

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

CHARLES ENLOW KOEN

Born in Cairo, Illinois, August 7, 1945.

Became involved in the civil rights struggle in the summer of 1963 in Cairo, in the integration of Public Eating Facilities. Was appointed Chairman of the non-violent Freedom Committee in Cairo at the age of 16. Was clubbed while peacefully demonstrating in August of that summer with a scar still on head from that beating. Was placed in jail at least 7 times with 10 days spent on a hunger strike along with John Lewis, Chairman of SNCC.

Arrested in Charleston, Mo. for attempting to intergrate public eating facilities there in 1963.

Attended McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill., at the age of 17 remained there for 3 years from 1963-1967 in the School of Liberal Arts and Theology. Was an organizer at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois.

Left School in 1967 to study under Professor Harry Voorath in Group Dynamics for 7 months at Breckenridge Job Corps Center, Morganfield, Ky.

Returned to Cairo in 1968 to head the Illinois Migrant Council School. The School prepared Migrants to enter the mainstream of life through this adult education.

Established the Southern Illinois Cooperative Association in 1967 which now operates a large Supermarket in Cairo. Started a cooperative newspaper in the community.

Became coordinator of the Black Economic Union of midwest leaders in 1968, the BEU attempted to obtain money for Black Cooperatives and businesses.

Coordinated (and won) an effort to obtain back pay for 80 mother who were fired by the school board. The mothers worked in a school lunch program.

Organized and became prime-minister of the National Black Liberators, a political oriented organization that elected a state representative and senator and assisted in the election of Rep. William Clay to U.S. Congress. Was almost beaten to death in the 9th District Police Station in St. Louis because of political activities as head of the Liberators. Was restricted to the state of Illinois and returned to Cairo.

After continous attacks on the Blacks of the community assisted in organizing the United Front. Also became a part of SCLC Operation Breadbasket Hunger Campaign and after a successful completion, June 1969, returned to Cairo as Acting Executive Director of the United Front. Initiated the "Drive to Save Cairo" by making demands on the Governor and Attorney General of Illinois. Assisted in organizing the United Christian Front and was appointed Executive Director. The UCF is a statewide group of clergy and laymen moving in Cairo and other cities against social injustices.

Married to Clydia Watson; daughters; Caral; Robbie5.

Ordained Minister in National Baptist Assoc. (Missionary Baptist).