

“Out in the Rural: A Health Center in Mississippi”

Carolyn Chu

Prior to the 1960s, most health care in the United States had been delivered privately to those who could afford it or administered via church-based “charity” systems to those who could not. When President Lyndon B. Johnson and the federal government declared a “war on poverty” via the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964, medical and civil rights activists seized the opportunity to create public health systems that could reduce disparities in wealth and health.

At the time H. Jack Geiger was a young doctor working at Tufts University. As a medical student, Dr. Geiger had studied the principles of Community Oriented Primary Care with Sidney Kark and colleagues in rural Natal, South Africa. [See page 116 of this issue] Along with the residents of North Bolivar County, Mississippi, Dr. Geiger worked to establish a center that would combine local resources with federal funds to empower this economically devastated community of the Mississippi Delta. By establishing a network of aggressive outreach and education efforts, and developing multiple health employment opportunities, the Delta Health Center and its participants became an engine for social reform.

The Community Health Center model was adopted widely by the federal government and today is administered by the Bureau of Primary Care (<http://bphc.hrsa.gov/>). Dr. Geiger is currently a Professor Emeritus at the [Department of Community Health and Social Medicine](#) at the Sophie Davis School of Biomedical Education at City College in New York City.

The film

Shot in the fall of 1969 and the winter of 1970, “Out in the Rural: A Health Center in Mississippi” highlights one of the very first Community Health Centers in the United States: the Tufts-Delta Health Center of North Bolivar County, Mississippi. The film captures the broad vision of a community health center involved in far more than traditional medical diagnosis and treatment.

Credits

Music: The Locust Grove Choir and The Shelby Male Chorus. *Production Assistants:* Philip Elkin and Katy Siepman. *Sound Recording:* Don A. Rogers. *Produced and Directed by* Judy Schader Rogers.

To view the video

This video is best viewed with Windows Media Player and can be downloaded by [clicking here](#). The movie is 22 minutes in length and it may take some time to open in your viewer.

Acknowledgments

We gratefully thank Dr. Jack Geiger for giving us permission to reproduce this film for the Internet.

-Carolyn Chu, MD

