFO was a coordinating body for civil rights movement efforts in the state during Freedom Summer. The Neshoba office was housed in a building originally owned by Calloway Cole of Longdale and later by Amos McClelland who also owned a café across the street. A large COFO sign visibly marked the building with black and white hands linked together. Today, this sign is on display in the Old Capitol Museum in Jackson, Miss.



4. CHARLES EVERS FUNERAL HOME

In the 1950s, this building housed a funeral home operated by Charles Evers, brother of Medgar Evers, who urged blacks to register to vote. He also ran a taxi company and a hotel. The hotel was located next to the COFO office and many COFO workers stayed there. In the years immediately following the 1964 murders, the area often suffered violence during



anniversaries of these murders. In one instance, a white gunman fired into the hotel and COFO workers returned the fire. Mr. Evers is a former mayor of Fayette, MS, and was a disc jockey for WHOC radio station while living in Philadelphia. The funeral home, now known as Latimer Funeral Home, is located at 250 Carver Avenue.

5. MT. NEBO MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church is located at 257 Carver Avenue. When the civil rights workers first came to Philadelphia, Mt. Nebo was the only church that would allow C.O.R.E. (Congress of Racial Equality) to hold mass meetings to register people to vote. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. led a memorial service at Mt. Nebo two years after the slayings. In 1966, that same year, Mt. Nebo was the headquarters for a county-wide boycott to protest repeated incidences of police brutality. There is a monument to Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner in front of Mt. Nebo. The "Community Welfare Club" donated this monument.



6. BOGUE CHITTO SWAMP

The burned 1963 blue Ford station wagon driven by the three missing civil rights workers was found by a Choctaw Indian in the Bogue Chitto



Swamp 13 miles northeast of Philadelphia on Highway 21. Investigating officers said the car was probably driven to this location and burned sometime late Sunday night or early Monday morning. It was discovered on Tuesday, June 23, two days after the workers disappeared.

* *Neshoba Democrat*

7. MT. ZION UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Mt. Zion United Methodist Church is located off Highway 16 East on County Road 747. On June 16, 1964, a routine meeting of church officers was held. As the officers were leaving the church, Klansmen met them outside and ordered them out of the vehicles where they proceeded to beat J.R. (Bud) Cole, Georgia Rush, and her son, John Thomas. The church was burned later that evening, leaving only the forty-year-old bell that was used to announce the begin-



ning of church services. On June 21, the three civil rights workers came to Philadelphia to secure affidavits about the raid, the beatings, and the burning of the church. The church

was rebuilt and rededicated in February 1966 with a plaque near the front to pay tribute to the three slain civil rights workers. In 1989, a historical marker was placed at the church to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the murders. The listeners of WKXI radio in Jackson, MS, donated this marker. Another monument has also been placed in front of the church in memory of the three slain workers.

8. ROAD 515 "ROCK CUT ROAD"

The murder site is located off Highway 19 South at the intersection of County Roads 515 and 284. Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were released from jail around 10:30 p.m., and a convoy of cars filled with Klansmen was waiting on Highway 19 South to intercept them. It is believed they were pulled over in the House community on Highway 492 going toward Union, MS. The conspirators drove the three workers back toward Philadelphia. The caravan turned onto Road 515. At the intersection of Roads 515 and 284, they stopped. Here, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were murdered.



Roots of Struggle

PEOPLE OF NOTE

J. R. (BUD) COLE

Mr. Cole was one of several Mt. Zion United Methodist Church members who was beaten by the Klansmen on the night of June 16, 1964, the same night the church was burned. Mr. Cole suffered permanent nerve damage to his back, causing 75 percent loss of usage of his leg. For the balance of his life, Cole had to wear a brace. His wife, Beatrice Cole, prayed while the Klansmen were beating her husband. She prayed, "Father I stretch my hands to thee, no other help I know. If thou withdraw thyself from me, where else can I go." The Klansmen stopped beating him and spared his life. Mr. and Mrs. Cole are buried in the Mount Zion United Methodist Church Cemetery.



REVEREND CLINTON COLLIER

Reverend Clinton Collier, a dynamic Methodist Minister from the Laurel Hill Community, was deeply involved in the civil rights movement in Neshoba County. He taught social studies at Carver School near Philadelphia. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, he led the effort in school integration. He and his wife now live in Morton, MS.



LESLIE RUSH

On June 21, 1964, while investigating the church burning, Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner met with several people in the Longdale Community. Earnest Kirkland took the three men to the home of Georgia Rush. Her son, Leslie, was the only person home and the men talked with him briefly. They then went east on Highway 16, turned left on County Road 747, and headed back toward the Longdale community. Several days later, Rita Schwerner came by to inquire if the men appeared to be afraid on their last visit. Leslie said that they did not.



FLORENCE MARS

Florence Mars is a native Mississippian who has spent much of her life in Neshoba County. As a resident of Philadelphia, Mars was one of the few whites who spoke out against the murders and the racism behind them. Local whites boycotted her stockyard business because of her courageous stance. She captured what it was like to live in a closed society of Mississippi in her book, *Witness in Philadelphia*.



GEORGIA RUSH AND SON JOHN THOMAS RUSH, JR.

