Neshoba County
African-American Heritage
Driving Tour
Philadelphia, MS

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. Neshoba 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 1950’s, 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, Miss., 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 on 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 get people registered 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 countywide 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.

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 beginning 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 local group placed a historical marker at the church to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the murders. There is also a monument 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. 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.

* Neshoba Democrat
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 for 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 editors. 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 Molpus, 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 Church 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, Burling 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 is serving as the 2003-04 president of the board.

**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 Leak County Department of Human Services in Carthage, MS. She continues to be active in civil rights work and is a lifelong 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 has served as the Fire Chief since 1990, the first black to do so.
Roots of Struggle

Map of Tour Sites

Neshoba County
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”
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 1948-1949 term. Mr. 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.

**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 Washington Carver — Hopewell**
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 1956, 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.

**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.

**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 early 40’s. 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 plot where a person was buried. He was responsible for the name “Donald Rest” being placed on the east side of the cemetery.

**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 Jimmerson, Mary Batts, Betty Beamon and many more. These activists marched in Philadelphia, as well as Washington DC, 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 Philadelphia. Mr. Kirkland operated the barbershop while Mrs. Kirkland served soul food to black workers in the area. They were also known for the introduction of soul music to downtown. Marty Stuart, the Nashville music star and former resident of Philadelphia, frequently visited the café to join the musicians.

**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 H. Molpus started the Molpus 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.
Rewards of Sacrifice

People of Note
These are a few of the next generation of African-American leaders from Philadelphia...

Shalana Donald Brown
Shalana is a 1996 special honors graduate of Philadelphia High School, wife of Jeredith D. Brown and the daughter of Lenetta and Jimmy McKenzie & Willie James Donald. In May 2000, she graduated from Tougaloo College with a B.S. degree in Chemistry. In May 2003, Mrs. Brown graduated from the University of Alabama in Huntsville with a M.S.E. degree in Chemical Engineering. Currently, Brown is a Ph.D. candidate at UAH, working toward her doctoral degree in civil engineering with a major in environmental engineering.

Marcus Dupree
Marcus was born in Neshoba County in 1964. While attending Philadelphia High School, 1978-81, he rushed for 5,284 yards. Dupree was a highly-recruited running back in 1982. He chose to play for the University of Oklahoma where he totaled 955 yards in his first season and was named the Fiesta Bowl Most Valuable Player. He tallied 239 yards in that game despite missing almost two quarters with a pulled hamstring. He then transferred to the University of Southern Mississippi. At the age of 19, he joined the New Orleans Breakers of the USFL. With knee injuries in 1985-86, he persevered and earned a place with the Los Angeles Rams in 1990-91. Injuries ended his career at the age of 27. Marcus has scouted for the Edmonton Eskimos and been a general manager of the Bossier City Battle Wings, an Arena 2 League team in Louisiana. He is presently a first-year college scout with the Washington Redskins.

Timothy D. Edwards
Timothy was born in August 1968. He became an accomplished athlete. At age 11, he was 1st Place in the Ford Neshoba County Punt, Pass & Kick Championship. He was All-District 4 and All-Conference in 1985 while at Neshoba Central High School, where he graduated in 1986. While at Delta State University on full scholarship, he was a two-time First Team All-Gulf South Conference and was named All-American by the Football Gazette (1989 & 1990) and by the Associated Press Third Team (1990). He played with the New England Patriots for three seasons and then with the Canadian Football League in 1995 for the Saskatchewan Rough Riders. He coached 4 years at Kentucky State University, served as defensive coordinator with the Carolina Rhinos in 2002 and defensive line coach at Pearl River Community College in 2003. He is presently in his second season as linebacker coach at Hampton University in Hampton, Virginia.

Derrick Hoskins
Derrick was born on November 16, 1970 to Jonnie and Iris Hoskins. He graduated from Neshoba Central High School in 1988 as an outstanding wide receiver and defensive back. He was president of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes; was named to the Clarion-Ledger and Columbus Dispatch Top 40 list; and was chosen by the University of Southern Mississippi head coach Jeff Bower as the most improved defensive player during spring workouts in 1990. He played in the NFL for the Oakland Raiders.

