

A PETITION

To the Honorable GEORGE C. WALLACE
Governor of the State of Alabama
and
To the Members of the Alabama Legislature, Respectively
State Capitol
Montgomery, Alabama

We, the Negro citizens of the United States of America and of the State of Alabama, have been impoverished, oppressed, disenfranchised, and brutalized by a government in which we have no part, but which we must serve and support--a government whose tyranny offends common decency and defiles American democratic principles. We do therefore set forth these grievances:

1) We are subject to conditions of abject poverty. Because of ~~salaries as low as 18¢ per hour~~, whole families must work to provide subsistence incomes. Even so, 85% of the Negro families living in the 19 "Black Belt" counties have incomes of less than \$57.00 per week.

Yet our state government, the government in which we are denied participation, has neither authorized nor requested federal funds for poverty relief. Nor has it initiated any state programs to correct this situation.

2) We are oppressed by discrimination in employment and segregation in education and public accommodations. We have been robbed of our God-given dignity.

Yet our city, county, and state governments, the governments from which we are systematically excluded, refuse to implement the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the 1954 "Equal Education" decision of the Supreme Court. Instead, the state government has enacted punitive legislation designed specifically to deprive Negro teachers of their civil rights.

Redress through normal legal channels is denied. The same governments that oppress us prohibit us from participating in their activities.

Therefore: We petition this government, demanding that it immediately

- 1) register all its citizens of voting age, free of impediments, and
- 2) conduct a free and fair election;

thereby providing equal representation and participation of all citizens, Negro and white. in all levels of city, county, and state governments.

4) We have been brutally treated. When we have sought dignity, education, economic improvement, and the right to vote, we have been beaten, intimidated, coerced, jailed, and even murdered. Because of a corrupt system of justice, even our murderers are permitted to to unpunished. The city, county, and state governments, instead of offering protection, have defiled the sacredness of human life, encouraging lawless group to deprive Negro citizens of the right of self-determination. Law enforcement officials have met nonviolence with billy clubs, love with tear gas and have made a mockery of justice.

5) We have been denied the right to vote. Although Negroes comprise 46% of the voting-age population, they comprise less than 15% of the registered voters. In the 19 "Black Belt" counties, less than 3% of the Negroes have been able to register to vote. In some of these counties Negroes represent 80% of the population. Restrictive laws, mob rule, and police brutality have been used to deny registration to qualified and determined Negro applicants. In the 1964 presidential election no resident of the State of Alabama was permitted to vote for the President of the United

