

BUILDING A MORE PERFECT UNION

PART II



NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

EDSITEment!
THE BEST OF THE HUMANITIES ON THE WEB

a more perfect
UNION
NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
HUMANITIES

NHD
NATIONAL
HISTORY DAY

BUILDING A MORE INCLUSIVE ELECTORATE: THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT 1966–1977

Author: Courtney Major, Edina High School, Edina, Minnesota

GUIDING QUESTION:

To what extent did the activities and strategies of the Voter Education Project (VEP) build a more inclusive electorate between 1966 and 1977?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, students will analyze primary sources to explore the work of the Voter Education Project to organize, register, and engage African American voters following the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

OBJECTIVES

At the conclusion of this activity, students will be able to:

- > Identify and explain the grassroots activities and strategies that the VEP employed to register Black voters after the 1965 Voting Rights Act passed;
- > Analyze the VEP's effectiveness in building a more inclusive electorate;
- > Generate questions comparing voter registration and participation between 1966 and 1977; and
- > Synthesize knowledge gathered from primary sources to participate in a class discussion.

STANDARDS CONNECTIONS

CONNECTIONS TO COMMON CORE

- > CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RH.9. Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.
- > CCSS.ELA-Writing.WHST.9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

CONNECTIONS TO C3 FRAMEWORK

- > D3.3.9-12. Identify evidence that draws information directly and substantively from multiple sources to detect inconsistencies in evidence in order to revise or strengthen claims.
- > D4.1.9-12. Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counterclaims and evidentiary weaknesses.

DOCUMENTS USED

PRIMARY SOURCES

Letter, Vernon Jordan to Mrs. Wallace Alston, Jr., July 12, 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0083>

Letter, John Lewis to Beatrice Clay, September 1, 1976
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0241>

Newsletter, Inner City Citizenship Education Project
Newsletter, August–September 1969 (excerpt)
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A1488>

Newsletter, VEP News, August 1967 (excerpt)
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0004>

Newsletter, VEP News, October 1971 (excerpt)
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0012>

Pamphlet, North Carolina Voter Education Project, Know
Your Voting Rights, c. 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0003>

Pamphlet, Patricia Collins and the Voter Education Project
Southern Regional Council, Inc., How to Conduct a
Registration Campaign, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0005>

Photograph, *John Lewis and Julian Bond Speaking*, August 3,
1971
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library,
Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0002>

Photograph, *Voting Advocacy*, c. 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0192>

Report, Auburn Women's League Voters Education Project Report, Lee County Alabama, 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0084>

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, June 3, 1968 to June 17, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0272>

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, July 9, 1968 to July 15, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0278>

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, July 16, 1968 to July 20, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0277>

SECONDARY SOURCE

Documentary, *The Time Has Come*, 1977 [8:10–9:55]
National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 53804)
<https://youtu.be/4qT0e9j826g?si=3SWgu2di9a4O2YaB&t=490>

TEACHER-CREATED MATERIALS

- > VEP Historical Context
- > Primary Source Packets One to Four
- > VEP Analysis and Impact Sources and Chart
- > VEP Analysis and Impact Activity

ACTIVITY PREPARATION

- > Prepare to project the VEP Historical Context.
- > Make one copy of the following for each student:
 - » VEP Activities and Strategies Chart
 - » VEP Analysis and Impact Activity
- > Organize the class into groups of three to four students each.
- > Make copies of the Primary Source Packets One to Four so each group has one set (repeat as needed).
- > Locate *The Time Has Come* [8:10–9:55] on the VEP Analysis and Impact Activity and prepare to project the segment of the documentary.

Special thanks to the team at the Robert W. Woodruff Library at Atlanta University for sharing these digitized sources for publication.

PROCEDURE

ACTIVITY ONE (15 MINUTES)

- > Project the VEP Historical Context page to the class.
- > Review with the class the key ideas and primary sources included on the sheet.

ACTIVITY TWO (30 MINUTES)

- > Organize the class into groups of three to four students each.
- > Distribute one copy of the VEP Activities and Strategies Chart to each student.
- > Distribute one of the four Primary Source Packets to each group.
- > Explain that the goal of each group is to use primary source(s) to identify the grassroots activities and strategies employed by the VEP in the 1960s and 1970s.
- > Allow students time to analyze their primary source(s) and complete their VEP Activities and Strategies Chart. Circulate among students to provide support and offer suggestions.
- > Report findings with the class. Ask groups to share quotations and summarize their assigned primary source set for their classmates.
- > Lead a brief discussion. Questions may include:
 - » *What VEP activities or strategies did your sources highlight?*
 - » *In what ways did this activity or strategy help to build a more inclusive electorate?*
 - » *Share one to two quotes or data points from your primary source set that exemplify the activities of the VEP. Why did your group choose this/these to highlight?*
 - » *Do you think this/these activities and strategies will prove effective? Why or why not?*

ACTIVITY THREE (25 MINUTES)

- > Distribute one copy of the VEP Analysis and Impact Activity to each student.
- > Explain that this set of sources includes data about the VEP's impact on voter registration rates in southern states. Remind students of the guiding question: *To what extent did the activities and strategies of the VEP build a more inclusive electorate between 1966 and 1977?*

CONNECTIONS

Many students focus on researching national topics, but local libraries, university archives, and historical societies can provide valuable insights into the same topics—but from a local lens. This approach help shows how national efforts to build a more perfect union.

- > For the first source, project the documentary, *The Time Has Come*, and play from 8:10 to 9:55.
- > Circulate among students as they complete the Analysis Activity and provide instructional support as needed.
- > Lead a class discussion with the following questions:
 - » *How did the actions of the VEP increase Black voter participation in the South in the years immediately following the Civil Rights Act of 1965?*
 - » *How did the increase in Black voters impact local elections in the late 1960s and early 1970s? State elections? National elections?*
 - » *How does having a more inclusive electorate impact formerly disenfranchised people's lives?*
 - » *Examine the roles and activities of the directors and leaders of the VEP (Vernon Jordan and John Lewis) and compare them to the roles and activities of the local leaders (League of Women Voters, registration workers). How did they work together to increase Black voter participation? Why were both functions necessary?*
 - » *Consider the VEP's myriad of actions and publications in the years immediately following the Voting Rights Act. Which actions do you think modern voting rights groups should adopt in your area to increase voter registration and participation? Explain your answer.*

ASSESSMENT OPTIONS

- > End the lesson with a written or oral reflection by students.
- > Construct a short graphic novel depicting two or three grassroots activities Voter Education Project organizers used to increase voter registration in the years following the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- > Create a script for a social media video about one or more of the types of activism explored in the lesson.

