

A call to Americans to

SAVE THE HOSPITAL AT MOUND BAYOU

AN APPEAL BY CONGRESSMAN ANDREW YOUNG
AND A COMMITTEE OF CONCERNED AMERICANS

Mound Bayou Community Hospital
Mound Bayou • Mississippi 38762

The Committee to Save Mound Bayou Community Hospital invites your concern and participation in saving this small rural hospital — as a living Memorial to the Freedom Marchers and in recognition of the role played by the hospital in caring for the Freedom Marchers during the 1960s. The best possible living Memorial to the spirit and sacrifices of those days would be the improvement and modernization of the Mound Bayou Community Hospital.

Background

MOUND BAYOU COMMUNITY HOSPITAL was founded in 1942 as the TABORIAN HOSPITAL by the Knights and Daughters of Tabor, probably the leading all-Black Fraternal order in Mississippi at the time. For years, it was the only hospital in the area that served poor blacks. The Order financed the hospital until 1967 when funding was taken over by the Federal government. That funding will end in June 1976.

Its medical importance would be sufficient justification for keeping the hospital open, but there is also a historical significance. When Taborian Hospital opened its doors 33 years ago, it was the symbol of black pride and achievement — the only black controlled hospital in the State and one of the few in the country. It was also evidence of the determination that black people would not suffer for lack of hospital care if rejected by white-area hospitals, the rule at the time.