Pearl Osby
Pearl graduated from Longdale High School. She is the daughter of the late E.C. Calloway and Adelaide Alexander Calloway Hudson of Philadelphia. She is the wife of Reverend James Osby and the mother of two children. She now resides in Meridian, MS. Mrs. Osby received her Ph.D. in educational leadership (school administration) with a minor in computer education and reading from Mississippi State University in Starkville. She attended Piney Woods Junior College and received her B.S. degree from Jackson State University. She received her master’s degree from the University of Texas and an educational specialist degree from Mississippi State University. She has taught in Arkansas, Texas, and Mississippi, as well as in Spain.

Tyrone Rush
Tyrone was born in Neshoba County on February 5, 1971 to Rita Faye Rush in the Longdale Community. He played football while attending the University of North Alabama, and later played with the Washington Redskins (1993-95), in the Canadian League (1996-97), and with the European League (1997-02). In that league, he set records of 3,200 yards rushing with 42 touchdowns. He is presently a social worker for Group Home BSW, a home for abandoned children in Covina, California.

Donald Culberson
Donald is the son of Mrs. Georgia Culberson and the late Mr. Jessie Culberson. He is a graduate of Neshoba Central High School and a former member of the East Central Community College baseball team. Culberson played for the Chicago White Sox, Milwaukee Brewers, and the Canadian League. He lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.
**Pashen LaKenya Thompson Autry**

Pashen was born January 16, 1975, in Neshoba County. Born into a large family who loved sports, she discovered a passion for playing basketball. Although she loved sports, she was taught by her mother that having an education was the key to success. Thompson graduated from Philadelphia High School in 1993, where she earned many honors. She was the first and only female player to have her jersey (#22) retired at Philadelphia High School. Pashen was the first female to be awarded a full basketball scholarship to the University of Tennessee. She was honored by the City of Philadelphia with a Pashen Thompson Day and given a key to the city. While a student athlete at Tennessee, she won many honors. She graduated with a B.S. in Human Services in 1997. Presently, she is a case manager at Weems Mental Health Center in Philadelphia, where she enjoys helping others. Thompson is also pursuing a second B.S. in Social Work at Mississippi State University in Meridian.

**Ta’Shia R. Shannon**

Ta’Shia, the daughter of Jimmy and Sabyna Shannon, attended Philadelphia High School and graduated in 1996 with special honors. She received a Collins Scholarship for Political Science at Mississippi State University. In 1999, she graduated Summa Cum Laude from Mississippi State University with a B.A. degree in Political Science. She was the recipient of the Evidence and Environmental Law Award. She graduated from the University of Mississippi School of Law in May 2003 and was admitted to the Mississippi Bar in September 2003. She is employed as an associate at the Edward A. Williams Law Firm and practices personal injury law in the areas of medical malpractice and pharmaceutical litigation.

**Monica A. Peeler**

Monica, the daughter of Mrs. Mamie Peeler and the late O.V. Peeler, was awarded the Doctorate of Medicine Degree from the University of South Alabama College of Medicine. She is a 1999 Magna Cum Laude graduate of Tougaloo College in Jackson with a B.S. Degree in biology. Dr. Peeler will begin her residency in Internal Medicine at the University of Tennessee Hospital in June 2004. She is a 1995 graduate of Neshoba Central High School.

**Fred McAfee**

Fred, son of Mattie R. McAfee and the late Gaddis “Tippy” McAfee, was a 1986 honor graduate of Philadelphia High School. He attended Mississippi College on a football scholarship from 1987-91 and graduated with a B.S. in Mass Communication. While at MC, Fred was an outstanding scholar and athlete. An honor graduate, he was a member of Who’s Who of American Colleges and Universities, a member of the Kodak All American First Team, the AP American First Team, Clarion Ledger Player of the Year 1990, and a finalist for the Harlon Hill Trophy. McAfee began his career in 1991 in professional football with the New Orleans Saints. He also played for the Pittsburgh Steelers, the Arizona Cardinals, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers and the Kansas City Chiefs. Fred was named to the Pro-Bowl. However, Fred McAfee’s most important contribution has been as a role model for the youth during his career. He has truly been an outstanding ambassador for Philadelphia and Neshoba County.

**Marion P. Boler**

Marion is a native of Neshoba County and a graduate of Neshoba Central High School. She served as a special education teacher from 1977-96 and now serves as special programs director for the Neshoba County School system. She will complete a Ph.D. in educational leadership from Mississippi State University in August 2004.

**Jerremey Willis**

Jerremey graduated from Philadelphia High School in 1990. In 1996, he received a B.S. in chemistry from Tougaloo College. He completed his doctorate in organic chemistry from the University of Florida in 2002. Jerremey is married and has two children. He is a researcher at Emory University.