STUDENTS INTERESTED IN THIS TOPIC MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN RESEARCHING THE FOLLOWING FOR AN NHD PROJECT:

- > The Niagara Movement (1906–1911)
- > Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) (1960)
- > Freedom Riders (1961)
- > Mississippi Freedom Summer (1964)
- > Women's voices in the Civil Rights Movement: Ella Baker (1903–1986), Daisy Bates (1914–1999), Fannie Lou Hamer (1917–1977), Constance Baker Motley (1921–2005), Shirley Chisholm (1924–2005), Barbara Jordan (1936–1996), Diane Nash (1938–)
- > Fair Housing Act of 1968

To access a PDF containing all of the sources and materials to complete this lesson plan, go to:

NHD.ORG/250

EDSITEment!

RELATED RESOURCES

Lesson Plan: The Freedom Riders and the Popular Music of the Civil Rights Movement
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/freedom-riders-and-popular-music-civil-rights-movement>

Lesson Plan: Picturing Freedom: Selma-to-Montgomery in March, 1965
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/picturing-freedom-selma-montgomery-march-1965>

Lesson Plan: Places and People of the Civil Rights Movement
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/lesson-plans/ordinary-people-ordinary-places-civil-rights-movement>

Media Resource: Backstory: Give Us the Ballot from “LBJ and the Great Society”
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/backstory-give-us-ballot-lbj-and-great-society>

Media Resource: Backstory: Legislation Impossible—The Civil Rights Act of 1964
<https://edsitement.neh.gov/media-resources/backstory-legislation-impossible-civil-rights-act-1964>

VEP HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 banned segregation in public places and the Twenty-Fifth Amendment outlawed the use of poll taxes in federal elections, other discriminatory practices prevented African Americans from registering to vote.

Compelled by the televised violent attack on peaceful protestors crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge on “Bloody Sunday” (March 7, 1965), during a march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, the American people called for legislative changes.



Poster created by the Voter Education project to promote voting, c. 1966. Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University.

Over the next five months, across the nation, civil rights leaders, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., local activists, and everyday citizens staged sit-ins and protests and engaged in letter-writing campaigns urging Congress to pass the Voting Rights Act. This constant pressure received significant media attention and proved highly effective by garnering new supporters and solidifying existing support at every level of government, including President Lyndon B. Johnson.

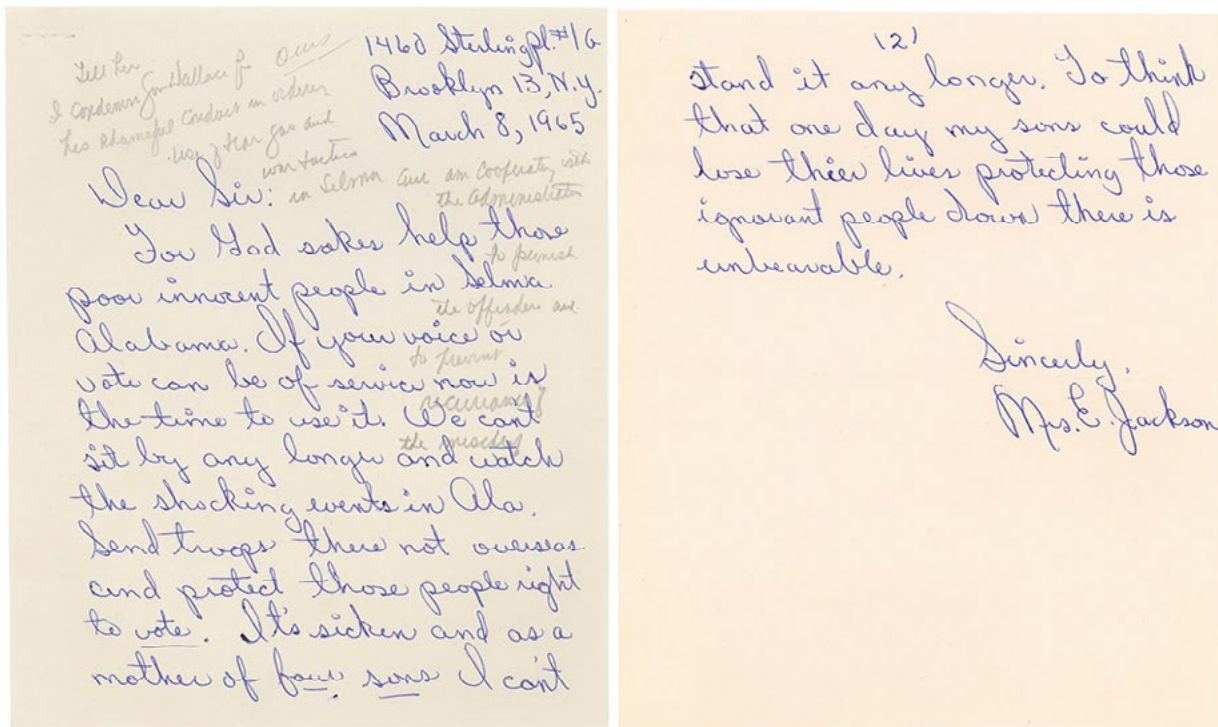
On March 15, a week after “Bloody Sunday,” in a speech to Congress, President Johnson described the techniques election officials used to dissuade African Americans from voting and to deny those who did go to the polls their right to vote, including literacy tests, false claims that the voting period was over, and claims that voters had incorrectly completed their registration forms. He then implored both parties to unite in support of humanity’s “unending search for freedom” and stated that, though there was “no cause for self-satisfaction in the long denial of equal rights for millions of Americans . . . there . . . [was] . . . cause for hope and for faith in our democracy.”¹ This speech, along with Johnson’s broader support for civil rights legislation, was crucial to building the bipartisan support necessary for the act’s passage.

Signed into law on August 6, 1965, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 outlawed discriminatory practices, such as those Johnson described in his speech, that southern states implemented after the Civil War to disenfranchise Black voters.² While the law formally struck down statutory barriers to voting, systemic issues such as educational, economic, and geographic inequalities continued to make registering to vote difficult for Black Americans, particularly in the South.