Georgia Rush and her family were members of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church. Mrs. Rush and her son, J.T., attended the church finance meeting on Tuesday evening, June 16, 1964. As Mrs. Rush and her son were leaving, armed Klansmen swarmed toward them wanting to know where the white men were. When J.T. explained that there had not been any whites at the church, the Klansmen were infuriated. "Shut up," one said. "Drive that damn truck into the ditch." Rush did as he was told. The Klansmen



then jerked the door open and hauled him from the cab, beating him in the face. Another man began cursing Mrs. Rush, and she was beaten about her head with a pistol as she cringed in the cab of the truck. Finally, Mrs. Rush and her son were allowed to leave. The next morning word spread that Mt. Zion Church had been burned to the ground. In 1964, Mrs. Georgia Rush and her son testified before a grand jury in connection with the murders. They affirmed that they had been beaten by whites while leaving Mt. Zion Methodist Church several nights before the three workers disappeared. John Thomas Rush, Jr., died August 28, 1966, and Georgia Rush died February 6, 1999. Both are buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery.



ARTHUR STANLEY DEARMAN

Arthur Stanley Dearman edited *The Neshoba Democrat* from 1966 to 2000. He spent those 34 years in an unrelenting pursuit of the truth, taking on bootleggers and corrupt public officials. Through the reporting in his newspaper, he enabled for the first time a frank, open discussion of the 1964 civil rights murders in Neshoba County nearly four decades later. Mr. Dearman never sought public approval. He had a gentle, but firm touch – the stick of a pin instead of a sledgehammer – with many of his editorials. He was a champion of the public schools and is credited with being a major force behind the smooth, peaceful integration in 1970. Mr. Dearman urged city and county officials to prepare for the 25th anniversary of the civil rights murders that led to an apology by native son and then-Secretary of State Dick Molyneux, a watershed in Mississippi civil rights history. In his last editorial before he sold the newspaper in August 2000, Mr. Dearman made an unequivocal call for prosecution of the 1964 murders.



JAMES (JIM) COLE

Jim Cole was a Sunday school teacher and steward at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and the brother of J.R. (Bud) Cole. He was at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church for the church meeting, but he was not beaten. He is buried in Mt. Zion United Methodist Cemetery.



CORNELIUS STEELE

On June 16, 1964, Cornelius Steele, with his wife Mable and their two children, were four of the ten people gathered at Mt. Zion Church for a regular finance meeting. The meeting ended about 9:00 that night. Cornelius and his family climbed into the cab of their truck and James Cole got in the back to hitch a ride home. Mr. Steele began to drive away from the church, followed by T.J. Miller in his car. They had driven only a few yards when a truck and a car came roaring down the dirt road and slid to a halt in front of them. Five white men scrambled out, carrying shotguns and pistols. "Where are the white men?" one demanded. Mr. Steele denied that any whites had been there that night. Apparently appeased, the Klansmen warned, "If you mess around with them, we can't help you." The Steele family, Jim Cole, and T.J. Miller were permitted to drive away. Others at the meeting were not so fortunate and were beaten. The church was burned later that night.



On June 21, 1964, Schwerner, Goodman and Chaney stopped to look at the ruins of Mt. Zion Church and to see Cornelius Steele and his wife. Mr. Steele told them what he had seen and heard before his lucky escape. He is buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery.

EARNEST KIRKLAND

Earnest Kirkland was born May 10, 1934. Mr. Kirkland was one of the last people to see the three civil rights workers alive. After their deaths,



he continued participating in the civil rights movement. He, along with Fred Black, Burline Kirkland Riley, and Lillie Jones, attended "The Poor People's Campaign in Washington." They were among the few people from Philadelphia/Neshoba County who also marched with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. when he visited here in 1966. Mr. Kirkland died October 21, 2001 and is buried in Mt. Zion Cemetery.

PETE TALLEY

Mr. Talley was the NAACP President in 1989 when the Neshoba County Board of Supervisors redistricted Neshoba County, making District 5 a predominantly African-American community, thus giving blacks more influence in county politics. In that same year, he was very instrumental in making the 25th anniversary observance a reality. He also helped to start the Boys and Girls Club in Philadelphia/Neshoba County.



T. J. MILLER

T. J. Miller was one of the ten people gathered at Mt. Zion Church for a finance meeting on June 16, 1964. After the meeting was dismissed, he followed the Steele family in his car. He also was stopped by the Klansmen and not permitted to depart until the Klansmen were assured there were no white people at the meeting. He later became a member of Mars Hill Church of God in Christ where his wife Pearl is a member. He is buried in Mars Hill Cemetery in the Poplar Springs Community off Highway 16 East and County Road 737.



JAMES YOUNG

Born and raised in Neshoba County, Mr. Young was the only black sixth grader at Neshoba Central Elementary School in 1967. He and several other children integrated Neshoba County schools under the "Freedom of Choice Plan." He went on to become a paramedic in the county-operated ambulance service. Mr. Young is the first black person to be elected to the Neshoba County Board of Supervisors and served as the 2004 president of the board and in 2009, he became the first black mayor elected.



