

Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the

FBI File on the
Students Nonviolent
Coordinating Committee
(SNCC)

A Microfilm Publication by

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Introduction

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was organized in 1960 as a nonviolent civil rights movement devoted to direct-action, voter-registration campaigns for blacks in the Deep South. Comprised mostly of Southern black college students upon its inception, SNCC later attracted both black and white students into its membership, and was one of the major groups, along with the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO), to press for voter rights in the early and mid-1960s. In 1965, SNCC shifted its emphasis from civil and voting rights to the empowerment, both economic and political, that those rights bring. In March 1966, SNCC became one of the first national student groups to come out strongly against the Vietnam War, labeling the black soldiers of the U.S. armed forces fighting there nothing more than "black mercenaries" and encouraging other students to avoid the draft.

The election of Stokely Carmichael as the SNCC national chairman in May 1966 was a major turning point in the group's history. Frustrated by foreign and domestic events, some SNCC members began to believe that the rights for which the committee fought had been merely legislated and not acted upon. Under Carmichael's leadership, as well as subsequent national chairman H. Rap Brown, SNCC pushed aggressively for black political and economic enfranchisement, as well as advocating black supremacy. Carmichael also abandoned the group's early insistence on non-violence at all times and popularized the slogan, "Black Power," which heightened tension among other black civil rights groups that had built interracial support through nonviolence. Carmichael split openly with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., over the methods to achieve a more just society, stating his challenge plainly to the white establishment: "It's time we stand up and take over. Take over. Move on over or we'll move on over you."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) began its surveillance of SNCC shortly after it was organized, claiming that Communists were infiltrating its leadership. As SNCC evolved, according to a 1967 FBI memorandum, from "a peaceful civil rights movement...to

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a hate group preaching violence and black supremacy,” the investigation centered on racial matters and domestic security rather than communism.¹ The investigation of SNCC was tied closely to the black nationalist division of the FBI’s counter-intelligence program (COINTELPRO) against real or potential threats to domestic security. The FBI believed that incendiary statements by Brown and Carmichael were igniting the many urban riots of the time, but could gather no hard evidence. Hence many of the Bureau’s activities were not directed toward prosecution of the group, but instead focused on compiling information on the organization that could be used to discredit the movement.

This file is comprised of field reports from nineteen different cities, and generally the larger the city, the better the coverage. (The national offices of SNCC were in Atlanta, so that section is the largest.) These reports are organized first by reporting field office, and then by rough chronological order therein. The cities are, in order: Atlanta, Jackson, Baltimore, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dallas, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Los Angeles, New York, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, Springfield, and Washington. The reports cover the years from 1964 to 1973, with the heaviest concentration of reporting during the years 1967-1969.

Each report is organized roughly as follows: 1) basis for investigation, 2) address of SNCC chapter, 3) characterization and membership, 4) principal officers, 5) activities, 6) results of activities, and 7) appendix. The appendix is noteworthy because it contains brief descriptions of the related organizations (national and local) the FBI thought important or noteworthy, including the Nation of Islam, the Black Panthers, Southern Conference Educational Fund, Inc., the Young Socialists, the Students for a Democratic Society, the Revolutionary Action Movement, Committee on Racial Equality, and the W. E. B. DuBois Clubs of America, among many others. Note that no two field offices’ reports are exactly alike, so some included newspaper clippings, others (most notably the Chicago reports) included SNCC publications and other “black power”-type pamphlets and transcripts of speeches.

¹Bureau memorandum, August 8, 1967, from R. W. Smith to W. C. Sullivan.

Introduction

The documents reproduced here were drawn from the Washington files of the FBI and have been released under the Freedom of Information Act; certain documents have been deleted by the FBI pursuant to provisions of that legislation. The material has been filmed in the exact order in which it was released. Microfilm targets indicating pages in poor condition have been inserted in the file.

The roll notes that follow this introduction give the originating city of each report and a list, as they appear on the film, of the dates these reports were made. The two exceptions to this are in sections one and two, where an FBI monograph about SNCC and a single report from one field office appear.