¹ Lyndon B. Johnson, *Speech to Congress on Voting Rights*, March 15, 1965, National Archives and Records Administration (RG 46). <https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/voting-rights-1965/johnson.html>.

² An Act to enforce the fifteenth amendment . . . [Voting Rights Act], 1965, National Archives and Records Administration (RG 11). <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/voting-rights-act>.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION



Letter from Mrs. E. Jackson to Representative Emanuel Celler, March 8, 1965. Representative Celler likely wrote the notes in pencil. National Archives and Records Administration (RG 233).

To combat these systemic inequalities, activists Vernon Jordan and John Lewis (one of the “Bloody Sunday” march leaders) used increased philanthropic support resulting from the Voting Rights Act to expand the Voter Education Project (VEP). Established as a small privately-funded pilot program three years prior, the VEP was instrumental in raising awareness for and supporting the act. It provided grants to civil rights organizations throughout the South for citizenship education. They created and distributed pamphlets and led classes and leadership training sessions to increase African American voter registration and electoral participation. This effort created a network of citizen activists and highlighted the necessity of widespread civic engagement. A more inclusive electorate engaging in the political process helped make America “a more perfect union.”

PRIMARY SOURCE SET ONE

GRASSROOTS EFFORTS BY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Letter, Vernon Jordan to Mrs. Wallace Alston, Jr., July 12, 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0083>

July 12, 1966

Mrs. Wallace Alston, Jr.
Chairman
Voter Service
League of Women Voters of Auburn
P. O. Box 191
Auburn, Alabama

Dear Mrs. Alston:

The Voter Education Project has carefully considered the request of the League of Women Voters of Auburn, for a grant to implement a series of T. V. programs on Citizenship Education, at approximately a sixth grade academic level, in Auburn, Alabama. We are pleased to inform you that we have approved your program in the amount of \$775.00.

Our check in the amount of \$775.00 is enclosed. Please sign and return the enclosed receipted carbon copy immediately.

The amount granted is to cover the following:

a) Studio Crew	\$ 100.00
b) Film	200.00
c) Studio (VTR Use & Studio Use)	175.00
d) Materials	100.00
e) Publicity	200.00

Mrs. Wallace Alston, Jr. - 2.
July 12, 1966

These funds may not be used to support partisan politics in any manner whatsoever, nor to influence legislation of any kind, nor in behalf of, or against, any political candidate. You should strongly urge and welcome non-partisan support of your citizenship education activities.

Our Director of Research, Marvin Wall, will write you regarding special reporting requirements to the Project.

If you have any questions, please let us hear from you.

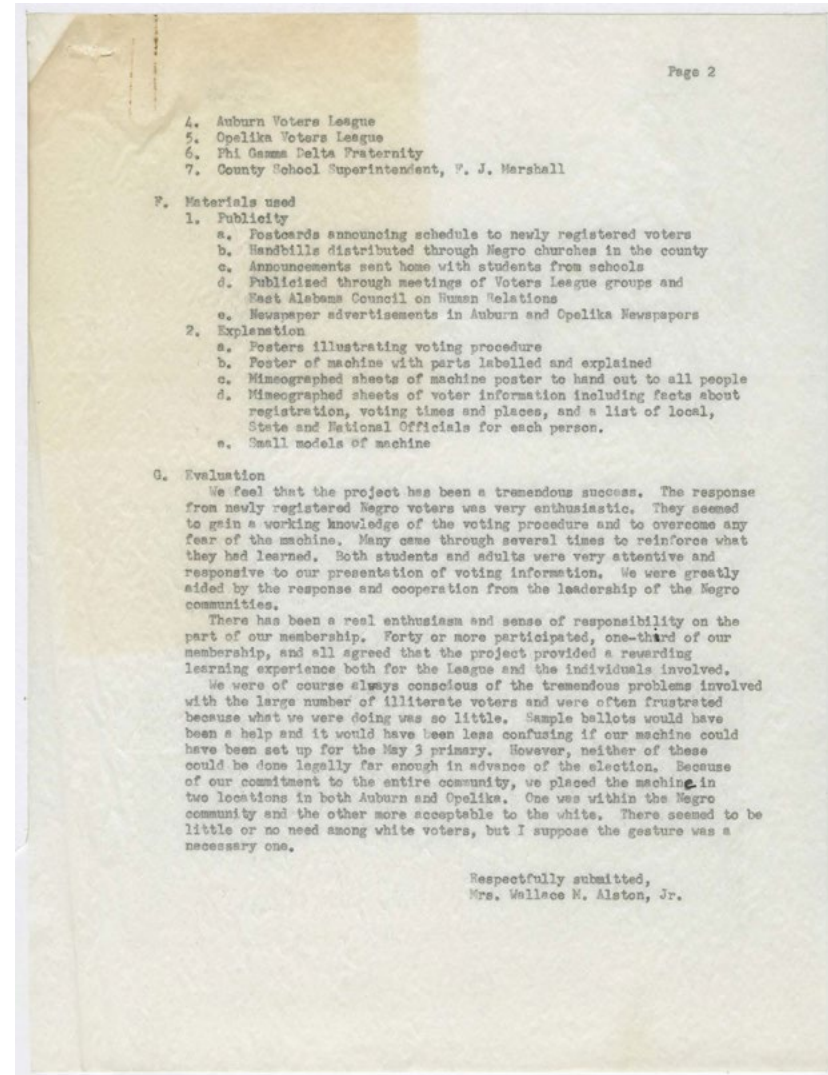
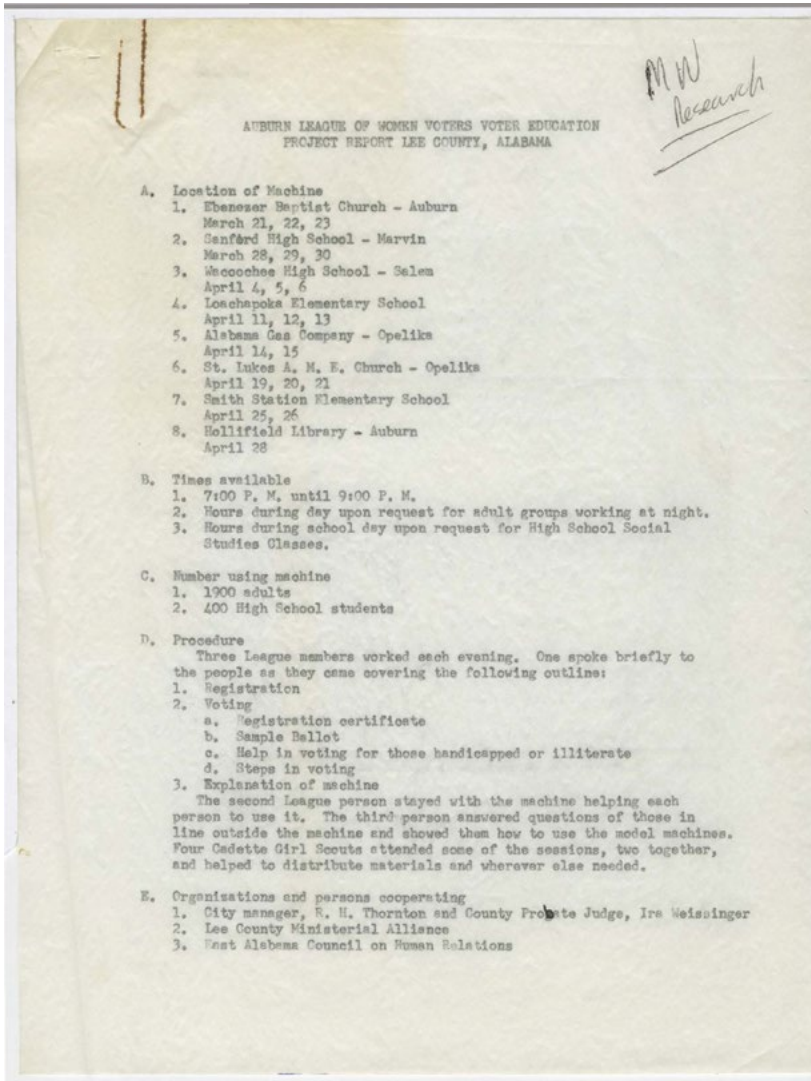
Sincerely yours,

Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.
Director
Voter Education Project

PRIMARY SOURCE SET ONE (CON'T)

GRASSROOTS EFFORTS BY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Report, Auburn Women's League Voters Education Project Report, Lee County Alabama, 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0084>



PRIMARY SOURCE SET ONE (CON'T)

GRASSROOTS EFFORTS BY AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Letter, John Lewis to Beatrice Clay, September 1, 1976
 Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0241>

September 1, 1976

Mrs. Beatrice Clay
 National Council of Negro Women
 609 S. Walters Street
 San Antonio, Texas 78203

Number: 76-690-65-TX-2

Dear Mrs. Clay:

The Voter Education Project, Inc., has carefully considered the proposal of the National Council of Negro Women for an allocation of funds to conduct a voter registration/citizenship education program in Bexar County. We are pleased to inform you that we have approved the request in the amount of \$1,090.00 for a period of four weeks, to run from September 6, 1976 to October 2, 1976.

These funds may not be used to support partisan politics in any manner whatsoever, nor in behalf of or against any political candidate or party. Elected officials and candidates for public office cannot hold positions as our local agents.

The amount allocated is to cover the following:

2 Coordinators (\$25/wk for 4 weeks)	\$ 200.00
10 Canvassers (\$10/wk for 4 weeks)	400.00
Transportation	400.00
Telephone & Supplies	90.00
Total	\$1,090.00

In order to receive the initial installment of this allocation, you are to open a separate, regular checking account. The procedures to follow are outlined in section "A" of the enclosed memorandum.

Subsequent installments will be made after you have submitted proper narrative and financial reports. Additional funds will not be sent to the checking account until we have received both reports. The dates for submitting the reports are September 20; and October 6, 1976. See sections "B" and "C" of the memorandum for reporting instructions.

SUMMARY OF REPORTS FROM PROJECT

Name of Project National Council of Negro Women (NCNW)
 Project Director Mrs. Beatrice Clay Phone 512/534-1754
 Mailing Address of Project 809 S. Walters Street
San Antonio, Texas 78203

Grant Number 76-690-65-TX-2 Type of Grant Voter Regs./Citizenship Education
 Period of Grant From 9/8/76 to 10/2/76 Amount of Grant \$1,090.00
 Period Grant Extended From _____ to _____ Additional Grant _____

Name of Bank Texas State Bank *# 512-333-6210*
 Address of Bank P. O. Box 20100 *Alenda*
San Antonio, Texas 78220
 (City and State)

Account Number [607-8547] Initial Deposit \$400.00

NARRATIVE ¹ REPORTS	FINANCIAL ² REPORTS	DATE & AMOUNT REIMBURSED	TOTAL SENT PROJECT	BALANCE OF GRANT
		10/23/76 \$400.00	\$800.00	\$290
		12/15/76 \$290.00	\$1,090.00	-0-

1. Give period covered by report.
 2. Indicate period and amount spent.

PRIMARY SOURCE SET TWO

REGISTRATION REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph, *Voting Advocacy*, c. 1966

Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University

<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0192>



PRIMARY SOURCE SET TWO (CON'T)

REGISTRATION REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, June 3, 1968 to June 17, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0272>

Auburn, Alabama
Lee County

REGISTRATION REPORT TO
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

RECEIVED
JUN 18 1968

Name of Project Ad Hoc Committee on Voter Education and Registration

Date covered by report: From June 3 to June 17, 1968

Area covered by report Rest of Loachapoka and Salem in Lee County, Alabama

Date submitted June 17, 1968

Number registered by your project 18

Number denied registration by registrar 0

Reason _____

Number approached about registration 40

By canvass (give number of houses, buildings,
blocks) 46 houses

By meetings (give attendance, place) _____

Other (specify) We visited five churches in the vicinity of Salem
--gave them posters and information

Number refusing to register 6

Reason Three were Jehovah's Witnesses who can't vote
Three just won't--too old or their neighbors told them not to.

Remarks We approached a great deal of houses out in the county. Many times it
is hard to find places. We seem to travel a long way and see only a few people.
Our transportation is not up to par because of lack of funds. We do, However,
travel a long way ^{with} the transportation we ^{do} have.