EVA M. TISDALE



Eva M. Tisdale is a native of Clarke County. She moved to Philadelphia in 1965 to work in the COFO office. She graduated from Mississippi State University with a degree in social work. She is a social worker with the Leake County Department of Human Services in Carthage, MS. She continues to be active in civil rights work and is a life-long member of the NAACP.

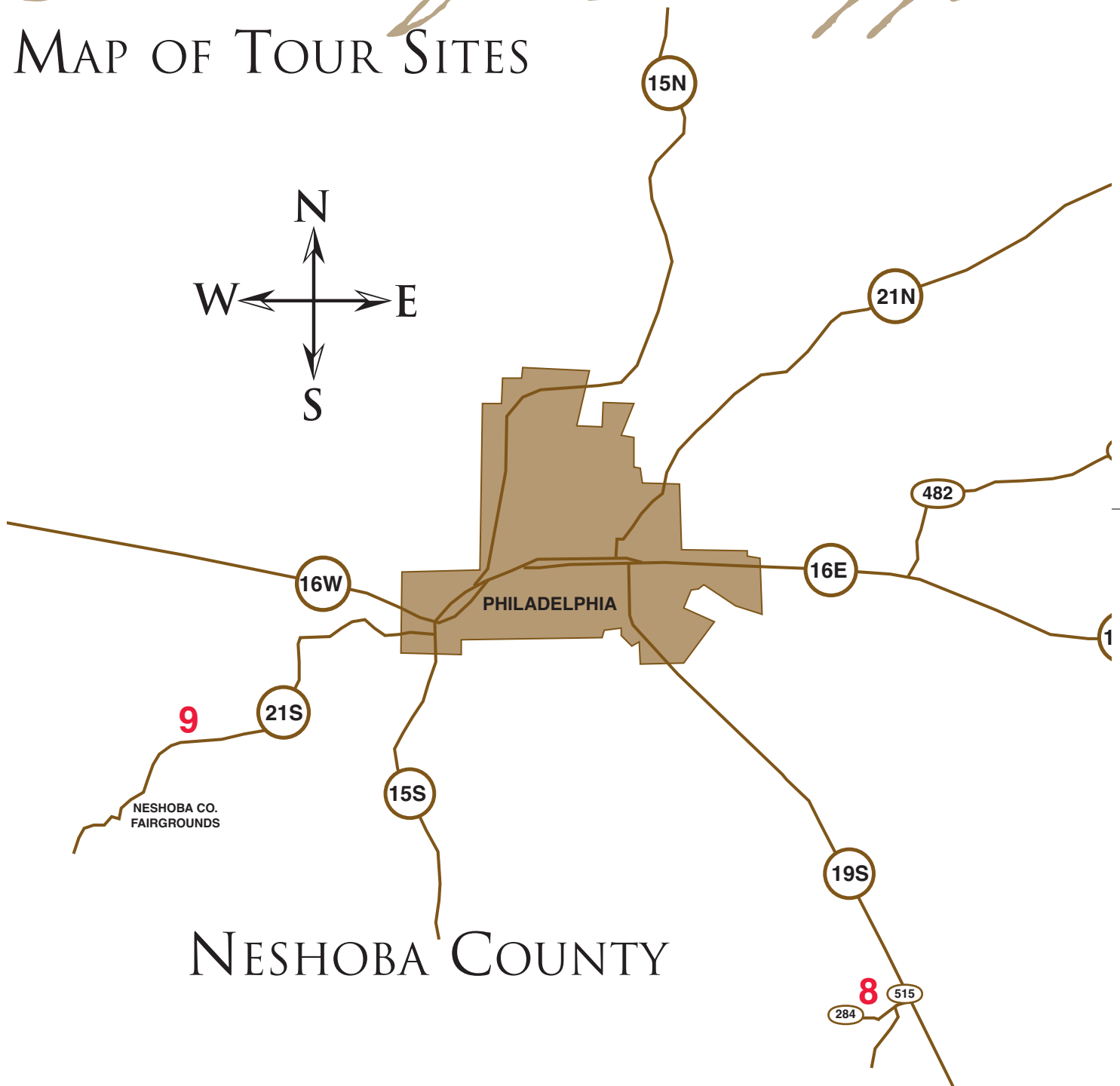
CHIEF KENNETH COLEMAN

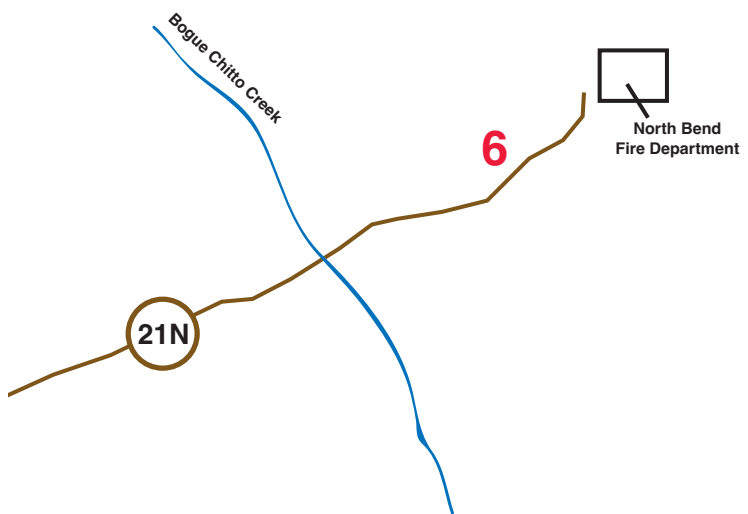
Mr. Coleman was born in Neshoba County and attended Booker T. Washington Elementary. He is a graduate of Philadelphia High School. In 1977, after college, he became a firefighter for the City of Philadelphia. He served as the Fire Chief from 1990 until his retirement in 2007.