**Recommended Reading List**


Seth Cadin 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.*


Elizabeth Martinez. *Letters from Mississippi.*


Don Whitehead. *Attack On Terror: The FBI Against the Ku Klux Klan in Mississippi.*

Carter G. Woodson. *The Mis-Educating of the Negro.*
Rewards of Sacrifice

On June 21, 1964, three young civil rights workers were murdered in Neshoba County. The trio had come here to investigate the burning of the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church in the Longdale Community off Highway 16 East. The night the church was burned, parishioners were beaten, some severely. The murders of Michael Schwerner, 24, James Chaney, 21, and Andrew Goodman, 20, were part of a plot hatched by the Lauderdale County unit of the Ku Klux Klan and carried out with members of the Neshoba County unit. The civil rights workers were part of a broader national movement that hoped to begin a voter registration drive in the area, part of the Mississippi Summer Project, that became known as Freedom Summer. A coalition of civil rights organizations known as COFO (Council of Federated Organizations) conceived of a project in the state with massive numbers of student volunteers who would converge on the state to register black voters and to conduct "free schools," which would offer curriculum of black history and arts to children throughout the state.

Chaney, a plasterer, had grown up in Meridian in nearby Lauderdale County, and even as a young student had been interested in civil rights work. Schwerner, a Jewish New Yorker, came south to Meridian to set up the COFO office because he believed he could help prevent the spread of hate that had resulted in the Holocaust, an event that had taken the lives of his family members. 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 were mounting that summer as some of Mississippi's segregationist newspapers propagated the idea of a "pending invasion" of civil rights workers. The state was a powder keg, as the recently-reformed Ku Klux Klan increasingly made its presence known, and fears were heightened among both blacks and whites. In April 1964, the Klan burned about a dozen crosses in Neshoba County. The Neshoba Democrat condemned the cross burnings and the coercion and intimidation employed by the Klan.

The Ku Klux Klan and other groups had become more active in response to increasing civil rights activity, especially since the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation. In addition to the Klan's resistance, the state of Mississippi was continuing to monitor activists through the Sovereignty Commission, which worked in conjunction with the White Citizens Council, to use economic intimidation and threats to attempt to keep blacks in subservient positions. Undertaking such struggles for equality was dangerous and courageous work. The work was so bold that the Klan vowed to stop it, even putting Schwerner on a hit list and giving him a code name "Goatee."

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 Chaney and Schwerner assaulted members of Mt. Zion. Later in the evening, they burned the church to the ground. Having been alerted of the attack, Chaney and Schwerner, joined by new volunteer Goodman, immediately drove south to investigate and offer solace to the church members.

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 in the city limits of Philadelphia. Chaney was arrested and charged with speeding, and Schwerner and Goodman were held on suspicion of burning Mt. Zion United Methodist Church.

What transpired afterwards would change the county, the state, and the nation itself. About 10:30 p.m., the three workers were released and ordered to leave town immediately. On the road to Meridian, they were pursued and overtaken by a gang of white men that included law enforcement officials. When the gang stopped them, the three men were pulled from their vehicle and driven to a lonely gravel road off the highway where they were murdered. By the next day, news of their disappearance was known even in the White House. While many white Mississippians denounced the disappearance as a hoax to get attention for Freedom Summer, President Johnson sent in national guardsmen and sailors from the nearby Meridian navy base 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. By then, if it hadn't seemed clear before, it was now obvious that the three young men had encountered foul play. Back 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 had been the tradition of many in the civil rights movement, however, the brave young people understood that to give in to violence would end the movement. As the search for their fellow volunteers 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 James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner were found buried in a newly-constructed earthen dam on a privately owned farm about seven miles south of Philadelphia.

By the end of the summer, despite assaults and the burnings of dozens of other churches in the state, the Summer Project had created an impact. Volunteers registered more black voters and initiated a challenge to the all-white Democratic Party that forever changed the national political landscape. Within two years, 100,000 new black voters registered in the state and began running for elective office.

Neshoba County discovered that the cancer of racism infects each person it touches. The cure for this epidemic is found only in the hearts of individuals. Although the ravages of this illness found a face in this community, racism is also part of the breadth and depth of all American history and culture. Today, Neshoba County has begun to heal. The sacrifices of the lives of James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner helped ensure a better future for Neshoba County, Mississippi, and the nation.