



FREEDOM SUMMER

MISSISSIPPI. 1964.

1 X 120 HD



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“Intelligently composed and powerfully driven, *Freedom Summer* is a stirring historical document.” — *Hollywood Reporter*

In the hot and deadly summer of 1964, the United States could not turn away from Mississippi. Over 10 memorable weeks known as Freedom Summer, more than 700 student volunteers joined with organizers and local African Americans in a historic effort to shatter the foundations of white supremacy in one of the nation’s most segregated states. Working together, they canvassed for voter registration, created Freedom Schools, and established the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Freedom Summer was marked by sustained and deadly violence, including the notorious murders of three civil rights workers, countless beatings, the burning of 35 churches, and the bombing of 70 homes and community centers.

Directed by acclaimed filmmaker Stanley Nelson (*Freedom Riders, The Murder of Emmett Till*), *Freedom Summer* highlights an overlooked but essential element of the civil rights movement: the patient and long-term efforts by outside activists and local citizens in Mississippi to organize communities and register black voters—even in the face of intimidation, physical violence, and death.

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) came up with a new plan to increase registrations in 1964. For 10 weeks, white students from the North would join activists on the ground for a massive effort that would force the media and the country to take notice of the shocking violence and massive injustice taking place in Mississippi.

Freedom Summer students gathered on the campus of Oberlin University in Oxford, Ohio, to meet with SNCC leaders for training. After the first week of training, the Freedom Summer volunteers learned that three members of their group had gone missing in Mississippi. As the days passed and the young men were not heard from, people began to fear the worst—that they’d been murdered by the Klan.

Undaunted, the Freedom Summer volunteers went down to Mississippi, fanning out across the state, embedding themselves with local families and setting up Freedom Schools where children were taught African-American history and culture—subjects forbidden in their regular public schools.

On August 4, 1964, the bodies of the three missing men were finally found, buried beneath an earthen dam. Despite the brutal murders, volunteers and locals were more committed to their cause than ever. Attention was focused on signing people up for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, which planned to challenge the all-white Mississippi delegation at the upcoming Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City. Delegates included Fannie Lou Hamer, a former sharecropper who had been beaten while trying to register to vote. At the convention, Hamer’s speech moved the crowd, but proved no match for the Johnson machine, which feared that the upheaval would threaten his candidacy.

The events of Freedom Summer have long been overshadowed by the more large-scale public events of the civil rights movement. *Freedom Summer*, told by the brave people who lived it, restores their story to its rightful place in America’s history.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

CREDITS

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