Roots of Struggle

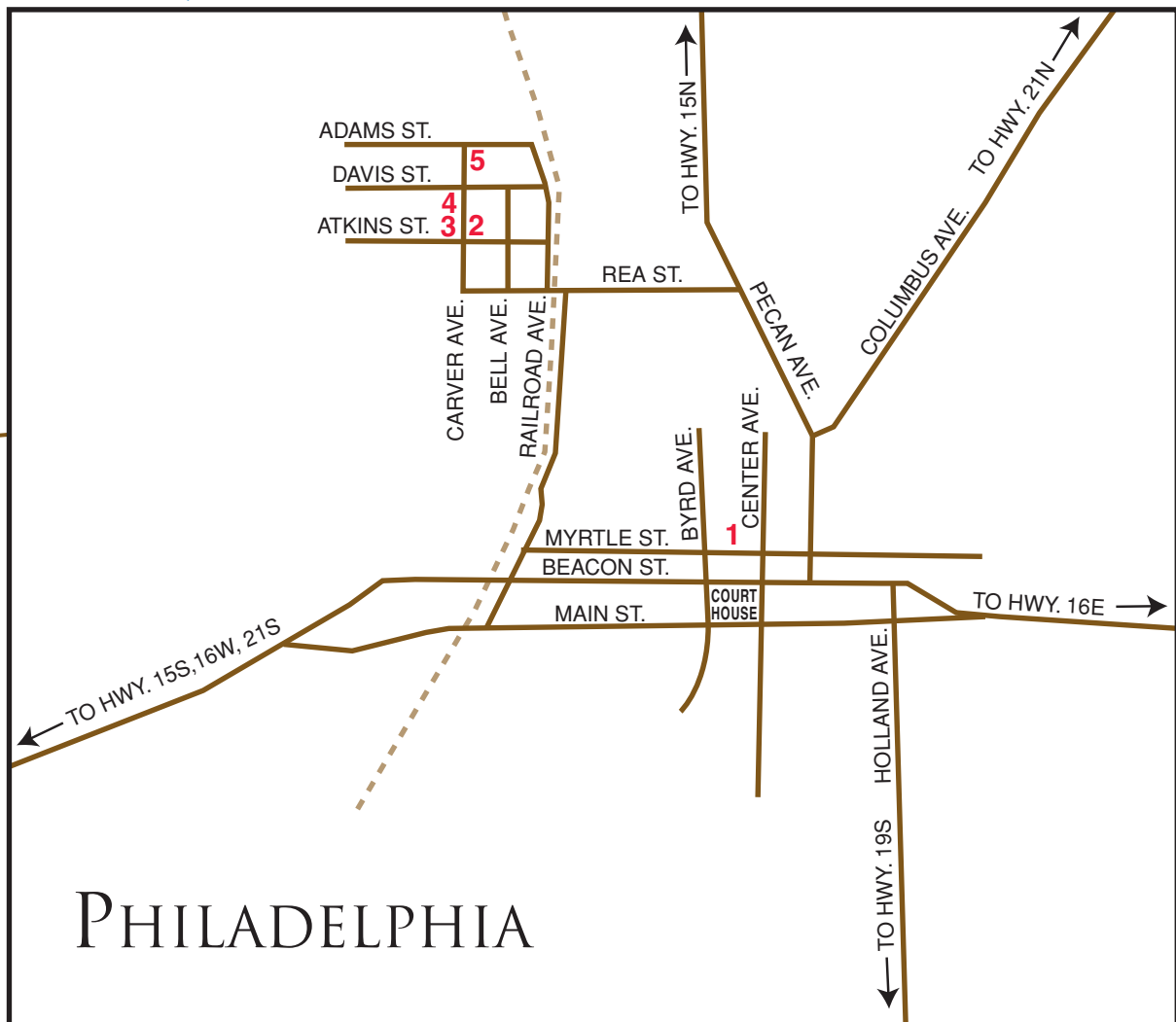
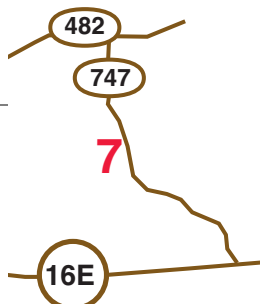
MAP OF TOUR SITES





TOUR SITES

- 1 Neshoba County Jail
- 2 Lillie Jones House
- 3 COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) Office
- 4 Charles Evers Funeral Home
- 5 Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church
- 6 Bogue Chitto Swamp
- 7 Mt. Zion United Methodist Church
- 8 Road 515 "Rock Cut Road" (Memorial Marker)
- 9 Earthen Dam Burial Site (This site is located on private property with **no trespassing.**)



