

STATEMENT GIVEN BY JOHN H. BALL
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My fellow citizens: my heart bleeds when I see the diminutive degree of freedom you take in freedom for yourselves and your children. Are you so satisfied that you can afford to exclude yourselves from the world-wide struggle for freedom? Are you so pleased with this situation until you can afford to allow your children to grow up in the same Jim Crow society as you have?

It isn't enough to be well off yourself and allow your brothers and sisters to suffer. It isn't enough to say the word "freedom" in a prayer, or sing the word "freedom" in a song, or say "Freedom is what I crave," and make no effort to achieve it.

We have had a movement going on here over a year, trying to awaken you to your responsibilities as citizens. Many of you have called the movement "mess" and as a result refused to have anything to do with it. We must not allow ourselves to be fooled by penny ante jobs to the extent that we become steadfast and refrain from or disregard the practicality of reality. We must not allow ourselves to think, because we are not participating actively in the Movement, that we are respected or looked upon as having sound judgment by the white man.

We are not doing anything any different than what Christ did during his life on earth over two thousand years ago. He was simply trying to awaken people to their responsibilities as citizens and those rights which belonged to them as citizens. There, people called the mass meetings "mess", too. There were kings who felt that he was destroying their system of feudalism. And he was: because people began to flee from idolatry and seek something more tangible. The kings became angry and discontented just like the lily-whites today, and tried to make a deal with him. He would not listen to deals, the same as we don't listen to deals. The kings then had him killed, but not because he was a member of SNCC, NAACP, SCLC, or CORE, but because he was trying to teach the people the word of God and enlighten the poor people to the injustice which had been imposed upon them by the kings.

Abraham Lincoln wasn't killed because he was a member of SNCC, NAACP, SCLC, or CORE: he was killed because he wanted all Americans to be free from slavery, for he knew that the nation could not survive with half slaves and half free.

Those children were killed in Birmingham while at Sunday School, and they were not members of SNCC. They were merely citizens attending the House of God, exercising the First Amendment of the Constitution: the right to worship in a peaceful assembly. Medgar Evers, field secretary for NAACP in Mississippi, was killed because he wanted freedom for all his people. He gave his life for that cause. How about you helping to avenge our loss by continuing to push for what you know is right?

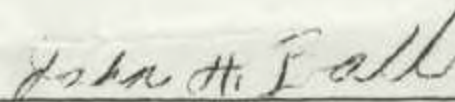
You see, my fellow citizens, this is nothing new. There have been over four thousand Negroes killed and mutilated in the South: 90% being in Mississippi, since 1860. They were not Negroes who were identified as leaders, but Negroes like yourselves who so openly and thoughtlessly said, "I'm not going to have anything to do with that mess!" You are involved, my friends, if you are black, and I presume you are. It is just a matter of time when some thoughtless illiterate pale-face throw a bomb into your window.

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Don't allow this to happen before you decide to act. Prevent this: trying to do something, toward achieving freedom and first class citizenship. This can only be done through voter registration. Every teacher should be a preceptor in their teaching. If you don't believe in voting, don't teach the students anything about it. On the other hand, if you do believe in voting, teach the students how to vote and vote yourself--thereby you are being a precept of what you teach.

Many have asked, "What is SNCC?" SNCC is many things: it is a breakthrough of segregation; it is a stool for a black man or woman to sit on in all white cafes; it is a seat for a black boy or a black girl in an all white school, college or university. It is a key to a restroom marked "For Whites Only." It is a symbol of justice in a white society; it is a resident in a white neighborhood; it is a key to equal job opportunity for Negroes based on their educational status and preparation rather than his pigmentation. It is a voice that cries out for freedom wherever it is lacking. It is a franchise to vote. Finally, SNCC is an organization that has surpassed its predictions, but yet digs up the roots of injustice and transplants the holes with justice, equity, and fair play for all people regardless of creed or color.

Everyone who loves freedom and hates injustice will support SNCC. You are not alone in this fight. Every Negro who knows the effectiveness of SNCC is a part of it through association. Do yourself justice by supporting this movement and let's hurry and get this job done. The speed by which freedom will come depends on every one of us. We can get it done today if we decide within ourselves that we are going all out to demand it. We intend to slug it out, nonviolently, of course, and to fight it out right here on this home front if it takes the rest of our lives... until Freedom comes and is ours!



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Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee