

COAHOMA COUNTY BRANCH NAACP
213 FOURTH STREET
CLARKSDALE, MISSISSIPPI

June 4, 1963

TO: BOARD OF MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS
CITY OF CLARKSDALE

RE: PERMISSION TO DISCUSS AND RESOLVE GRIEVANCES PERTINENT TO INTERACIAL
GOOD WILL AND UNDERSTANDING.

Now come the members, friends and supporters of the Coahoma County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People to request permission to present and discuss with you some problems that we feel must be resolved in our community. We regret the necessity of having to come before you after having asked and not received permission; but we feel that it is important enough to risk this possible affront to you, if the rights we seek and a peaceful community can be had at the same time.

The solutions to the problems we wish to discuss we feel can very well be handled by the endorsement and appointment of a Bi-Racial Committee, composed of the interested leadership of both racial groups. Such a Committee if supported by the Mayor and Commissioners could go a long way toward resolving these problems and correcting the unfavorable conditions under which we live and of which we are all aware.

The problems that we would want such a group or committee to look into and solve would be numerous. Besides those already present there will be others. Those that we would want looked into immediately by this proposed committee would include:

I. LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE COURTS:

A. Negroes generally feel that we do not have any chance of successfully defending ourselves when we are charged by the local officials and we are tried in the local courts.

B. Investigation into the activity of Clarksdale Police Department and the Police Commissioner in the following cases.

1. The Case of Mrs. Willie Griffin Lee. This young ladies' difficulty began with the Clarksdale Police Department, August of 1962. She is publicity identified as a member of the NAACP. She was a worker with the Coahoma County Voter Education Program, and was arrested while trying to persuade Negroes to go over to the Court House to register

She was later arrested in a case growing out of her attempt to retain a "nickle pickle" which she had purchased. A Negro boy under spurious circumstances tried to take this pickle away from her and they allegedly exchanged blows for which was

hauled into city court and fined \$200.00. Upon being released from the city she was promptly hauled into county court and fined again for the same charge. Gentlemen this is persecution.

2. The case of Mr. Dale Hurliman and three other students from the University of Iowa, as they visited here with friends who happened to be Negroes. They were harassed and abused in a manner that many citizens both Negro and white are ashamed.

3. A bomb thrown into the Centennial Baptist Church at the time that

Mr. Dick Gregory visited in the community and was appearing for the NAACP. The church on this particular night was surrounded by members of the Clarksdale Police Department including the Police Commissioner. When the bomb entered the Church, many of the persons inside ran out in panic and fear. The fact that a bomb had been thrown into the church was reported to police outside. No assistance nor investigation was made or given. Negroes upon returning to the meeting after all was quiet reported policemen parked across the streets laughing as Negroes ran from the church.

WE REQUEST AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CONDUCT AND ACTIONS OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER AT THE CLOSE OF THIS MEETING.

4. The Twelve O'Clock Curfew is a ready made "Harassment Gadget" in the hands of the city police to be used to intimidate Negroes. It was recently reported to us that Negroes have been so instructed by some members of the Police Department that if they are out of town and cannot get back into Clarksdale before twelve O' clock, to spend the night out of town or they will be arrested if they come into Clarksdale after 12 O' clock midnight. We have no intentions of obeying such a command.

II. EMPLOYMENT.

A. The general absence of Negro Employees above the area of common labor in municipal government and in the business community, needs correcting.

B. Negroes added to the Clarksdale Police Department would improve it's effectiveness and its public image tremendously. Negro and White persons working together in the Clarksdale Police Department would be a big factor in helping reduce and eliminate complaints of intimidation and harassment of Negroes.

III. EDUCATION

A. Poor quality of Education afforded Negro children due to continued segregated School System, despite Legal Rulings outlawing segregation in Public Education. A way must be found to begin desegregating the public school system without the difficulty and bitterness that has accompanied this activity in many other communities. Many more communities have accomplished

this fete without difficulty than those that have had difficulty. It can be done here without difficulty if we try.

