

FRIENDS OF CHILDREN OF MISSISSIPPI
507½ North Farish Street
Jackson, Mississippi

March 9, 1967

Dear Friends:

This is a letter introducing the Friends of Children of Mississippi to you. Thus far, we have not been able to come together and discuss the history of "Friends" and what it is today.

The Friends of Children of Mississippi was originally created to coordinate and plan strategy to achieve the re-funding of the Child Development Group of Mississippi (CDGM). The "Friends" involvement was initiated on October 15, 1966, when a few CDGM staff members relocated in the present Friends' office. From this office the few CDGM staffers, hand-in-hand with communities across the state, staged an up-hill fight for the resurrection of the present program. During this period of time, CDGM was able to attract the necessary national attention to its cause. Church groups, influential individuals and other groups came to aid in resurrecting the CDGM program.

The massive struggle to revive the only poverty program in the country with a large following of poverty-stricken people continued through December 16. It was determined on December 16, 1966 that CDGM would be awarded a grant which would include nineteen counties.

After the above determination was made, OEO under pressure, displayed its contempt for the CDGM program and the poor people of Mississippi with the following two action:

1. It was month and a half before OEO officially signed the grant.
2. Even more heart breaking and tragic, OEO officials arbitrarily eliminated five counties which were included in the original nineteen--five counties which participated in previous CDGM programs.

This action implies that the people in these counties do not have a choice in the type of program they might desire to serve them. This flagrant abuse of institutional power displays total disrespect for the poor people in these counties and for poor Mississippians across the state.

In answer to the first point, CDGM's grant was given final approval by CEO on February 1, 1967. Since that time, the CDGM Board of Directors and staff have worked toward operating a successful program.

What is the choice for those counties excluded from the CDGM grant? On January 18, 1967, after recovering from the shock of not having the program of their choice, representatives from the six counties met in Jackson to decide what they were going to do. The decision this group had to make, after months of volunteer work and equally sharing the burden to aid in the refunding of CDGM, was:

1. To continue their own independent struggle to acquire the type of program which allow for total growth of poor people.
2. To be absorbed by another program, not of their choice, which would greatly limit participation and growth of poor people.
3. To have no program at all..

Are these choices parents and children deserve, after sacrificing to maintain volunteer centers and the giving of so much to CDGM in her darkest hours?

The representatives, with many obstacles to hurdle, elected the first alternative. Plans were made to reorganize center committees and elect county councils and a board of directors. This was accomplished by February 4, 1967, with the board of directors holding its first meeting. Since that time, the "Friends" have worked toward setting up and operating, on a minimum budget, a successful program.

Already the "Friends" program has been remarkably successful. There has been a minimum of twenty-three volunteer centers open for the past seven months, with very little assistance from sources outside the individual counties.


Dedication, inventiveness, and sacrifice made do where money, equipment, supplies and comfortable salaries do not exist. In one FCM community the people were pushed out of their center, but a fraternal group quickly made another building available. Persons from the community contributed a stove, refrigerator, and the center was allowed to tap water at a neighboring house. The community has been contributing food, supplies, transportation, home made-toys for the children and volunteer time. In another community the teachers have been making clothing for the children.

The needs of "Friends" are great. We need assistance in the following areas.

1. Staffing
2. Supplies
3. Development Teacher Material
4. Financial Support to pay our staff subsistence wages and to pay our office expenses.

Will you help us? Your assistance will be greatly appreciated by all the children, parents, workers, and board members.

Sincerely yours,


Frederick R. Mangrum, Jr.
Director

I will pledge the following support to
the Friends of Children of Mississippi on
a bi-weekly basis.

\$5	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$10	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$15	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$20	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$25	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please make all donations payable to Friends
of Children of Mississippi.