

MISSISSIPPI WOMEN'S PLANNING SESSION - REPORT

November 18-19, 1966, Jackson, Mississippi

National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

Agency

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OPENING SESSION - YWCA, North Farish Street

Greetings: Mrs. C.C. Mosley, Temporary Chairman, Jackson Section,
National Council of Negro Women.

Orientation: Miss Dorothy I. Height, National President, NCNW.

1. Growth and Range of Volunteer Work

Miss Dorothy Height, in her opening remarks stated:

During the years in which the National Council of Negro Women has had programs in the State of Mississippi, it has become aware of the many people who are dedicated to the goals of strengthening the Negro woman and her family life. Progressive programs have already taken place in Mississippi; for example, the Special Training Institute on the Problems of School Desegregation at the University of Mississippi. Now we need to confront ourselves with the thought that in these times we are not only faced with the normal change seen in every generation, but with the speed of change that this generation is experiencing.

As we consider, during this planning conference, the new look in volunteer services - the volunteer as the person who works by his free will - we hope to define the needs and methods of work for the volunteer who is also a working woman, a wife and a mother, but who is acutely aware that there are many needs still to be met, and that her role is to help meet them.

We must, during this planning session, decide if a training program is desirable in Mississippi, whether NCNW can help with such a program, and, if so, what are the issues, the problems and the needs.

2. Areas and Services of Interest to NCNW

The 49 participants in this opening session, from 15 communities, as well as staff and consultants, introduced their neighbors (after a few moments

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of query) by name, location, profession and volunteer activity. Among the Mississippi women, nine were community organizers, 14 had worked or were working with Head Start, eleven were or had been teachers - elementary through college - four were social workers, one a librarian, several were employed in social agencies such as the YWCA, Urban League and STAR.

Volunteer work included : United Church Women, Catholic Ladies of Charity, NCCW, Girl Scouts, SCLC, NAACP, Womanpower Unlimited, F.D.P., Citizens' Committee for Urban Renewal, Women in Community Service (WICS), and NCNW.

After the introductions, the participants, staff and consultants broke into small buzz groups to prepare statements of the community needs and the problems to be considered in this planning session.

3. Summary of Small Group Sessions

- a) Certain rights, such as education, are unfulfilled.
- b) There should be a place for women to be trained for jobs, to upgrade themselves.
- c) A means must be found to channel resources and funds into the state.
- d) The Planners should consider the "how to" of funding women who cannot volunteer for work without travel and food allowance.
- e) The need for recreation centers and day care centers should be studied.
- f) The Planners need to gather support for a Compulsory School Attendance Law.

SECOND DAY'S SESSION - Hotel Heidelberg

(Breakfast Meeting: Miss Height, Dr. Tatum, Miss Cramer, Dorothy Duke, Dr. Boyer, Gabe Beard, Polly Cowan. Summary of reactions to Opening Session)

4. Training Persons for Volunteer Work

Miss Height opened the meeting with a few words about the purposes of The National Council of Negro Women since its inception by Mary McLeod Bethune. The founder's goals were those of joining all hands to get the

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job done. From this goal to those of the planning session is a short step: increasing skills and adding womanpower to many volunteer projects already functioning in Mississippi, and bringing new volunteer projects into areas in need of them.

5. Areas of Work

Stimulated by these goals, the participants spoke of their own definitions of volunteer work. In the course of the discussion they spoke of the means of communicating with each other and with those who need to become involved.

Areas of Work, selected as primary needs:

- a) welfare and educational needs of children
- b) parents' relationship to the school
- c) citizenship responsibilities
- d) involving and training of youth for service
- e) adult education and related need such as transportation to classes and tests
- f) consumer education
- g) using individual or group initiative in volunteer work to promote a cause
- h) payment for food and travel when volunteers cannot afford out-of-pocket expenses
- i) training sessions for filling out of all kinds of forms (leases, voter registration, applications for jobs or for training for jobs) as well as for program funding
- j) implementing child labor laws

The participants spoke of the fact that the Negro woman has had to nurse the sick and bury the dead, and always make something out of nothing. They concluded that she is peculiarly well equipped to use initiative when there are no guidelines. Now, however, the women agreed they wanted concrete proposals by which they could raise their families and themselves to a higher level. They spoke of the need for people with a better education and a good job to work for the general good because they have access to information and know how to use it. They told of their desire to bridge the gap between those who have received the benefits of education and those who have not.

6. Task Forces

To decide what The National Council of Negro Women can do to meet the overall needs of poverty, by developing potential and determining the projects and places which need leadership training for volunteer work, the group divided into five Task Forces.

Task Force leaders: Miss Gloria Cotton - McComb
Mrs. Annie Devine - Canton
Mrs. Mason - Biloxi
Mrs. Jeanette Smith - Hattiesburg
Mrs. Unita Blackwell - Mayersville

7. Reports from Task Forces

The Task Forces began their reports before lunch and concluded after the meal.

