

# 1776 & 1976

## THE BETTER WE KNOW US ...

Johnny White is just 19 years old. But he's already serving a second prison term, this time for car theft.

Up for parole in 60 days, he's determined not to return a third time. But without help from the community, the chances are high that he'll end up back behind bars.

Johnny White is a fictitious character, but there are many men and women who are in similar situations — wanting to become productive citizens upon release, but in many respects, unsure of how or if they can make it on their own.

Two Wachovians in Raleigh are helping to make this transition from prison to the outside world a little easier.

Grady Perkins, Marketing, and Beki Alexander, manager of the North Ridge Office, are now offering their financial expertise as part of a special North Carolina program—Pre-Release and After Care Training—designed to

make a criminal's re-entry into the community smoother and more effective.

"I definitely feel good about the program and think it's already proving itself," says Mr. Perkins who has been participating in the pilot project since it was begun a year ago.

"I think these people can be productive citizens, but it's up to us to help them. If we provide them with helpful information—show them that we're behind them—we're in essence helping to reduce crime."

The four-week programs are completely voluntary. They are set up for 25 to 30 adult honor prisoners from a 40-county area who are 30 to 90 days away from parole. Ages of the participants range from 16 to the mid-fifties and include both male and female prisoners. Training centers on four areas: self-awareness, family, the community, and finance, the latter which involves Wachovia.

"I start out by explaining our services at Wachovia," says Mr. Perkins who discusses financial planning with the groups once a month. "Then I talk about credit. They want to know how to get credit, can they borrow money, and how to go about buying a house."

"I am very straightforward with the inmates on the matter of credit. I tell them that they will have to demonstrate their creditworthiness because it will be more difficult for them to attain credit. I encourage them to get a steady job and establish creditability with their employers and then get involved in community affairs."

"I also suggest establishing a relationship with a bank by opening up a savings account as well as a checking account. Then after a year or so, their chances for getting credit are more favorable."

Mr. Perkins also tells the inmates to be completely honest about their backgrounds with their Personal Bankers

as well as their employers.

"Some of the prisoners have had absolutely no experience with banking services," says Mrs. Alexander who just recently began participating in the programs. "So we explain how to open checking and savings accounts and then how to use these accounts."

The program is showing good results. Although it has not been in operation long enough to gather meaningful statistics on its rate of success, prison officials are optimistic about the benefits the program offers, and they expect to see a reduction in the number of these people returning to prison.

"I honestly feel that if we reach just one person, the program's worthwhile," says Mr. Perkins. "Anything we can do to help these people break out of their role of dependency—be it physical, economic, or mental—will benefit them and in turn help the community."



**A VIABLE, VALID REQUIREMENT  
RESPONDING TO  
BLACK NORTH CAROLINA**

# THE TRIBUNAL AID

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The 1976 Editions of THE TRIBUNAL AID will be dedicated to America's bicentennial Celebration, with emphasis on contributions our Race has made in the making of America, from birth to the present.

In 1976 there should not be a need to lift these contributions from isolated sources. Our past

should be interwoven into the fabric of our civilization, because we are, except for the Indian, America's oldest ethnic minority.

We have helped make America what it was, and what it is, since the founding of Virginia. We have been a factor in many major issues in our history. There have been many misdeeds

against us, yet we have been able to live through them and fight back. This is living proof of our history.

Our role in the making of America is neither well known or correctly known. Many positive contributions have escaped historians and have not found their way into the pages of many history books.

We will strive to give readers, Black and white, many little-known facts about our past and it is hoped that a proper perspective of our history will be of value to persons who may believe that as Black people we have an unworthy past; and hence, no strong claims to all rights of other Americans.

## BICENTENNIAL BLACK HISTORY "Lost-Strayed-Or Stolen"

Black history in the Western Hemisphere most probably begins with the discovery of the New World by Christopher Columbus in 1492. Blacks are known to have participated meaningfully in a number of later explorations made by Europeans in various parts of the United States and Spanish America. Facts such as these at once fashion a new dimension for Black history within the mainstream of American history. Inasmuch as one of the primary purposes of this feature is to record some historical achievements of the Black, it becomes most important to offer the reader chronological accounts through which he can conveniently familiarize himself with the broad sweep of American Black history. The years covered here are 1492-1954.

### KANSAS

#### Nicodemus Nicodemus Colony

Located along U.S. Route 24 two miles west of the Rooks-Graham County line, Nicodemus Colony is the last of three now-virtually-deserted colonies which were founded by the Exodusters—a group of Negro homesteaders active in Kansas during the 1870's. The name "Nicodemus" was derived from a slave who, according to legend, foretold the coming of the Civil War. Arriving in 1877, the first settlers lived in dugouts and burrows during the cold weather. From the outset, they were plagued by crop failures. Although never more than 500 in number, they managed nonetheless to create a real community with teachers, ministers, civil servants, etc. The state of Kansas has commemorated this site with a historical marker located in a roadside park in Nicodemus.

