

of jealousy or greed or self-seeking” (153). Fundamental to the realization of this has been a supportive community of parents and educators who encourage students toward excellence and provide older students with the opportunity to mentor and support younger students. The continuation of Gascoigne’s vision and the success of The Study are ultimately attributed to the uniqueness of each subsequent headmistress, her capacity to leave an enriching legacy behind, and her ability to maintain the homelike community established by the founder.

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Jon N. Hale

*The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*

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New York: Columbia University Press, 2016. 320 pp.

In *The Freedom Schools: Student Activists in the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*, Jon N. Hale provides a detailed account of the role of grassroots educational experiments in the 1964 Freedom Summer campaign and beyond. Delving deeply into a subject that he rightly points out has too often been marginalized in studies of the civil rights movement at large and in the state, Hale situates the Freedom Schools in the long history of education in Mississippi, describes their founding and operations, connects them to other forms of activism at the time, and traces their impact in subsequent years. In the process he makes three main arguments. First, he asserts that middle and high school students organized protests in small communities around the state during and immediately the Freedom Summer campaign, and that their experience in the Freedom Schools led many of them to activist careers later in life. In addition, Hale demonstrates that education, and the demands for equal access to it and ideas about its potential to liberate, were key components of the civil rights struggle. Finally, Hale traces the Freedom Schools’ impact on the development of a “progressive student-centered pedagogy” (13) that continues to influence education scholars and policy debates today. While falling short of proving that the “Freedom Schools constitute one of the most unique legacies of the civil rights movement and, indeed, American History” (14)—a claim that exemplifies an unfortunate hyperbolic or hagiographic tendency that in places mars the book—Hale has addressed a gap in the literature on the movement with a story that is both grounded in the experience of the people and connected to broad themes about how to achieve racial equality.

There are many strengths of this work that make it compelling and provide bountiful food for thought. To begin, Hale contextualizes the Freedom Schools in Mississippi African Americans’ long quest for access to education, from Reconstruction era community sacrifices to build schools, to campaigns for equalization and the reaction to *Brown v. Board of Education*, establishing that the goals of organizers in the 1960s did

not spring up in a vacuum but rather tapped into a deep and broad well of precedent. Perhaps one of the most appealing and successful aspects of the book is Hale's use of oral history interviews with former students, teachers, and community members. With these sources he is able to draw a very personal portrait of how young people learned civil rights activism, what drew them into the Freedom Schools, what they experienced there, and how they took that with them at the end of the summer. At the heart of the book is a comprehensive report of how the schools were organized, including finding locations, recruiting volunteer teachers, developing a curriculum, training the instructors, and filling the seats with students. This is followed by a similarly evocative portrait of what went on inside of the classrooms on a day-to-day basis. As Hale emphatically notes, the Freedom School experiment did not end at the close of the summer project. Young people continued their fight for a meaningful education through activism in the public schools over the next year. Moreover, Hale demonstrates how the Freedom School idea was incorporated into the Mississippi War on Poverty and Head Start Program and the Black Power Movement's educational initiatives. For education policy scholars, perhaps the most useful part of the book will be the discussion of how the model and ideals of the Mississippi Freedom Schools of 1964 have informed contemporary projects, from perhaps the most well-known, the Algebra Project, to others in Philadelphia, Chicago, Tucson, Michigan, and elsewhere.

A few weaknesses limit the book's achievement. Of lesser importance, there are some writing and copy-editing errors and some repetitiveness, stemming from covering similar themes in more than one place and from the overuse of certain phrases, which can be frustrating to the reader. More significantly, the book is at times over-argued; Hale makes sweeping statements about events or about the historical narrative of the movement that do not reflect the current state of scholarship. For example, he asserts that "students too young for college and too young to vote were not typically viewed as serious participants in the movement" (95), which would likely surprise the teenagers brutalized and/or arrested in Louisville (1961), Albany (1962), and Birmingham (1963). Moreover, in several places he mischaracterizes the narrative of the Mississippi movement by picturing it collapsing or ending in 1964, as a way to assert that instead the Freedom School alumni carried it on much longer. Historians employing the long civil rights movement approach have amply demonstrated the persistence of activism on a local, state, and regional level by this point in time, as illustrated by among others Todd Moyer's *Let the People Decide: Black Freedom and White Resistance Movements in Sunflower County, Mississippi, 1945–1986* (University of North Carolina Press, 2004). The story Hale constructs of the Freedom Schools stands as a significant contribution to the scholarship on the Mississippi Movement, without requiring an overstated critique of the "whitewashed version of the Freedom Summer campaign that scholars typically recall" (110). Indeed, minus these small distractions from the prose, Hale's work is an engaging and important study which brings insights from the experiences in the past to bear on discussions of how educational institutions and educators can be allies in the ongoing struggle for freedom.

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