Group V - Mrs. Annie Devine:

Reported concern on the plight of the poverty- stricken and felt the need for leadership training for both young people and adults. The group asked for the tools with which to bridge the gaps, finding that groups do not reach out to one another. They specifically requested NCNW to find methods or proposals from which the entire community could benefit.

Group IV - Mrs. Mason:

Asked NCNW to help discover and train women for work on the needs of schools and school related problems, such as getting representation on school boards and in PTA's. Also work in helping adults to pass tests given for jobs.

Group III - Mrs. Unita Blackwell:

Requested NCNW to have training workshops on a regional basis

throughout the state, and to find funds to make this possible.

Group II - Mrs. Jeanette Smith:

Asked for more information on the program and goals of NCNW and on how to organize sections in Mississippi.

Group I - Miss Gloria Cotton:

Requested same information as Group II, adding the need for information on how projects can get funds to pay the basic expenses of volunteers.

8. NCNW Program, Activities and Structure

Miss Height explained the concept and structure of the National Council of Negro Women and outlined Council programs such as : Women in Community Service (WICS), Consumer Education, the National Committee on Household Employment, WIMS, Project Womanpower and Volunteers Unlimited.

She expressed the Council's appreciation of the trust shown by the Mississippi participants as shown by the attendance at this meeting, called by the National Council of Negro Women. Answering the requests of the Task Forces, Miss Height said that NCNW would plan to begin a series of training programs: the first early in 1967. NCNW will supply training resources, staff and volunteers. The first workshop will be designed to answer the needs of those volunteers who wish to develop the skills for writing proposals for federal or foundation grants.

9. Consultants to the Mississippi Planning Session

Dr. Roscoe Boyer, Professor of Education at the University of Mississippi, spoke to the women on "grantsmanship". He told the women that any training program which emerged from this Planning Session had the support and the

participation of the consultants from the University of Mississippi. He urged them to make use of the educational research by counties and school districts, which his department can make available on official request from the women. However, the University can help only if the request is made as it was for the Planning Session -- through some part of the National Council of Negro Women, its Mississippi membership or local sections.

Miss Marie Barksdale, Special Assistant for the Office of Economic Opportunity and a WIMS team member, gave information on the need nationally for technical assistance for writing proposals. She added that if the State of Mississippi does not submit its allotted number of proposals, another state will move in and use the money earmarked for Mississippi.

Mr. Coleman Miller, Director of a special program for community centers in Mississippi, which operates through the National Federation of Settlements, addressed the participants, stressing that if progress is to be made in the social service areas of Mississippi, it is the Negro women of the state who will do it.

10. Other Programs operating in the South

Discussion followed on the importance of relating the proposals to the needs of the community. Miss Height outlined the program of the Citizens' Crusade Against Poverty, Southern Rural Action Project (SRAP), giving the example of the work in Crawfordville, Georgia. (The Greenville representative asked if her community could apply for a SRAP program).

11. Summary - Task Force and Steering Committee

Leaders of the five Task Forces rounded up their hopes from this Planning Session into one specific request :

That leadership training should be geared toward helping people in the community to identify their problems and set forth solutions.

The steering committee of volunteers consists of the five Task Force leaders plus Mrs. Snowden Jones of Greenwood, Mrs. Morton of Greenville, Mrs. Gooden of Oxford, and Mrs. Rucker of Greenwood. Mrs. Annie Devine and Mrs. C.C. Mosley will serve as co-chairmen.

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National Council of Negro Women, Inc.

November 18-19, 1966

Chairman

Dorothy I. Height - National President, NCNW

Director

Polly Cowan - NCNW

Consultants

Miss Marie Barksdale	-OEO
Dr. Roscoe Boyer	-University of Mississippi
Miss Mary Cramer	-Women's Bureau, Department of Labor
Dr. Katherine Rea	-University of Mississippi
Dr. Julian Tatum	-University of Mississippi
Miss Kate Wilkinson	-University of Mississippi

Staff

Gabriel Beard	-University of Mississippi
Doris Dozier	-NCNW
Dorothy Duke	-NCNW

Attendance --- Planning Session

Overall Number	53	
Jackson women (& 2 men)	18	
Other Mississippi women	25	(included women from 15 towns and rural areas)
Staff and Consultants	10	
Travel and Meals paid	19	(includes 2 consultants; others paid for by their own agencies)

Mississippi towns and communities from which
participants in Mississippi Planning Session
came.

Clarksdale

Hattiesburg

Mayersville

Corinth

McComb

Oxford

Philadelphia

Laurel

Greenville

Greenwood

Canton

Wesson

Jackson

Biloxi