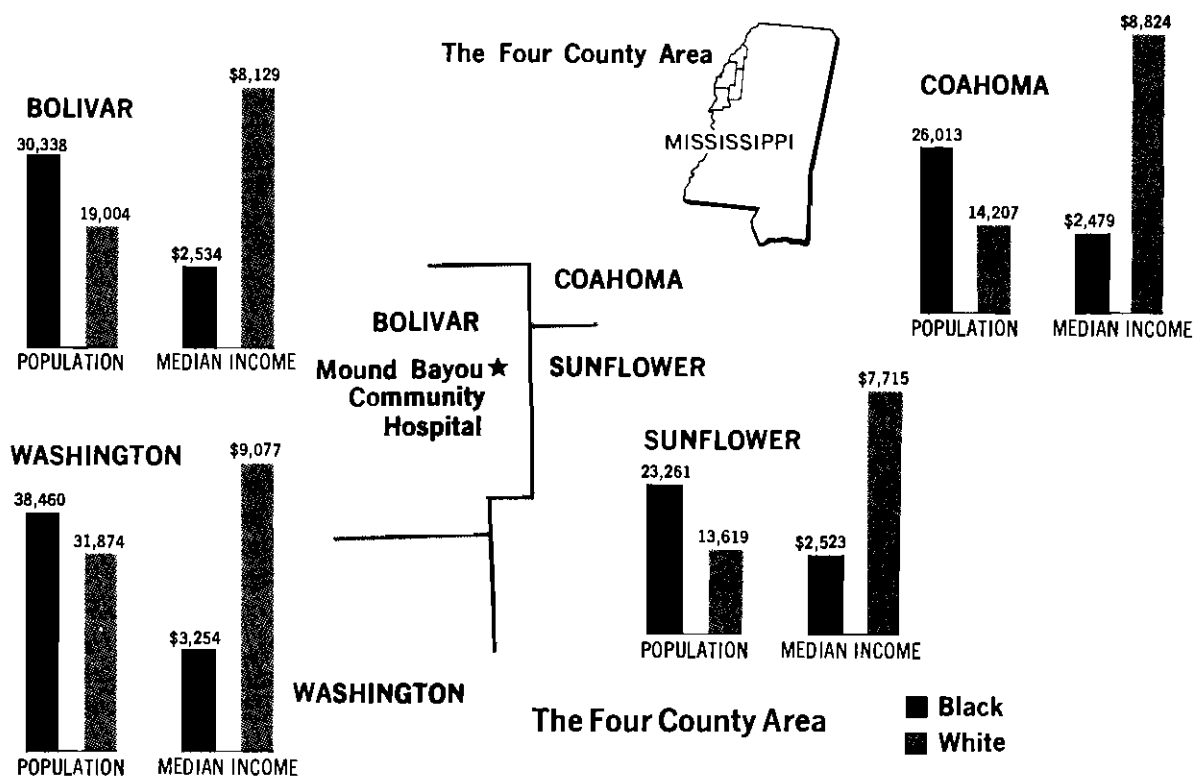
The World of Mound Bayou

The four-county area of Northwest Mississippi, served by the Mound Bayou Community Hospital, is in the heart of the Delta region of the State. It is one of the poorest areas of the country, and can hardly afford to lose any of its existing resources. Yet, despite its extreme poverty and desperate need to greatly improve its health, educational and economic resources of all kinds, this four-county area (Bolivar, Coahoma, Sunflower and Washington) is threatened with the impending loss of one of its two most important health facilities — the Mound Bayou Community Hospital (MBCH). MBCH is associated with an out-patient component, the Delta Health Center.

Mount Bayou Community Hospital has sur-

vived various crises over the years, but will close its doors if new sources of funding are not found by May 1976. The hospital's current funding from HEW will run out at that time. The region is too poor to support this facility through medical fees, third party payments or personal donations. In effect, Mound Bayou is in the heart of a rural unemployment pool, made so by the mechanization of "King Cotton".

One half mile down the highway from the Mound Bayou Community Hospital sits its sister component — the Delta Health Center — to which since 1967 19,000 poor people (black and white) have come for ambulatory health care. It is the outgrowth of the concern of young medical volunteers from



Source: County & City Data Book 1972

across the country who went into Mississippi to protect the health of the Freedom Marchers during the 1960s. They quickly extended their concern to the untended ills of the poor living below the poverty line with no access to continuous health care.

Though the Delta Health Center is not immediately threatened with loss of funding, it could not survive for long if the hospital closed. The Mound Bayou Community Hospital is the only facility to which the Health Center can refer its out patients in great numbers for further medical care or hospitalization.

There are four other hospitals in the four-county region to which the health center

refers some of its patients. But these hospitals have consistently shifted the burden of caring for poor people, particularly poor blacks, to the Mound Bayou Community Hospital and Delta Health Center. There are numerous instances of poor blacks and poor whites being refused care at one of the four hospitals, or by private doctors, because they had no health insurance or money.

Officials at both facilities state that approximately 80% of the patients at the hospital and 92% at the health center have neither adequate personal funds nor health insurance to pay their medical bills. Hospital officials state that several patients a week come to the hospital in a serious condition **in need of immediate attention** but who were turned

down by either a private doctor or another medical facility. "These are only the known cases. I am sure that others whom we treat were also turned down, but we don't know

about their having been rejected," says Howard Jessamy, the hospital's administrator. We cite two blatant cases of rejection to illustrate the point:

- A two months old baby was brought to the hospital by her distraught mother less than an hour after leaving the office of a prominent, upper-income doctor in Shelby, about three miles north of Mound Bayou. The baby had stopped breathing when the mother arrived. Breathing was restored through inserting a tube in the baby's throat. She was fed intravenously, and treated for pneumonia. She spent two days in the hospital which received only \$12.50 a day from the State for the baby's care.

- An 80 year old woman was sent to the hospital from Marks, Mississippi, some 60 miles northeast of Mound Bayou, by a doctor who had previously treated her for anemia. The elderly woman was accompanied by her daughter and arrived in an extremely weakened condition carrying some vitamin pills and a note which read: "Patient is weak; please examine." She was immediately treated by the medical staff which discovered she had cancer of the colon which required surgery. She was given blood and medication, but declined surgery because of her advanced age. She was discharged and later returned to Marks.

These cases are indicative of the kinds of patients both the hospital and health center have always cared for.