Roots of Struggle

SCHOOLS

BOOKER T. WASHINGTON SCHOOL

The first school for black children in the city of Philadelphia was held in the Black Masonic Lodge just off Wilson Street. Mr. and Mrs. Ed Stephens organized the school with Mrs. Stephens being one of the first teachers. The school's name was Neshoba County School. The next location for the black school was on the east side of the railroad track, just off Rea Street, where the feed mill is now located. The three-room structure, which was built in the late 1920s, was financed by the Rosenwald Foundation. In 1917, Julius Rosenwald created the Rosenwald Foundation to help build schools for African-Americans in the decades before the end of segregation. He encouraged blacks and whites to work together to build the schools. His foundation helped to build more than 5,300 structures across the rural South, with the second highest number in Mississippi. Of the almost 600 structures in the state, only eleven remain.

Small additions to this school were made, including a home economics class and an industrial shop. The name of the school was changed in 1939 to



Neshoba County Training School. A new building was ready for occupancy for the 1948-49 term. Henry Hunter Watts was principal and the school's name was changed to Booker T. Washington.

In the early 1950s, a band program was established and named the Booker T. Washington Hornets. At this same time, an organized athletic program was begun. Due to integration, the school closed in 1970 and was vacant for several years. Today, it houses the Philadelphia Head Start, and the gym is used for parks and recreation activities. It is located at 234 Carver Avenue.

NESHOBA CENTRAL SCHOOL

The school is located at 1125 Golf Course Road, south of Highway 16 East. Neshoba Central School was built in 1963 to serve the white students who lived in the county. Students from the Stallo Community who first attended an all-white school, through the "Freedom of Choice Plan," were Earlean Sherrod Triplett, Mavis Moore Carter, Frank Jimmerson, Wesley Moore, and Thad Holmes. In January 1970, all black students living in the county were sent to Neshoba Central School from Carver School. Neshoba Central is the only county public school.



LONGDALE HIGH SCHOOL

Longdale High School, located near Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, was built in 1948. The people of Mt. Zion and the neighboring Poplar Springs Community borrowed \$7,000 from a white Philadelphia businessman and were granted \$5,000 from the state. A nearby home for the teachers was also built. The larger Mt. Zion and Poplar Springs landowners signed the note on the borrowed money. This school closed in 1963.

HEAD START SCHOOLS

Head Start is a pre-school program for disadvantaged children that grew out of the civil rights movement. It was funded by President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty program in the late 1960s. There were several Head Start centers located in black churches throughout Neshoba County. Now, all of the Head Start centers are consolidated at the Carver Avenue location.



GEORGE W. CARVER — HOPEWELL SCHOOL

The school was located on County Road 553. In 1928, the black farmers in the Hopewell Community decided to build a school that was the first black high school. The Rosenwald Foundation covered half the expense for construction. A local lumber dealer, R. H. Molpus, was to get the necessary building material to construct a modern building. Each of the black families planted one acre of cotton to be used to help pay for the building. The white county agent helped supervise the planting, fertilizing, gathering, and ginning so the cotton would all be treated the same. The



families organized a club to help carry out plans for this project. The project started with 32 acres of cotton and ended in 1935 with 29 acres. In 1929, a Jeanes teacher came to work there. Initially funded in 1908 by the Negro Rural School Fund (also referred to as the Anna T. Jeanes Fund/Foundation after its founder), the Jeanes Teachers Program was continued by the Southern Education Foundation until 1968. In the early years, the Jeanes teachers traveled to rural areas in the South with high populations of minorities and taught classes on industrial subjects such as sewing, canning, basketry, and woodworking. Over the years, the focus evolved to helping improve the educational programs through curriculum development and teacher training. The school became an eight-month school in 1936, financed by county revenue. As enrollment grew, the county decided to build a school in the Hopewell Community to house all the black students in Neshoba County. The new structure was completed in 1963 and named for the great black educator and scientist, Dr. George Washington Carver. After desegregation in 1970, students went to Neshoba Central School and Carver School was closed. Nemanco, a clothing factory, occupies the Carver School building today. It is located at 1028 County Road 553, Hopewell Road.

PHILADELPHIA HIGH SCHOOL

Philadelphia High School was an all-white school until Ajatha Morris Nichols, Carrie Lee Hoskins, and Irma Carter integrated it under the "Freedom of Choice Plan." The school was fully integrated by a Supreme Court order in January 1970. During that year, students from Booker T. Washington merged with Philadelphia High School. The high school is located at 248 Byrd Avenue.



FREEDOM SCHOOLS

As part of Freedom Summer, COFO helped create "Freedom Schools" in communities across the state. Freedom Schools were designed to provide traditional instruction in reading, writing, and arithmetic, along with an awareness of black history and politics. The students were encouraged to write essays about conditions in their neighborhoods, including racism. Some students look back on these classes now as eye openers, that allowed them to imagine an integrated world. Mt. Talley Missionary Baptist Church, in the Stallo Community, hosted Neshoba County's only Freedom School in 1964.



PLACES OF INTEREST

CARVER AVENUE

Carver Avenue was named after George Washington Carver, a prominent African-American. It is the “main street” of the predominantly African-American community in Philadelphia. Most black businesses were located on Carver Avenue during the civil rights movement and remain there today.