PRIMARY SOURCE SET TWO (CON'T)

REGISTRATION REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, July 9, 1968 to July 15, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0278>

RECEIVED
JUL 18 1968

REGISTRATION REPORT TO
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

Name of Project Voter Education Registration

Date covered by report: From July 9 to July 15, 1968

Area covered by report Auburn

Date submitted July 16

Number registered by your project 16

Number denied registration by registrar NONE

Reason _____

Number approached about registration 80-100

By canvass (give number of houses, buildings, blocks) The North Side of Auburn

By meetings (give attendance, place) _____

Other (specify) _____

Number refusing to register ONE

Reason She had just got of from work and she WAS tired. This WAS her reason.

Remarks There is a problem in Auburn similar to the one out in the County. The people work during the week. Therefore it is hard for them to get to the registrar's office because they are open on a working day.

PRIMARY SOURCE SET TWO (CON'T)

REGISTRATION REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Report, Registration Report to the Voter Education Project, July 16, 1968 to July 20, 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0277>

Lee County
303B Foster St.
Auburn, Alabama

REGISTRATION REPORT TO
THE VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

RECEIVED
JUL 23 1968

Name of Project Ad Hoc Voter Education and Registration

Date covered by report: From July 16 to July 20, 1968

Area covered by report Auburn

Date submitted July 22

Number registered by your project _____

Number denied registration by registrar _____

Reason _____

Number approached about registration _____

By canvass (give number of houses, buildings, blocks) _____

By meetings (give attendance, place) _____

Other (specify) _____

Number refusing to register _____

Reason _____

Remarks From July 16 through July 20 we worked on getting people to hear the candidates speak at Auburn High School. We offered Transportation and also offered to relay the information to the people who could not be present. The candidates

are running for positions in the city and presented their platforms at this meeting. We are also setting up a Voting machine at a community center. This is in order to educate the people on how to use the machines when they go to the pools to vote.

PRIMARY SOURCE SET TWO (CON'T)

REGISTRATION REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph, *John Lewis and Julian Bond Speaking*, August 3, 1971
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A0002>



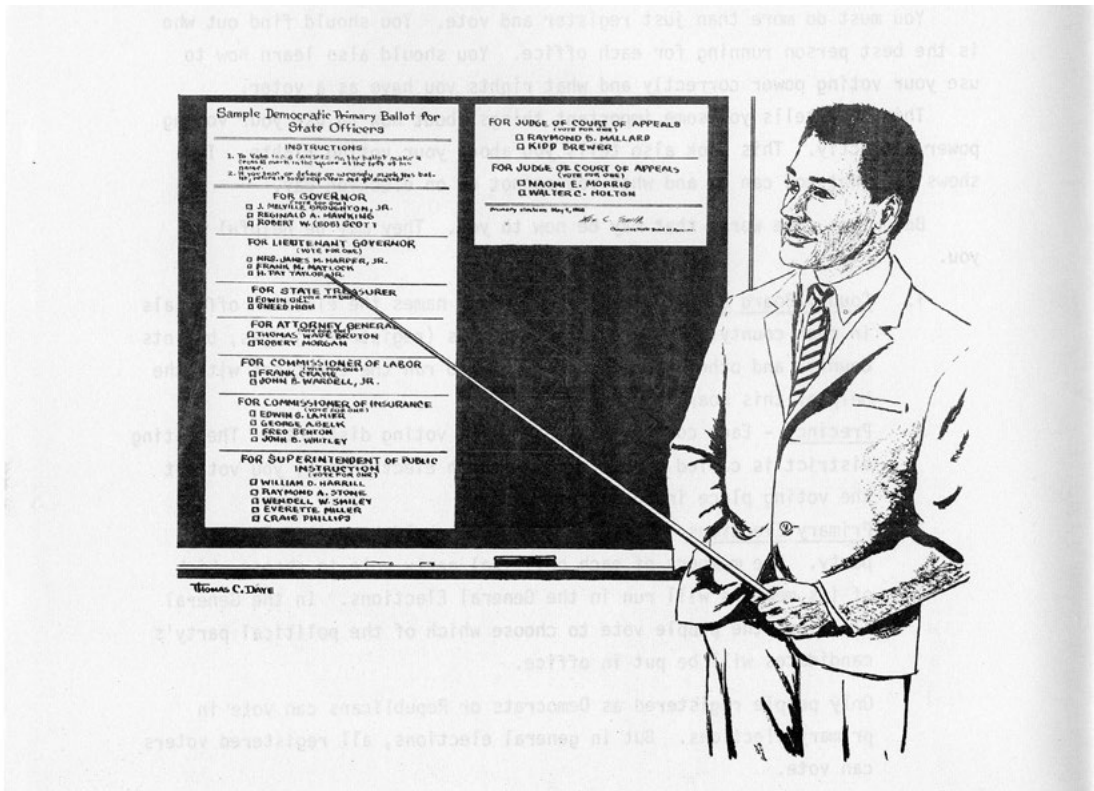
WHITE CASTLE, LA. -- John Lewis and Julian Bond (right) speak to a group of black citizens during their recent Louisiana Voting Rights Tour, August 3-5, 1971. As officials of the Voter Education Project (VEP), their efforts were an attempt to encourage the registration of almost 200,000 unregistered blacks in the State of Louisiana. (Photo by Archie E. Allen).

PRIMARY SOURCE SET THREE

VOTER EDUCATION PAMPHLET

Pamphlet, North Carolina Voter Education Project, Know Your Voting Rights, c. 1966
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University

Click to access the pamphlet: <https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0003>

