

S.
Gordon

Box 13137
University Station
Gainesville, Florida
January 21, 1964

James Mc Cain
CORE
38 Park Row
New York 38, New York

Dear Mr. McCain,

Spiver Gordon, Field Secretary for Florida, has just left for the staff meeting in Ia. after a visit here in Gainesville with us. Because of the circumstances here during his visit and his conduct, a number of the activists who met Spiver have expressed to me the hope that someone from Gainesville CORE would write to you and Mr. Haley commending him. Since I join wholeheartedly in this sentiment, I thought I would drop you a note on the subject.

The last week in Gainesville (coinciding with Spiver's visit) happened to be one of great tension and also very militant reorganization of civil rights forces due to a blatantly discriminatory act on the part of the vocational education department for the county. After a number of nightly meetings it was decided that a group of 14 would chain out whites from entering the segregated night classes. These 14 are local CORE members, although the larger group sponsoring the project includes four civil rights organizations in the city. I can honestly say that Spiver's presence, even though he is not known here, contributed greatly to the success of the project, the rational manner in which it was conducted, and the force of our negotiating meeting with the superintendent of schools in which he participated wonderfully. He conducted the non-violent workshop. The main thing which impressed so many people, including marginal CORE supporters, was his appearance, his ability to listen to everyone's opinion, his willingness to pursue each suggestion, and his own well timed and very appropriate advice. Having been a field worker, I know there is a great temptation to feel called upon to structure such situations, but Spiver listened well and commented only when his own experience provided really needed help. Although he did not lead in the project, he was willing to participate wherever it was thought he would be effective—he scared the school people royally without detracting from the force of the local people. In short, we feel that his visit was fruitful (which is not always the case) and welcome him back, and in this I speak not only for the more militant people, but also for those moderates whose heads were cleared in many cases by Spiver's own reasonable approach to a situation in which a militant response had already been decided on.

It appears that we may now have the beginning of an "in" in the Negro community here. I was really surprised myself at the number of people who are willing to commit themselves to civil disobedience and hard work in association with CORE (as most people considered this last project a CORE project). I hope that we can begin a strong organization program.

My regards to you both, and I hope we will be seeing one another again soon,

Judy

Judy Benninger

for: Gainesville CORE and

Ad Hoc Committee on Vocational Ed.

cc: Richard Haley