McCLELLAND'S CAFÉ

Mrs. Mamie McClelland established McClelland's Café, located at 245 Carver Avenue, in the late 40s. The business operated for a while from a small covered truck trailer and served as a community café. The café later moved to a building on Carver Avenue where it remained until a new building was completed in the early 1960s. Mrs. McClelland operated the family business with help from her daughters until her death in May 1990. After her death, her youngest daughter, Beverly Ann McClelland-Gill, began operating the business. She expanded operations and added a line of grocery items, thus beginning McClelland's Café and Groceries.



HENRY LATIMER'S GROCERY

Mr. Henry Latimer was the first black person to own and operate a grocery store and service station, pictured below, on Northwest Street in Philadelphia. He operated this business for more than twenty years. He also owned and operated a restaurant called The Eatery on Northwest Street for several years. Mr. Latimer was the second black electrician in



Philadelphia, as well as a licensed plumber and barber. He was known as the “fix-it man”.

Mr. Latimer provided the building for the first Head Start school, located on Northwest Street, called Exhibit Hall. Until the four Head Start schools were funded, he provided groceries for the students and purchased the first school bus for the Head Start.

He was the overseer of Donald Rest Cemetery for more than twenty years and had no problem in locating a burial plot.

MOORE'S CAFÉ

In the summer of 1969, Mr. Lawrence Payne built Moore's Café. It was originally built as a florist shop and later became Moore's Café. The café operated by Mr. Ervin Moore was located on Atkins Street.



STALLO COMMUNITY

The Stallo Community is located in the northern part of Neshoba County. In the 1960s, concerned citizens in their community decided to organize their own civil rights organization and met on a monthly basis, or as often as needed.

Many of the old pioneers of the Stallo Community worked very hard during the Civil Rights Movement. They included the late “Brother” Joe Lyons, who served as president of the NAACP for several years and Leddrew Moore, who also served as NAACP president. Other pioneers were Alvin Burnside, Annie Bell Kelly, Lenora Welch, Solomon Jimerson, Mary Batts, Betty Beamon and many more. These activists marched in Philadelphia, as well as Washington, D.C., carrying picket signs to let their opponents know that blacks were displeased and wanted change in Neshoba County.

COLES AND JONES CLEANERS

Calloway Cole owned the building located on Beacon Street which was the first black dry cleaners in downtown Philadelphia. Curtis “Threefoot” Cole, Calloway Cole's brother, operated the dry cleaners. Mr. Calloway Cole also owned the building that housed the former COFO office.

BUSY BEE CAFÉ

The Busy Bee Café and Barber Shop, located at 414 Church Avenue and owned by Mr. & Mrs. Millard Kirkland, were the first black-owned businesses in downtown Philadelphia. Mr. Kirkland operated the barbershop while Mrs. Kirkland served food to black workers in the area. They were also instrumental in introducing soul music to that area. Marty Stuart, Nashville musician and former resident of Philadelphia, frequently sat in on jam sessions at the Busy Bee.



DEWEESE LUMBER COMPANY

The DeWeese Sawmill and Mercantile Store, owned by A. B. DeWeese, came to Philadelphia with the railroad in 1905. DeWeese Lumber Company was one of the largest employers of African-Americans in the county. In 1966, DeWeese Lumber Company was sold to Weyerhaeuser Company.

DEEMER LUMBER COMPANY

At Deemer Lumber Company, the work force was evenly divided between blacks and whites. Because of working side by side, many good relationships grew between the races.

MOLPUS LUMBER COMPANY

Richard Hezekiah Molpus started the Moplus Lumber Company in 1905. Richard Henderson Molpus operated the company until it was sold to Louisiana-Pacific in 1984. It provided jobs to large portions of the African-American community in Philadelphia.

Roots of Struggle

TIMES OF CHANGE

1967

FREEDOM OF CHOICE IN THE SCHOOLS

The Freedom of Choice plan for achieving school desegregation implied an actual freedom of choice. But in reality, in much of the South, most blacks did not have the option to choose where their children were educated. In Mississippi between 1964 and 1969, black parents who chose white schools for their children were regularly intimidated, and the handful of black students who did enter white schools under the Freedom of Choice plan often faced the wrath of unsympathetic white teachers and students. Sadly, Freedom of Choice proved essentially meaningless as a mechanism for ending school segregation.

1970

DESEGREGATION OF SCHOOLS

The desegregation orders of 1954's *Brown vs. the Board of Education* case were not followed and schools in the South were desegregating slowly if at all. After 16 years of failed desegregation tactics and U.S. Supreme Court orders to dismantle Mississippi's dual school system, federal intervention, and a steady stream of legal action by black parents finally toppled the state's 95-year-old "separate but equal" school system. In the 1969 case of *Alexander v. Holmes County Board of Education*, the Supreme Court overturned a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit, which would have again postponed the date when 33 Mississippi school districts would be required to implement desegregation plans. The Court declared it to be the obligation of all districts to eliminate dual school systems immediately.