American War. It was at Leavenworth that the Independent Kansas Colored Battery, a unit with several Negro officers, was recruited in 1864. Among its members was Captain H. Ford Douglass, son of the noted abolitionist Frederick Douglass. The younger Douglass joined the Illinois Volunteers as far back as 1862. Beeler: *George Washington Carver Marker-Fort Scott*

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Fort Scott was the home of the First Kansas Colored Volunteers, a Negro unit organized by the Union Army in August 1862. The first such unit to go into combat during the Civil War, it beat back a superior Confederate force at the battle of Island Mount, Missouri on October 28, 1862.

#### LEAVENWORTH: Fort Leavenworth

Fort Leavenworth was the first home of the 10th Cavalry, the all-black unit which not only participated in many important battles during the Indian wars, but also served with valor and distinction during the Spanish-

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### Fannie Lou Hamer

## A NATURAL LEADER

Out numbered Mississippi whites became alarmed. In 1890 Mississippi with its majority Black population decided that the only way to preserve White Supremacy was by completely disfranchising Blacks. This was accomplished by not allowing non property owners or those who were descendants of persons who had not voted before 1866 voting rights, and also requiring voters to read and interpret any section of the state constitution. These methods kept Black Mississippians from voting.

FANNIE LOU HAMER lived in Mississippi's Sunflower County, where in 1964 there were nearly twice as many Blacks as whites voting age, yet the number of registered Black voters there was only 2.5 per cent of the white. Mrs. Hamer saw that as a shameful violation of human rights and there could be no rest for her until she did something to correct it.

In August 1962 two Civil Rights groups came to Mississippi to help Black people register to vote, they were SNCC and SCLC. It was agreed at the end of the meeting that eighteen of those present would go to the Indianola Courthouse to register. Fannie Lou Hamer would be their leader. The test they were confronted with took the entire day. When Mrs. Hamer returned to her home she was informed that unless she withdrew her right to vote she would lose her job. That night Mrs. Hamer left her family with friends in Ruleville. Her husband was urged to remain until the end of the harvest, and was promised that he could take his belongings. Of course he was not allowed to take his belongings at the end of the harvest season. Mrs. Hamer and her family had many unfortunate experiences including severe beatings.

For months Mrs. Hamer tried to work with the regular Mississippi Democratic Party, first attempting to go to work on precinct level. She had no luck, whenever she attended a precinct meeting in Ruleville, her husband recently hired on a new job, was fired the following day.

The only way to attack the tight political machine would be to establish a political party of their own. Mrs. Hamer and her fellow workers established their own party and named it THE MISSISSIPPI FREEDOM PARTY. The M.F.D.P. was formed well before the August 1964 Democratic Convention that met in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Its program for getting support among other delegates to the convention was well organized and executed. As early as May 1964 the M.F.D.P. opened an office in Washington, D.C.

The Delegates took their views from that section of the Declaration of Independence that reads: "Whenever any form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is Right of the People to alter or abolish it, and to institute new Government."

The Convention was opened to Black and White alike. And the delegation that came out of those conventions was made of people doing average jobs. At the June 1964 meeting held in Jackson, Mississippi, a White native born Mississippian named Ed King was elected as Chairman of its delegation. Fannie Lou Hamer was elected Vice-Chairman. For the first time in its history the old-line Mississippi politicians were being challenged before the nation and the world by their own constituents. The M.F.D.P. was finally offered a compromise, the regulars, they were informed, were going to be seated and two members of the M.F.D.P. could be seated as delegates-at-large at the convention. But the choice of which two of their party to be chosen would not be theirs. The M.F.D.P. rejected the compromise and their hope of replacing the Mississippi regulars died.

With the help of Northern liberals the M.F.D.P. was later able in Washington to challenge the right of the Mississippi regulars to take seats in the House of Representatives. They forced an answer to the challenge from the Governors and other State officials who issued a statement condemning violence and racism in Mississippi.

Fannie Lou Hamer is kept busy now as a lecturer, traveling to various parts of the nation. She is the author of a practical plan for feeding Sunflower County's poor Blacks with dignity. Freedom Farms which she conceived, get right to the vitals of the country's problems. Mrs. Hamer wants no child on Freedom Farms to experience the uncertainty of the tenant farm living she knows too well.

On commencement Day in 1969 at Atlanta's Morehouse College, Fannie Lou Hamer was honored, the speaker in paying tribute to Mrs. Hamer said: "Fannie Lou Hamer, you have little formal education and your speech is full of errors in grammar and diction; but you tell your story with a passionate power that is intensified by pain, and you are a natural leader with the capacity to guide and inspire your fellow sufferers. You also have the ability to awaken in your oppressed countrymen your own unquenchable yearning for freedom and equality. We pay tribute to you for your noble example of Black womanhood, for your strong defense of human dignity, and for your fearless promotion of civil rights in your native state of Mississippi." Mrs. Hamer received the honor with the earthy and dignified simplicity befitting a woman of valor and greatness.

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## 1776 Honoring America's Bicentennial 1976