The Medical Need

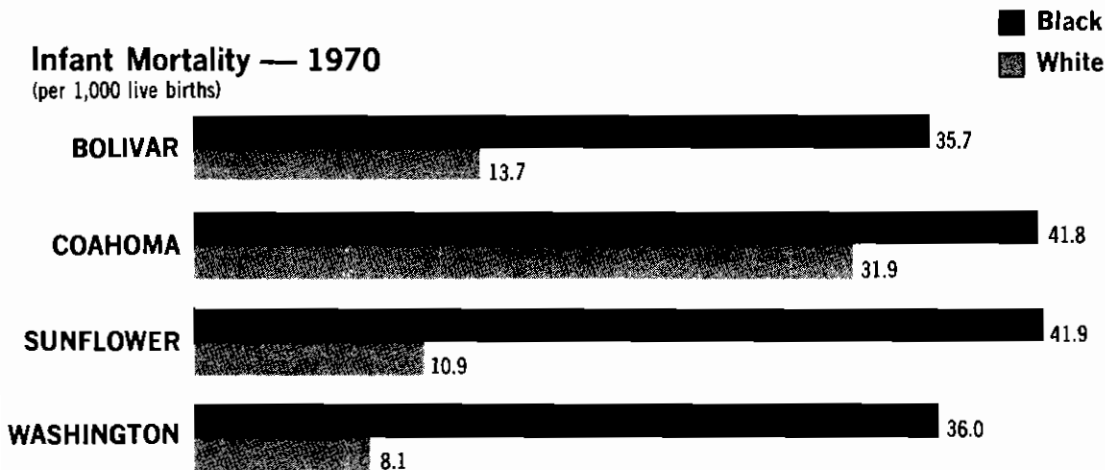
A cursory look at the social and economic statistics for the four county region served by the hospital and health center quickly reveals why both facilities not only need to continue in operation, but also to **expand** their facilities and staff.

Population: According to the 1970 census, the four-county region had a population of 197,482 of whom 60% (118,052) were black. More than half the total population was classified as "poor" or living below the government established poverty level. Also,



87% of those living below the poverty level were black. These poor people simply do not have the money or health insurance to pay for minimal health care, and often do not even have transportation to the nearest facility or doctor. In a 1971 survey of 964 families in the four-county region, conducted by the hospital, most respondents stated they did not use other area health facilities because they could not get to them, did not know about them or could not pay for the services.

Infant Mortality: The State of Mississippi generally ranks near the top (if not at the top) among states with the highest incidence of infant mortality among blacks. The four-county region has always had an extremely high incidence of infant mortality within the State. Figures compiled by the Mississippi State Board of Health for 1970 (the last year for which they were available) offer this comparison of infant mortality among blacks and whites in the four counties:



In a recent year, according to hospital officials, there were 1,035 births at the Mound Bayou Community Hospital and only five infant deaths. Since 1968, infant mortality among nonwhites in the four-county area has dropped dramatically. In the Census of 1960, infant deaths in the four-county area was 54.3 per 1,000 live births.

Total Patient Care: During 1974, the hospital served 2,768 patients, had 900 live births and an occupancy rate of 73%. Most of these patients cannot get treatment anywhere else in the area because private doctors and other health facilities simply have not and will not treat large numbers of poor blacks who have no money or health insurance.

What Must Be Done

As recently as September, 1975, the Mound Bayou Community Hospital was given the Community Service Award by the Congressional Black Caucus. That this small, poor

hospital with only five doctors in attendance should be singled out from the many throughout the nation is a significant testimonial of its service to human beings. Yet,

today it faces extinction.

The closing of Mound Bayou Community Hospital could be a disaster for the four-county region and specifically for the thousands of medically indigent blacks who depend upon it. There is overwhelming evidence that closing this facility or even reducing its capability to treat people would jeopardize the health and welfare of thousands of poor people in the area who simply do not have anywhere else to go for medical care. These are the people who for generations have been at the bottom of the pile and who, today, need health care more than most.

Men and women of goodwill throughout the country can save the Mound Bayou Community Hospital as a symbol of their concern for other Americans, who historically have not shared in the blessings of The War on

Poverty or The Great Society. Our appeal is not merely to save a small hospital in the Mississippi Delta and care for the Delta poor. Ultimately we hope to build and support a modern hospital and health center at Mound Bayou as the **only living** memorial to the courage and sacrifice of the Freedom Marchers of the 1960s. They gave their youth in a vibrant and generous crusade for others — many gave their lives. Their sacrifices must not be forgotten.

This concern, which the writer shares with his associates of the National Committee to Save Mound Bayou Community Hospital, is but a small candle of hope to thousands of poor people. But it will give evidence to some unfortunate human beings that they are not forgotten. Contributions (tax deductible) should be made out to the Mound Bayou Community Hospital. The writer and other members of the Committee will be grateful.

Andrew Young, M.C.