1989

AN APOLOGY

At the 25th anniversary remembrance ceremony of slain civil rights workers James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, then-Secretary of State Dick Molpus, who grew up in Philadelphia, made a historic apology to their families at Mt. Zion United Methodist Church. "We deeply regret what happened here 25 years ago," Molpus said. "We wish we could undo it. We are profoundly sorry that they are gone. We wish we could bring them back. Every decent person in Philadelphia and Neshoba County and Mississippi feels that way." That same year, journalist Stanley Dearman published an interview with Carolyn Goodman, mother of Andy Goodman. Many citizens credit that interview with educating them about the tremendous loss experienced by the victims' families.

2004

THE PHILADELPHIA COALITION

Forty years after the murders, the killers of the civil rights workers were still at large. In response, a group of Neshoba County citizens formed the multiracial Philadelphia Coalition to rally for a call for justice in the workers' case. The Coalition issued a statement calling on the state of Mississippi to request the release of additional FBI evidence. In a public ceremony attended by the Mississippi governor, four congressmen and 1,500 citizens, the Coalition publicly made it known that they would not rest until justice was served. "The state of Mississippi has never brought criminal indictments against anyone for these murders—an act of omission of historic significance. There is, for good and obvious reasons, no statute of limitations on murder. This principle of law holds that anyone who takes the life of another person for any reason not provided by law is never immune from prosecution, no matter how remote in time," reads an excerpt from the Coalition's statement.

2005

CONVICTION OF EDGAR RAY KILLEN

Forty-one years to the day after the civil rights workers' murders, a grand jury of nine whites and three blacks found former Klansman Edgar Ray Killen, then 80 years old, guilty on three counts of manslaughter. After the verdict was announced, Neshoba County District Attorney Mark Duncan said "Today we've shown the rest of the world the true character of the people of Neshoba County." Killen appealed the verdict, but his punishment of three times 20 years in prison was upheld by the Mississippi Supreme Court in 2007.

2006

A HIGHWAY MEMORIAL

In 2006 state lawmakers named a 23-mile portion of Mississippi Highway 19, where the civil rights workers were killed, the "Chaney-Goodman-Schwerner Memorial Highway." The same bill also renamed part of U-S 49 East in Leflore and Tallahatchie counties the "Emmett Till Memorial Highway." Till was a black 14-year-old beaten to death in 1955, supposedly for whistling at a white woman.

2006

A BREAKTHROUGH FOR CIVIL RIGHTS EDUCATION

In 2006, Mississippi legislators passed Senate Bill 2718, which mandates teaching civil rights and human rights history in all Mississippi K-12 classrooms. The bill was cosponsored by legislators from Neshoba County. The Philadelphia Coalition began an intensive curriculum development initiative in conjunction with local schools to ensure that future students were taught the lessons of the past.

2009

45 YEARS LATER: GONE, BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

On June 21, 2009, the forty-fifth anniversary of the murders, the Philadelphia Coalition dedicated an historic marker near the Rock Cut Road site where the murders took place. Approved by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, the marker denotes an additional site in the Neshoba County civil rights driving tour.



THE PHILADELPHIA COALITION

RECOMMENDED READING LIST

- Howard Ball. *Justice in Mississippi: United States v. Price and the Struggle for Civil Rights*
- Seth Cagin and Philip Dray. *We Are Not Afraid: The Story of Goodman, Schwerner, and Chaney and the Civil Rights Campaign for Mississippi*
- Harvey Fireside. *The Mississippi Burning Civil Rights Murder Conspiracy Trial: A Headline Court Case*
- William Bradford Huie. *Three Lives for Mississippi*
- Florence Mars. *Witness in Philadelphia*
- Elizabeth Martinez. *Letters from Mississippi*
- Willie Morris. *The Courting of Marcus Dupree*
- Don Whitehead. *Attack On Terror: The FBI Against the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi*
- Harry N. Maclean. *The Past is Never Dead, The Trial of James Ford Seale and Mississippi Struggle for Redemption*



REWARDS OF SACRIFICE

On June 21, 1964, three young civil rights workers were murdered in Neshoba County. The disappearances of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner launched a massive search by the FBI and brought increased attention to violence against civil rights activists in the state of Mississippi. Despite the violence and murders prior to this, the notoriety of this case, where two of the three men were white, caught the attention of the nation. The failure of the state of Mississippi to hold their murderers accountable cast a shadow for decades over Neshoba County and the State for a generation.

The civil rights workers were part of a broader national movement that hoped to begin a voter registration drive in the area. A coalition of civil rights organizations known as COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) organized a project with large numbers of student volunteers who would attempt to register black voters and conduct "freedom schools" offering black history and arts to children throughout the state.

Chaney, 21, a plasterer, had grown up in Meridian in nearby Lauderdale County, and had been interested in civil rights work even as a young student. Schwerner, 24, a New Yorker, had come to Meridian to set up the COFO office the prior January. Chaney volunteered at the Meridian office, and the two young men began to make visits to Neshoba County searching for residents to sponsor voter registration drives and freedom schools. After contacting members of Mt. Zion United Methodist Church and Mt. Nebo Missionary Baptist Church, as well as other individuals, Chaney and Schwerner made plans for a COFO project in the area.

