



Freedom Summer Background Information

Freedom Summer, also known as the Mississippi Summer Project, was a 1964 voter registration drive with the goal of increasing African American voter registration in Mississippi.

Jim Crow laws enacted at the end of the Reconstruction period, such as grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and poll taxes effectively disenfranchised African American voters, directly contradicting the 15th Amendment.

Once these laws were in effect, the number of African Americans registered to vote significantly decreased, which directly led to an increase in institutionalized racism.

By 1964, the approximation of registered black voters dwindled down to 2000, which was around 7% of the state's eligible black voting population.

As a result, the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee chose Mississippi as the place to challenge the Jim Crow voting laws.

Over 700 volunteers, most of whom were white, joined African Americans to fight for voting rights.

They were met with violent resistance from the Ku Klux Klan and law enforcement.

The murders of Michael Schwerner, Andrew Goodman, and James Chaney made the volunteers scared to go to Mississippi, but none of them left the program.

News coverage of the events drew international attention to the Civil Rights movement.

The momentum gained by the coverage, eventually led to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.