The Future Mound Bayou Community Hospital — Dedicated to the Freedom Marchers of the 1960s

Mound Bayou: Health Care For Those Who Cannot Pay

(From U.S. News & World Report June 16, 1975)

MOUND BAYOU, Miss

Nestled in the rich cotton and soybean country of the Mississippi Delta is a little 34-bed hospital at the intersection of paved Highway 61 and a dirt road.

It serves a rural, indigent community of more than 20,000 persons—more than half of whom can't pay for the health services they receive. Many travel 30 miles or more to reach the hospital, located in an area where there is no

State and Federal Government to continue operating. Recently, however, it got permission from the State to expand to a 44-bed facility at a cost not to exceed 3.3 million dollars.

Benefit performances. Last December, former Beatle George Harrison gave two benefit performances at the Capital Centre near Washington, D.C., which netted Mound Bayou \$166,000.

eleven surgery and consult on serious medical problems.

In emergencies or in cases beyond the means of Mound Bayou, patients may be sent to Memphis, 100 miles away, or Jackson, Miss., 140 miles distant.

Adequate staffing at all levels and staff turnover are serious problems. The Delta area, officials say, is not an attractive place to many young doctors and their families.

"The glamour lies in the major medical centers—not in the Mound Bayous," says Mr. Jessamy.

But the administrator adds: "While we don't have adequate staff, we're doing a good job with what we have."

Financially, the biggest problem facing a rural hospital such as Mound Bayou, where 70 per cent of the patients are unemployed or underemployed, is getting people to pay, and keeping costs from escalating out of sight.

Charges traditionally have been low and still are, though rising.

"If we increase the emergency-room fee from \$5 to \$25, we don't have a chance," said Mr. Jessamy. "We might collect \$5, but there's no way we can get \$25. The people don't have it."

What of the future of Mound Bayou, and other hospitals like it?

In the view of Mr. Jessamy: "Our problems won't solve themselves. They are likely to grow worse if left alone. We need some incentive programs for rural hospitals."

"Some members of Congress are pushing legislation to get physicians to serve in underserved areas. We need this. There should be Public Health Service bonuses to serve in these areas."

"Problems for the rural hospital or clinic or community center everywhere in this country are likely to get worse before they get better unless Congress steps in with some plan to save them."

The Black Experience in the South

Circa 1900 1960

As told by General Daniel (Chappie) James, Jr., Commander in Chief, North American Air Defense Command.

Ten of the James children died, most at very early ages, before Chappie's birth in 1920 in Pensacola, Fla.

"They died because there wasn't medical care available for blacks in that area even if they could afford it," he says. "We could afford it because my father worked like hell. But there were no black pediatricians."

"And so the pair of twins died in my momma's arms. She was at a white pediatrician's office and the deal was, he would see all the white babies first and at the end of the day, he would look through a peephole to see if any blacks were waiting. Momma waited for hours and by the time the doctor got around to her, the twins were dead."

physician in private practice. Mound Bayou Community Hospital sits in the oldest predominantly black community in America, founded by former slaves of the brother of Confederate President Jefferson Davis.

It previously was known as Taborian Hospital, a name which still appears above its door. It costs money to change signs.

Like most rural hospitals, privately incorporated Mound Bayou has always had hard going. Its history has been that of a long struggle to get funds from the

Says Administrator Howard T. Jessamy, a 27-year-old New Yorker with a master's degree in hospital administration from the University of Michigan:

"We know one of the reasons we are still open is because of the indigent care we offer which no one else will."

The hospital has six full-time physicians—four specialists in obstetrics and gynecology and two general practitioners. In addition, specialists come in several times each month from Meharry Medical College in Nashville to perform

Please Help the Mound Bayou Community Hospital

Gifts are tax deductible and should be sent to the MOUND BAYOU COMMUNITY HOSPITAL, MOUND BAYOU, Mississippi, 38762

A gift of \$1425 will staff the emergency room for 1 week.

A gift of \$531 will cover delivery and total care of a mother and a newborn child.

A gift of \$94 will pay for a day's care of an indigent patient.

A gift of \$30 will pay for a day's work of a Registered nurse.

A gift of \$20 will pay one day's salary of a nurse's aide.

A gift of \$15 will buy a dozen nasal masks for surgery.

A gift in any amount, together with the gifts of others, will help someone who is ill and without the means to pay.