Tensions mounted as Mississippi's segregationist newspapers proclaimed a "pending invasion" of civil rights workers. The state was a powder keg, as the Ku Klux Klan increasingly made its presence known. Fears heightened among both black and whites. In April 1964, the Klan burned a dozen crosses in Neshoba County. The *Neshoba Democrat*, although staunchly segregationist, condemned the cross burnings and the coercion and intimidation employed by the Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan and other violent groups had become more active with the increasing civil rights activity, and in response to the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation. In addition to the Klan's resistance of the civil rights movement, the State of Mississippi continued to monitor activists through the Sovereignty Commission, and in conjunction with the Citizens Councils which it funded, used economic intimidation and threats to attempt to suppress black demands for civil rights and to contain the African American population in subservience.

In mid-June, Chaney and Schwerner traveled to Oxford, Ohio, to participate in the Freedom Summer volunteers training session being held there. While they were away, on June 16, Klansmen looking for them assaulted members of Mt. Zion. Later in the evening, the church was burned to the ground. Having been alerted of the attack, Chaney and Schwerner, joined by new volunteer Andrew Goodman, 20, immediately drove back to Mississippi to meet with the church members and investigate and document the violence.

On Sunday afternoon, June 21, Father's Day, the three young men drove to Philadelphia from Meridian and visited members of Mt. Zion. After leaving Mt. Zion Church, they were pulled over by a sheriff's deputy while within the city limits of Philadelphia. Chaney was arrested and charged with speeding and Schwerner was held on suspicion of arson. Schwerner, whom the Klan had determined to execute, was recognized by the deputy, who then reported his capture to other Klan members. Goodman, who was with them, was held in the Philadelphia jail along with the other two men.

About 10:30 pm, the three workers were released and ordered to leave town immediately. Their presence on the road was reported by a state highway patrol officer, who at the last minute withdrew from the murderous conspiracy. The three civil rights workers were pursued and overtaken by a gang of Klansmen that included law enforcement. The three men were pulled from their vehicle and driven to a lonely gravel road where they were murdered. By the next day, news

of their disappearance was known even in the White House. While many Mississippians, including the governor and one of the senators denounced the disappearance as a hoax to get attention for Freedom Summer, President Johnson sent national guardsmen and sailors from the nearby Meridian Naval Air Station to scour the county in search of the three workers.

On June 23, the station wagon the young men had been driving was found burned in the Bogue Chito swamp. In Oxford, Ohio, the young COFO volunteers had been informed that three of their colleagues were missing and presumed dead. They had to choose whether or not to continue the project, knowing their safety, even their lives, were at risk. As was the understanding of many in the civil rights movement, however, the brave young people perceived that to give in to violence would end the Movement. As the search continued, a thousand young people poured into the state, conducting voter registration drives and setting up freedom schools. On August 4, forty-four days after their disappearance, the bodies of the three men were found buried in a newly-constructed dam on a privately owned farm about seven miles south of Philadelphia. Their murders were part of a plot hatched by the Lauderdale County unit of the Ku Klux Klan and carried out with the members of the Neshoba County unit. Such groups, with support from the State Sovereignty Commission, continued to commit violence upon civil rights workers and local people throughout the summer.

By the end of the summer, despite the repeated incidents of assaults and the burnings of dozens of other black churches, the Summer Project had created an impact. Volunteers along with local people registered black voters and initiated a challenge to the all-white Democratic Party. Black citizens began running for elective office. Over the years, public schools in Neshoba County quietly integrated and the murders slipped into the realm of public secret, something well-known but never discussed. On the twenty-fifth anniversaries of the murders, a multiracial group issued an apology to the families of the victims but it would take another fifteen years for a measure of justice to be secured.

In 2004, in the fortieth anniversary of the murders, a multiracial group of citizens from the area formed the Philadelphia Coalition to recognize the tragedy of the murders, to resolve the miscarriage of justice in the case and to seek redemption for Neshoba County. On June 21, 2004, this group issued a public call for justice in a ceremony attended by family members of the civil rights workers, the governor, and four congressmen, as well as 1500 guests. In addition, the group met with local and state officials to push for justice in the case. Within seven months, the state attorney general issued the first murder charges in the case and on the forty-first anniversary of the murders, a local jury of Neshoba citizens found Klansman Edgar Ray Killen guilty of three counts of manslaughter.

The Coalition understands that a trial was merely a first step toward community renewal. Since 2005, it has supported local and state efforts to teach civil rights history and helped lobby for SB2718, which was signed into law in 2006 and mandates teaching civil and human rights in Mississippi classrooms. In addition, the group has worked to memorialize the three men through a children's civil rights collection at the local library, named in honor of local activists Clinton Collier and Florence Mars, and to secure state designation of Highway 19 South as Chaney, Goodman, Schwerner Memorial Highway. In 2009, the forty-fifth anniversary of the murders, the Coalition installed a state historic marker on Highway 19 near Rock Cut Road, the site of the murders.

Neshoba County has discovered that racism affects each person in the community. The cure is found not only by individuals but must also be manifested in public policies that create equity and justice for all. Racism is not found in only one community but is unfortunately still part of all American history and culture. Today, Neshoba County has begun to heal. The sacrifices of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner, and all of the other Mississippi victims of violence and intimidation over the years, have been part of the effort to ensure a better future for Neshoba County, Mississippi, and the nation.