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Carolina Press has set the text in a minuscule font. The reader who struggles with this aspect of the book can empathize with Ruggles, whose eye illness plagued him at a relatively young age. Hodges speculates that “the onset of cataracts that would eventually blind him” was the cause (113).

Hodges, the George Dorland Langdon Jr. Professor of History and Africana and Latin American Studies at Colgate University, has given us a long overdue biography of Ruggles that would have pleased Dorothy Porter Wesley.

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NOTES

¹ Dorothy B. Porter, “David Ruggles, an Apostle of Human Rights,” *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (January 1943), 23.

² *Ibid.*, 24.

³ Samuel J. May, *Some Recollections of Our Antislavery Conflict* (Boston: Fields, Osgood, & Co., 1869), 285.

⁴ Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton and Mulligan, 1855), 341.

Bruce Watson, *Freedom Summer: The Savage Season that Made Mississippi Burn and Made America a Democracy* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2010).

Among the most compelling moments in the unfolding of the long civil rights movement was the SNCC initiated campaign to bring one thousand mostly white northern college students to Mississippi in the summer of 1964. As an admission of the dangers and difficulties of mounting a movement for voter registration with limited and often begrudging help from the federal government and in the face of intractable and violent white supremacist state authorities, the mostly black SNCC staff wrestled with the impact, both positive and negative, that such a large contingent of young northerners would mean for both short-term and long-term goals. Those in SNCC, like Bob Moses, who had seen supporters among the indigenous African-American community in Mississippi terrorized and killed with little national attention, eventually persuaded others in the organization reluctant to cede the slow-building development of confident local black leadership to outsiders, even well meaning northern allies. Ultimately, the impact of what was called “Freedom Summer” did influence the internal and external politics of SNCC, as well as challenging the state and nation to recognize the full citizenship rights of Mississippi blacks.

The great strength of Bruce Watson’s gripping narrative of Freedom Summer lies in his ability to portray this episode as a dramatic confrontation that changed the lives of those who participated while acknowledging the contribution it made to the realization of a civil rights agenda. Watson is particularly adept at incorporating the stories of the volunteers, adding immeasurably to those studies

from movement veterans and academics. While incorporating the most recent scholarship on the civil rights movement, SNCC, and Freedom Summer, Watson's book often dispenses with the finer shadings of many other studies in order to move along the drama. Such dramatic framing certainly provides the general reader with an insightful portrait of the courage, tenacity, and inventiveness of those involved in Freedom Summer, whether student outsiders or intrepid indigenous black residents whose risks were even greater than the volunteers. Relying on lengthy interviews with a wide variety of Freedom Summer volunteers, Watson skilfully weaves their memories with documents from the period in order to reconstruct the perils and possibilities of the time. From the high-profile murders of Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner to the quiet work of the Freedom Schools, Watson manages to navigate through the rough and high times that made up Freedom Summer.

On the other hand, the compulsion to rely on dramatic framing throughout leads Watson to some glaring claims and omissions that ultimately detract from a more inclusive understanding of the successes and failures of Freedom Summer. Among one of the more startling assertions made immediately in the "Prologue" is the allusion to Fannie Lou Hamer's admittedly riveting testimony before the Credentials Committee of the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Referring to that incident as one that "nearly ended the political career of the president of the United States" (13) is such an exaggeration that it both distorts the difficulties confronting the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at Atlantic City and the manipulation and stage-management of the National Convention by Lyndon Johnson and his liberal allies. Moreover, in his insistence on the idealism of the student volunteers, he diminishes the political backgrounds and experiences of those who came to Mississippi in the summer of 1964. Beyond being "jaded by the Bay of Pigs or darkening reports from Vietnam" (19), a significant percentage of the volunteers were already committed to either an anti-imperialist perspective or a growing political sense, reflected in SNCC's analysis, of the linkages between domestic and foreign policy, a linkage that Bob Moses would make very explicit in the 1965 SDS-sponsored anti-war demonstration in Washington, D.C.

While there is no denying the impact that the summer had on the volunteers who, like Mario Savio, would use that experience to inform their work on college campuses and in northern communities for the rest of the decade and beyond, Watson's almost ahistorical approach to the meanings and impact of Freedom Summer lead to some astounding misrepresentations. Overlooking the more nuanced readings of SNCC's ideological crises in the aftermath of Freedom Summer rendered in studies by Francesca Polleta, among others, Watson argues that "SNCC surrendered to rage and resentment." (269) Neglecting the continuing work that SNCC did in the South, especially in Alabama and the development of the local Lowndes County Black Panther Party, Watson seemingly capitulates to the bookending of Freedom Summer as the epitome of the civil rights drama

and idealism. Certainly, Atlantic City soured many of the black and white followers of SNCC on liberalism. Yet, to assert, as Watson does that Freedom Summer alone was responsible for the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act (280) is to deny the dramatic impact of the 1965 Selma March and all of the work that went on before and after that march, including bringing down additional white student, clergy, and adult allies to rally in Montgomery, Alabama. Indeed, there was another variation of Freedom Summer in 1965, this one sponsored mainly by SCLC, which recruited mostly white college kids who added their own contributions to the struggle for civil rights in Mississippi.

Of course, as demonstrated by historians John Dittmer and Charles Payne, much of the ultimate meaning of Freedom Summer was about how local blacks translated the work generated in 1964 into projects that would change the educational and political lives of Mississippi African-Americans even as later transformations in Mississippi continued to perpetuate racial discrimination. This is not to deny the important work done by the white volunteers in Freedom Summer that Watson so dramatically catalogues. Yet, for Watson, the tidy march of history requires his moving work to end up on a particularly ironic note with the election of Barack Obama in 2008. Attempting to resurrect the idealism of those Freedom Summer volunteers of 1964, Watson minimizes the political contradictions underlying Obama's victory. Quoting one of the Freedom Summer participants about the renewed optimism unleashed by the "historic inauguration of a black president" (300), the book's ending only reinforces the point that drama and symbolism are not the only stuff of real historical transformation. While capturing the drama and symbolism of Freedom Summer with brilliant reportage, Watson too often overlooks the very untidy processes of substantive and radical change.

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Elizabeth Abel, *Signs of the Times: The Visual Politics of Jim Crow* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

Elizabeth Abel eloquently labels her study of the signage that mandated racial separation during the era of *de jure* southern segregation as a response to the "need for an archive of the ordinary." (xx) In describing the quotidian nature of the written markers of segregation, Lillian Smith, a white southerner and one of Jim Crow's most ardent contemporary critics, famously recalled, "I don't think we noticed the signs. Somehow we seemed always to walk through the right door." Abel gives us the scholarly apparatus for reflecting on these memories of segregation, demonstrating that in the built environment of the pre-1964 South these signs were so common as to be rendered almost invisible to some. No doubt black