



FANNIE LOU HAMER'S TESTIMONY AT THE 1964 DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION (CONTINUED)

...As soon as I was seated on the bus, I saw when they began to get the five people in a highway patrolman's car. I stepped off of the bus to see what was happening and somebody screamed..."Get that one there." And when I went to get in the car, when the man told me I was under arrest, he kicked me.

I was carried to the county jail and put in the booking room. They left some of the people in the booking room and began to place us in cells...After I was placed in the cell...I could hear the sounds of licks and horrible screams...They [were beating a woman], I don't know how long. And after a while she began to pray, and asked God to have mercy on those people.

And it wasn't too long before three white men came to my cell. One of these men was a State Highway Patrolman and...he said, "We're going to make you wish you was dead."

I was carried out of that cell into another cell where they had two Negro prisoners. The State Highway Patrolmen ordered the first Negro to take the blackjack. The first Negro prisoner ordered me, by orders from the State Highway Patrolman, for me to lay down on a bunk bed on my face. And I laid on my face, the first Negro began to beat me. And I was beat by the first Negro until he was exhausted. I was holding my hands behind me at that time on my left side, because I suffered from polio when I was six years old.

After the first Negro had beat until he was exhausted, the State Highway Patrolman ordered the second Negro to take the blackjack. The second Negro began to beat and I began to work my feet, and the State Highway Patrolman ordered the first Negro who had beat to sit on my feet—to keep me from working my feet. I began to scream and one white man got up and began to beat me in my head and tell me to hush...

...All of this is on account of we want to register, to become first-class citizens. And if the [Mississippi] Freedom Democratic Party is not seated now, I question America. Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off of the hooks because our lives be threatened daily, because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?



The text on this 1964 flier reads:

Fannie Lou Hamer is the candidate of the FREEDOM DEMOCRATIC PARTY for Congress in the Second District. Mrs. Hamer used to work on a plantation near Ruleville. She was fired when she tried to register to vote. And later she was beaten by the police in Winona because she was helping other Negroes to register.

Fannie Lou Hamer and the Freedom Democratic Party want JOBS, JUSTICE, and EDUCATION for all people in Mississippi — black and white. And they want all people to have the right to vote.

That is why the FREEDOM VOTE is being held. Anyone who is 21 or older can vote in the FREEDOM VOTE. You do not have to be registered at the Courthouse to vote in the FREEDOM VOTE. You can vote at churches, barbershops, cafes — at any FREEDOM VOTE polling place.

VOTE for FANNIE LOU HAMER in the FREEDOM VOTE on OCTOBER 30-31 and NOVEMBER 1-2.

SOURCES:

Speech: American Rhetoric Online Speech Bank. "Fannie Lou Hamer, Testimony Before the Credentials Committee, DN Convention, delivered 22 August 1964." <https://bit.ly/3w30Ejq>.

Photo: Leffler, Warren K. "Fannie Lou Hamer, Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegate, at the Democratic National Convention, Atlantic City, New Jersey, August 1964." Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. <https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003688126>.

Flier: Smithsonian National Museum of American History, Behring Center. Freedom Summer Primary Source Documents. <https://americanhistory.si.edu/freedom-summer/primary-sources>.