B. Not a single Negro child attends an accredited school in this community, while all schools White children attend are accredited. We agree completely with the request of the PTA last week for a walk-way for Negro children attending Booker T. Washington School. The point is however; if white children had been attending Booker T. Washington School also, it would not have been necessary to petition for a walk-way. The school and city boards would have seen to it as they have done for the new Clarksdale Coahoma High School, which for the time being has all white students in attendance.

IV. VOTING RIGHTS:

A. The number of Negroes who are denied the right to Register to vote is alarming. An average week will find atleast fifty Negroes presenting themselves to Register to vote and most times fewer than five are permitted to register. Several of the ones denied the right to register are high school graduates.

1. The Circuit Clerk must somehow be persuaded to stop denying Negroes the right to register to vote.

2. Once the Negro secures the ballot without so much difficulty, Racial Prejudice will cease to be a major factor in politics and even you the members of the Board of Mayor and Commissioners can freely proclaim the rights and privileges due every American Citizen without facing sure defeat in the next election for having done so.

V. HUMAN DIGNITY:

A. The right to use any public facility without discrimination or segregation must be established. We insist that the stigma of racial inferiority be removed and the following facilities be opened to us as they are to all other citizens without segregation or discrimination. 1. Schools
2. Hospitals 3. Libraries 4. Playgrounds 5. Swimming Pools 6. Public buildings, including City Hall and Courthouse.

B. Local Press, Clarksdale Press Register, should be encouraged to exhibit human decency when referring to Negroes in its news column. It might be that such a step by the press will be followed by the business men of our community. This has been the experience of other communities that have had a Local Paper with the courage to speak up for Human Decency.

C. All Establishments opened to the general public should be persuaded and permitted to serve the general public without interference from the local law officials.

continued Board of Mayor and Commissioners ~~the~~

In addition to you we plan to inform the entire community of our grievances. We intend to saturate the area of Public Opinion wherever an opportunity can be found or made.

WE ARE OFFERING THE NAMES OF THE FOLLOWING PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY US TO REPRESENT US AND NEGOTIATE WITH RESPONSIBLE LEADERS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY. IF THE MAYOR AND THE COMMISSIONERS WILL APPOINT SUCH A COMMITTEE, SO WELL AND GOOD IF THEY WILL NOT, WE CALL UPON THE MINISTERS OF THE WHITE COMMUNITY AND OTHER RESPONSIBLE LEADERS TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN THIS REGARD.

Mr. R. L. Drew
Mrs. Lillian Rogers Johnson
Mr. J. J. Mason
Mr. J. W. Wright
Mr. Aaron E. Henry

Mrs. Vera M. Pigeo
Mr. M. D. Upchurch
Rev. L. I. Young
Mr. James C. Gilliam
Mr. Cleo Jackson

Mr. H. Y. Hackett
Rev. J. D. Rayford
Mr. Hughey McDaniel
Mr. Typhonia Pettis
Mrs. A. B. Wilson

The requests that we are making, we know are rightfully ours. So attested to by the President of the United States, the Vice President of the United States, the Attorney General of the United States, the Supreme Court of the United States, The Constitution of the United States, the Word of Jesus Christ and found in the hearts of both Negroes and Whites desiring Freedom everywhere.

Respectfully submitted,

COAHOMA COUNTY BRANCH NAACP

Aaron E. Henry
Aaron E. Henry, President

WE ARE OFFERING FOR SALE THE FOLLOWING PERSONS WHO HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY US
 TO REPRESENT THE WHITE COMMUNITY IN THE M. V. FOR THE YEAR 1960. IN THE M. V. FOR THE YEAR 1960. IN THE M. V. FOR THE YEAR 1960. IN THE M. V. FOR THE YEAR 1960.

Diane & Benel
 3006 Del Mar Lane, N.W.
 Atlanta, Ga.
 799-7504

going to aheni Miss
 meet at the Hopewell Bt
 Mr Bob Moses Call from
 green wood. Church

3200
 1280
 1920

2200
 3500
 1400
 \$21.00

3200
 1280.0
 3500
 1400.0