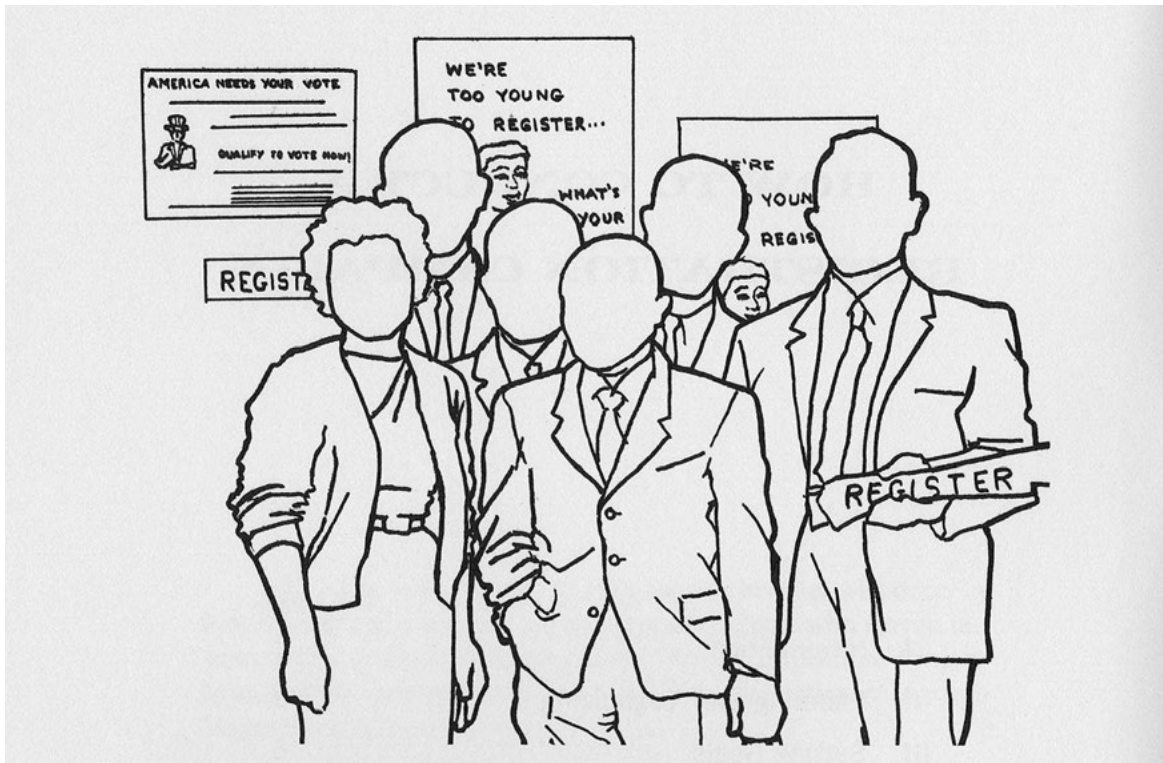


PRIMARY SOURCE SET FOUR

GRASSROOTS ORGANIZING

Pamphlet, Patricia Collins and the Voter Education Project Southern Regional Council, Inc., How to Conduct a Registration Campaign, March 1968
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University

Click to access the pamphlet: <https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0005>



VEP ACTIVITIES AND STRATEGIES CHART

What activities or strategies of the VEP are highlighted in the source(s)?	Quote two or three excerpts from the source(s) that describe activities or strategies.

Summarize the activities or strategies employed to increase voter registration highlighted in the source(s).

In what ways did these VEP activities or strategies help to build a more inclusive electorate?

VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT SOURCES

Documentary, *The Time Has Come*, 1977 [8:10–9:55]
National Archives and Records Administration (NAID 53804)
<https://youtu.be/4qT0e9j826g?si=3SWgu2di9a4O2YaB&t=490>

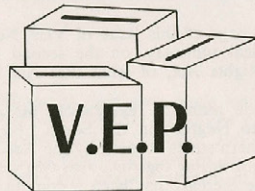
VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT SOURCES (CON'T)

Newsletter, VEP News, August 1967 (excerpt)
 Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0004>

Two-Year History of the Voting Rights Act

	NEGRO VAP 1960	TOTAL REGISTERED 6-1-67	% OF VAP REGISTERED	PRE-ACT REGISTERED	PRE-ACT % OF VAP REGISTERED	INCREASE	# REGISTERED BY FEDERAL EXAMINERS
ALABAMA	481,320	255,000	53.0	113,000	23.5	142,000	60,204
GEORGIA	612,910	334,000	54.5	233,000	38.0	101,000	3,164
LOUISIANA	514,589	273,000	53.3	163,000	31.8	110,000	21,159
MISSISSIPPI	422,256	199,000	47.1	35,000	8.3	164,000	51,808
S. CAROLINA	371,104	189,000	50.9	143,000	35.5	46,000	4,606
VIRGINIA	436,720	243,000	55.6	169,000	38.7	74,000	0
TOTAL	2,836,581	1,493,000	52.6	856,000	30.2	637,000	140,941

*VAP = Voting Age Population.



NEWS

VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

AUGUST 1967

VOL. 1, NO. 3

Southern Regional Council, Inc. 5 Forsyth St., N.W. Atlanta, Ga. 30303

NEGRO REGISTRATION UP 637,000 IN SIX VRA STATES

Two years of the Voting Rights Act have brought an increase of 637,000 in Negro registration in six Southern states covered by the Act, according to figures compiled by the Voter Education Project.

The six states are Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, Louisiana, South Carolina and Virginia.

siana, South Carolina and Virginia.

Total Negro registration in these six states was 856,000 when President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act into law on August 6, 1965. As of June of this year, total Negro registration stood at 1,493,000.

Before the Voting Rights Act went into effect, only 30.2 per cent of the voting-age Negroes in the six states was registered. Now the figure is 52.6 per cent.

Federal examiners have been assigned to at least some counties in all of the six states except Virginia. Of the 637,000 increase in Negro registration, federal examiners have accounted directly for 141,000.

As of June, federal examiners had registered 60,204 in Alabama, 51,808 in Mississippi, 21,159 in Louisiana, 4,606 in South Carolina and 3,164 in Georgia. In addition, the federal examiners have registered a total of 7,027 white voters in these five states.

The Voting Rights Act also applies to about 26 counties in North Carolina, but no examiners have been assigned in these counties. Examiners were assigned in Georgia only last spring by U. S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark. Three Georgia counties were designated.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 suspended literacy tests and other devices historically used to make it difficult for Negroes to register and vote in the South.

A study made by the Voter Education Project last year indicated that Negro registration tends to be higher in counties to which federal examiners have been assigned. Since county courthouses are symbols of discrimination in much of the South, many Negroes prefer to register with federal examiners.

Whenever possible, the Voter Education Project gives assistance to local registration programs in counties having federal examiners so that full use can be made of these examiners.

V. E. P. News Briefs

Reports a VEP-assisted program in Virginia: "July 4, 1967 a \$25,000 swimming pool was dedicated in our county. This was an excellent point to prove to our people that our food, recreation, jobs, etc. come about by voting. The Board of Supervisors and Town Council appropriated the \$25,000 for the project. This was due to our voting strength in the county."

VEP Director Vernon E. Jordan Jr. addressed the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University on July 4 on "The Negro in the Southern Political Process." Dr. Vivian W. Henderson, a member of the VEP advisory committee, also spoke at the Race Relations Institute.

