

The OCBI Tipping Point

“The tipping point is that magic moment when an idea, trend, or social behavior crosses a threshold, tips, and spreads like wildfire.”

Malcolm Gladwell



Volume 1, Issue 3

August 23, 2007

What is ICSAA?

ICSAA stands for the Iowa Commission on the Status of African Americans

SNCC?

Who is Ella Baker? And what is the SCLC?

Major Endorsement!

We have just received a major endorsement from Mr. Charles McDew, one of the principal architects in the founding of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) of 1960. I met Mr. McDew in Fort Dodge at a banquet celebration there organized by ICSAA Commissioner Charles Clayton. In conversation with McDew after my presentation, McDew said he believes that the OCBI is a very good strategy to organize Black Iowans around critical issues, and that he wishes us well. We want to bring Mr. McDew to Des Moines in the next several months.

What is “SNCC”?

”**Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee** (or **SNCC**, pronounced "snick") was one of the principal organizations of the [American Civil Rights Movement](#) in the 1960s. It emerged in April of 1960 from student meetings led by [Ella Baker](#) held at [Shaw University](#) in [Raleigh, North Carolina](#).

Ella Baker had been the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#) director before helping form SNCC, but this did not mean SNCC was a branch of SCLC. Instead of being closely tied to SCLC or other groups such as the [NAACP](#) as a youth division, SNCC sought to stand on its own. Two hundred black students were present at the first meeting, including Stokely Carmichael from Howard University. He would later head SNCC’s militant branch after the group split in two in the late 1960s. SNCC members were referred to as “shock troops of the revolution.” [1]

What were the Freedom Rides?

SNCC played a leading role in the [Freedom Rides](#), the [1963 March on Washington](#), Mississippi [Freedom Summer](#) and the [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party](#) over the next few years. In the later part of the 1960s, led by fiery leaders such as [Stokely Carmichael](#), SNCC focused on [Black Power](#), and then fighting against the [Vietnam War](#). In 1969, SNCC officially changed its name to the **Student National Coordinating Committee** to reflect the broadening of its strategies. It passed out of existence in the 1970s.

Origins in the Sit-In Movement

SNCC began with an \$800 grant from the [Southern Christian Leadership Conference](#). It began by [organizing sit-ins](#) at [segregated](#) lunch counters to protest the pervasiveness of [Jim Crow](#) and other forms of racism. One of its earliest members was J. Charles Jones, who organized 200 students to participate in sit-ins at department stores throughout Charlotte, North Carolina.

March on Washington

SNCC played a signal role in the 1963 [March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom](#). While many speakers applauded the Kennedy Administration for the efforts it had made toward obtaining new, more effective civil rights legislation protecting the right to vote and outlawing segregation, John Lewis took the Administration to task for how little it had done to protect Southern blacks and civil rights workers under attack in the [Deep South](#). While he toned down his comments under pressure from others in the movement, his words still stung:

"We march today for jobs and freedom, but we have nothing to be proud of, for hundreds and thousands of our brothers are not here--for they have no money for their transportation, for they are receiving starvation wages...or no wages at all. In good conscience, we cannot support the administration's civil rights bill.

This bill will not protect young children and old women from police dogs and fire hoses when engaging in peaceful demonstrations. This bill will not protect the citizens of [Danville, Virginia](#) who must live in constant fear in a police state. This bill will not protect the hundreds of people who have been arrested on trumped-up charges like those in [Americus, Georgia](#), where four young men are in jail, facing a death penalty, for engaging in peaceful protest.

I want to know, which side is the federal government on? The revolution is a serious one. Mr. Kennedy is trying to take the revolution out of the streets and put it in the courts. Listen Mr. Kennedy, the black masses are on the march for jobs and for freedom, and we must say to the politicians that there won't be a 'cooling-off period.'"

Voting rights struggles

SNCC expanded its activities in the next few years to other forms of organizing. Later in 1963 SNCC conducted the Freedom Ballot, a mock election in which black Mississippians came out to show their willingness to vote--a right they had been denied, despite the provisions of the [Fifteenth Amendment](#), due to a combination of state laws, economic reprisals and violence by white authorities and private citizens.

SNCC followed up on the Freedom Ballot with the Mississippi Summer Project, also known as Freedom Summer, which focused on voter registration. SNCC organized black Mississippians to register to vote, almost always without success, as white authorities either rejected their applications on any pretexts available or, failing that, simply refused to accept their applications.

What did the 15th Amendment do?

Who are these men: James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, and Michael Schwerner?

Mississippi Summer got national attention when three civil rights workers involved in the project, [James Chaney](#), [Andrew Goodman](#) and [Michael Schwerner](#), disappeared after having been released from police custody. Their bodies were eventually found after a reluctant [J. Edgar Hoover](#) directed the [FBI](#) to find them; in the process it also found corpses of several other missing black Mississippians, whose disappearances had not attracted any public attention.

SNCC also established Freedom Schools to teach children to read and to educate them to stand up for their rights. As in the struggle to desegregate public accommodations led by [Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) in [Birmingham, Alabama](#) the year before, the bolder attitudes of children brought into the movement helped shake their parents out of the fear that had paralyzed many of them.

The goal of the Mississippi Summer Project was to organize the [Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party](#), an integrated party, to win seats at the [1964 Democratic National Convention](#) for a slate of delegates elected by disenfranchised black Mississippians and white sympathizers. The MFDP was, however, tremendously inconvenient for the [Johnson](#) Administration, which wanted to minimize the inroads that [Barry Goldwater](#)'s campaign was making into what had previously been the Democratic stronghold of the "Solid South" and the support that [George Wallace](#) had received during the Democratic primaries in the North.

Further Reading

Books

- Carmichael, Stokely, et al. **Ready for Revolution : The Life and Struggles of Stokely Carmichael (Kwame Ture)**. Scribner ([15 February 2005](#)) 848 pages. [ISBN 0-684-85004-4](#).
- Carson, Claybourne. **In Struggle, SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960's**. Cambridge Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. 1981. [ISBN 0-674-44727-1](#).

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The Ongoing Covenant with Black Iowa: The Foundational Phase of the Culver-Judge "One Iowa, One Unlimited Future" Initiative