Terry Lynch

**FBI File on the
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
(SNCC)**

Bureau File No. 100-439190 (Domestic Security Investigation)

Section 1 Roll 1, 0007-0682

Atlanta Field Reports

20 Mar 1964
28 Sep 1964
28 May 1965
04 Feb 1966
26 Oct 1966
12 Jun 1967

FBI monograph dated 08 Aug 1967 entitled, "Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee." Includes I: Origin, Aims and Purposes; II: Component of New Left; III: Membership; IV: Organization; V: Leaders; VI: Activities; VII: Publications; VIII: Finances.

18 Dec 1967
14 May 1968
24 Jun 1968
26 Nov 1968
10 Mar 1969
01 Aug 1969

Section 2 Roll 1, 0683-0705

Jackson, Mississippi, Field Report

07 Oct 1968

Concerns the Black Student Conference, Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, MI, 12-14 Apr 1968

Section 3 Roll 1, 0706-0795

Baltimore Field Reports

23 Feb 1968
24 May 1968

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28 Aug 1968
29 Nov 1968
28 Apr 1969

Section 4 Roll 1, 0796-0867

Boston Field Reports

08 Dec 1967
14 Mar 1968
22 Jul 1968
25 Oct 1968

Section 5 Roll 1, 0868-0922

Buffalo Field Reports

26 Jan 1968
27 Jun 1968
27 Sep 1968
10 Feb 1969

Section 6 Roll 1, 0923-1180

Chicago Field Reports

06 Dec 1967
19 Apr 1968
23 Jul 1968
27 Dec 1968
18 Feb 1972

Section 7 Roll 1, 1181-1398

Cincinnati Field Reports

08 Jan 1968
17 Jan 1968
18 Jun 1968
03 Oct 1968
08 Apr 1969
27 Jun 1969
09 Oct 1969
14 Jan 1970
04 Jun 1970

Section 8 Roll 1, 1399-END Roll 1

Cleveland Field Reports

25 Oct	1965
11 May	1966
07 Dec	1966
15 Jun	1967
26 Dec	1967

Section 9 Roll 2, 0007-0144

Dallas Field Reports

29 Feb	1968
10 May	1968
23 Aug	1968
27 Nov	1968
06 Nov	1969

Section 10 Roll 2, 0145-0272

Detroit Field Reports

05 Jan	1968
30 Apr	1968
31 Jul	1968
31 Oct	1968
31 Jan	1969

Section 11 Roll 2, 0273-0449

Houston Field Reports

30 Nov	1967
28 Feb	1968
29 May	1968
27 Aug	1968
22 Nov	1968

Section 12 Roll 2, 0450-0480

Indianapolis Field Reports

28 Feb	1968
31 Jul	1968
21 Jan	1969

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Section 13 Roll 2, 0481-0930

Los Angeles Field Reports

16 Mar	1965
24 Sep	1965
07 Apr	1966
07 Oct	1966
07 Apr	1967
06 Oct	1967
29 May	1968
18 Sep	1968
19 Sep	1968
18 Dec	1968
15 Apr	1969
25 Feb	1969
14 Jul	1969
26 Nov	1969

Section 14 Roll 2, 0931-1301

New York Field Reports

04 Jan	1968
16 Oct	1969
21 Jan	1970
25 May	1970
10 May	1971
11 Aug	1971
18 Nov	1971
11 Dec	1973

Section 15 Roll 2, 1302-1356

Portland, Oregon, Field Reports

29 Nov	1963
07 Feb	1964
10 Sep	1964
23 Mar	1965
20 Sep	1965
18 Mar	1966

Section 16 Roll 2, 1357-1454

San Francisco Field Reports

31 Oct 1967

18 Dec 1967

11 Apr 1968

Section 17 Roll 2, 1455-1477

Seattle Field Reports

29 Feb 1968

30 Sep 1968

Section 18 Roll 2, 1478-1496

Springfield, Illinois, Field Report

05 Mar 1969

Section 19 Roll 2, 1497-END

Washington Field Reports

31 Dec 1964

25 Mar 1966

24 Mar 1967

09 Oct 1967

18 Nov 1968

11 Oct 1966