Two Negro women—Mrs. Mary Singleton and Mrs. Sallye B. Mathis—have been elected to membership on the Jacksonville, Fla., City Council. Mrs. Mathis last year headed a NAACP voter registration program in Jacksonville that was assisted by VEP.

VEP Advisory Committee Member Frank E. Smith recently presented a paper entitled "Liberal Leadership in the Present-Day South" at a joint session of the Organization of American Historians and the Southern Historical Association. The meeting was held in Chicago.

VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT SOURCES (CON'T)

Newsletter, VEP News, October 1971 (excerpt)
Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.133%3A0012>



VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT, INC. 52 FAIRLIE ST., N.W. ATLANTA, GA. 30303

VOLUME 6 OCTOBER, 1971 — FEBRUARY, 1972 NUMBER 1

Black Elected Officials Total Climbs To 873



Pharr, Texas—Workers from Mexican-American Youth Organizations (MAYO) engage in Hidalgo County registration campaign. (Photo courtesy of YA MERO)

CHICANO, BIRACIAL GROUPS RECEIVE VEP SUPPORT

The Voter Education Project, following a commitment to make an all-inclusive organizing effort in 1972, has announced the funding of bi-racial citizenship education projects in three southern states and support for efforts to increase Mexican-American participation in the southern political process.

In January and February, 1972, the VEP announced the funding of five citizenship education grants to local organizations in Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana. The grants will be used to provide education for black and white workers on the nature of the political process and to encourage bi-racial participation in the political arena.

In the same period, the VEP also distributed allocations to eight local Mexican-American organizations for voter education and registration efforts in a 21-county area of southwest Texas.

(Continued on page 2)

The Voter Education Project has published the results of a February 3, 1972 survey which indicates that there are 873 black elected officials in the 11 southern states.

Prior to the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, the number of black officials in the south was fewer than 100. Since 1965, that number has increased as follows: 1966, 159; December, 1968, 385; November, 1970, 644; August, 1971, 735; to the February, 1972, figure of 873.

In Mississippi and Louisiana, the number of black elected officials increased sharply as a result of recent statewide elections.

In Alabama, the number of black elected officials reflected a decrease of 16 positions because the Justice of the Peace office was abolished by referendum on January 18, 1972.

A state-by-state breakdown yields the following totals: Alabama, 83; Arkansas, 96; Florida, 51; Georgia, 65; Louisiana, 119; Mississippi, 128; North Carolina, 103; South Carolina, 66; Tennessee, 47; Texas, 61; and Virginia, 54.

Three of the 873 black officials hold two offices. In Arkansas and Mississippi, a city councilman also serves on the school board. In Tennessee, a state senator is also a city councilman. Thus, there are actually 876 offices held by blacks in the South.

The 873 black elected officials hold public office as follows: state senators, 6; state representatives, 41; county officials, 111; city officials, 425; law enforcement officials, 117; and school board members, 176. The number of city officials includes 31 black municipal mayors.

Assessing the latest statistics on black elected officials, VEP Executive Director John Lewis stated, "The continued upswing in the total number of blacks in public office over the past six years is an indication that blacks are beginning to acquire the kind of political sophistication which will enable them to begin to control their own destinies."

"On the other hand," continued Lewis, "we must be aware that the number of blacks in office constitutes only a fraction of the total number of elected positions in the South. This means that blacks are still seriously under-represented in the political arena. In 1972, VEP will rededicate its efforts to continue to increase black participation in the southern political process."

A complete ROSTER OF BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE SOUTH, available from the office of VEP, includes the names, addresses, and titles of current black elected officials.



Fort Valley, Georgia—John Lewis (3rd from r.) and Julian Bond (r.) accompany Fort Valley State College students to register to vote. (Photo by William L. Dugas, II)

BLACK YOUTH POTENTIAL EMPHASIZED BY TOURS

The first in a series of voting rights tours on black college and university campuses in the South was conducted by John Lewis and Julian Bond on February 18, 1972, as they visited three Georgia state schools.

At Fort Valley State College in Fort Valley, Georgia, the first stop of the tour, VEP Executive Director John Lewis and Board Member Julian Bond addressed the student body at 10:00 a.m. Following the addresses, the black college students boarded waiting buses and drove to the county seat to become registered voters. In the highly successful registration effort, several hundred black students became registered.

As the tour continued to Albany State College, Albany, Georgia, Lewis and Bond encouraged the students to become registered and involved, but, beyond that, to go out into the black communities surrounding their campuses and organize political participation there. Following their addresses at 2:00 p.m. at Albany State, Lewis and Bond conferred with student and community leaders on problems and programs in the local area.

Speaking at Savannah State College in Savannah, Georgia, at 8:00 p.m., the VEP team stressed that the involvement of black youth in politics could, in many instances in the South, provide the necessary final push to more representative local governments.

The black campus voting rights tours are only one component of a VEP program for 1972 designed to tap the vast potential of the black youth vote in the South. In 1972, there are approximately 1,250,000 blacks between the ages of 18 and 23. The VEP will be stressing youth organizing in providing assistance to local registration and education projects and will work to organize effective networks of communication for black youth on college campuses throughout the eleven southern states.

IS THIS YOUR LAST ISSUE OF VEP NEWS?

We are currently revising our mailing procedures so that we can more economically provide information to individuals, groups, and libraries who wish to keep abreast of VEP activities.

Since many persons now receiving the VEP NEWS were originally on the mailing list of the Southern Regional Council (of which VEP was a part until 1970), we need assistance in determining whether to continue sending the newsletter, now published quarterly.

If you were originally on the SRC mailing list and wish to continue receiving the VEP NEWS, please clip

HOUSE REPORT SCORES VOTING RIGHTS ENFORCEMENT

In January, 1972, the Civil Rights Oversight Subcommittee of the U. S. House of Representatives issued a report which criticized Justice Department enforcement of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 in Mississippi.

A part of the House Committee on the Judiciary, the subcommittee based its report on hearings, conferences, and investigations. The subcommittee gave detailed consideration to the administration and enforcement of the Voting Rights Act in Mississippi during 1971, when 26 counties undertook to re-register voters.

The subcommittee reported that the Department of Justice did not properly enforce the Voting Rights Act. According to the findings, the Department of Justice did not seek to enjoin enforcement of non-enforceable changes affecting voting in Mississippi and failed to adequately protect the rights of persons registered by Federal examiners. The subcommittee stated that the Justice Department should have objected to the re-registration process in Mississippi and criticized a Justice Department policy which tolls the running of the 60-day consideration period of proposed changes in states covered by the Act.

The subcommittee recommended:

" . . . that the Department of Justice promptly seek judicial relief where a jurisdiction covered by the Voting Rights Act of 1965 knowingly enforces a change affecting voting which has not been precleared—particularly where the change would have a substantial impact on the voting rights of many people.

" . . . that the Department of Justice in determining whether a change affecting voting will have the effect of discriminating on the basis of race or color, apply the standard as Congress intended it and as the Supreme Court of the United States has interpreted it. That standard is not fully satisfied by an indication that the administration of the change affecting voting will be impartial or neutral. Rather that standard can only be fully satisfied by determining on the basis of the facts found by the Attorney General to be true whether the ability of minority groups to participate in the political process and to elect their choices to office is augmented, diminished, or not affected by the change affecting voting in view of the political, sociological, economic, and psychological circumstances within the community proposing the change.

" . . . that the Department of Justice clearly demonstrate a no-nonsense policy of enforcement by utilizing civil and criminal sanctions in certain cases where the action of State or local officials openly flouts the provisions of the Voting Rights Act."

this portion of the newsletter and return it to us immediately. IF YOU DO NOT NOTIFY US BY RETURNING THIS PORTION WITH YOUR MAILING ADDRESS ON THE BACK, WE WILL NOT INCLUDE YOUR NAME IN FUTURE MAILINGS.

Please disregard this request if you responded to VEP's direct-mail financial appeals and began receiving the VEP NEWS after making a contribution. Your name will automatically be retained on our mailing lists.

—Editor

VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT SOURCES (CON'T)

Newsletter, Inner City Citizenship Education Project Newsletter, August–September 1969 (excerpts)
 Voter Education Project, Robert W. Woodruff Library, Atlanta University
<https://radar.auctr.edu/islandora/object/auc.076%3A1488>

Black Elected Officials in the Southern States

	Ala.	Ark.	Fla.	Ga.	La.	Miss.	N. C.	S. C.	Tenn.	Texas	Va.	TOTALS
U. S. Congress	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Statewide Offices	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
State Senate	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	5
State House	0	0	1	12	1	1	1	0	6	2	1	25
Local Offices	70	55	22	18	62	50	17	27	22	18	23	384
TOTALS	70	55	23	32	63	51	18	27	30	21	24	414

Voter Education Project of the Southern Regional Council, Inc., April 21, 1969.

VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT SOURCES (CON'T)

Data Table, Black Voter Registration by State, 1962-1970¹

Black Voter Registration by State, 1962-1970
(%=Registered Out of Total Black Voting Age Population)

	1962	1964	1966	1968	1970
Alabama	68,317 (13.4%)	110,000 (22.8%)	246,396 (51.2%)	273,000 (56.7%)	315,000 (65.4%)
Arkansas	68,790 (34%)	80,000 (41.5%)	115,000 (59.7%)	130,000 (67.5%)	153,000 (79.4%)

APPENDIX 1: BLACK VOTER REGISTRATION BY STATE, 1962-1970 (% = Registered Out of Total Black Voting Age Population)

	1962	1964	1966	1968	1970
Alabama	68,317 (13.4%)	110,000 (22.8%)	246,396 (51.2%)	273,000 (56.7%)	315,000 (65.4%)
Arkansas	68,970 (34%)	80,000 (41.5%)	115,000 (59.7%)	130,000 (67.5%)	153,000 (79.4%)
Florida	182,456 (36.8%)	299,960 (63.8%)	286,446 (60.9%)	292,000 (62.1%)	302,000 (64.2%)
Georgia	175,573 (26.7%)	270,000 (44.1%)	289,545 (47.2%)	344,000 (56.1%)	395,000 (64.4%)
Louisiana	151,663 (27.8)	163,041 (31.7%)	242,130 (47.1%)	305,000 (59.3%)	319,000 (62%)
Mississippi	23,920 (5.3%)	28,500 (6.7%)	139,099 (32.9%)	251,000 (59.4%)	286,000 (67.7%)
North Carolina	210,450 (35.8%)	258,000 (46.8%)	281,134 (51%)	305,000 (55.3%)	305,000 (55.3%)
South Carolina	90,901 (22.9%)	144,000 (38.8%)	190,609 (51.4%)	189,000 (50.8%)	221,000 (59.6%)
Tennessee	150,869 (49.8%)	218,000 (69.4%)	225,000 (71.7%)	228,000 (72.6%)	242,000 (77.1%)
Texas	111,014 (26.7%)	375,000 (57.7%)	400,000 (61.6%)	540,000 (83.1%)	550,000 (84.7%)
Virginia	110,113 (24%)	127,000 (29.1%)	205,000 (46.9%)	255,000 (58.4%)	269,000 (61.6%)
Total	1,344,519 (26.8%)	2,074,461 (40.8%)	2,620,359 (52.2%)	3,112,000 (62%)	3,357,000 (66.9%)

Sources: Appendix II in Pat Watters and Reese Cleghorn, *Climbing Jacob's Ladder: The Arrival of Negroes in Southern Politics* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967); Voter Registration in the South, Summer 1966, Box 563, Folder 3, SCLC Papers, MARBL, Emory University; Voter Registration in the South, Summer 1968, Folder 7607, NCF Papers; and VEP Annual Report, 1970, Reel 177, SRC Papers. Total population figures for percentages based on 1960 census.

¹ Compiled by T. Evan Faulkenbury, *Poll Power: The Voter Education Project and the Financing of the Civil Rights Movement, 1961-1992*, Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2016. <https://cdr.lib.unc.edu/downloads/5712m6991>.

VEP ANALYSIS AND IMPACT ACTIVITY

Gather evidence from the sources to construct an argument addressing the question: *To what extent did the activities and strategies of the Voter Education Project build a more inclusive electorate between 1966 and 1977?*

	Evidence of changes in voter registration from this source (add two or three facts or data points).	Did this impact local, state, or federal elections?	Are there continuing issues? What are the next steps for the VEP (if discussed)?
Documentary, <i>The Time Has Come</i> , 1977 [8:10–9:55]			
VEP News, August 1967 (excerpt)			
VEP News, October 1971 (excerpt)			
Inner City Citizenship Education Project Newsletter, August–September 1969 (excerpt)			
Data Table, Black Voter Registration by State, 1962-1970			