

Sunday, September 22, 1963  
SELMA TIMES-JOURNAL

(This full-page advertisement is reprinted here because we feel it is a clear statement of the power the myth of racism has when it is clothed in fine words and backed by financial and political power. Notes follow.)

#### A DECLARATION OF BASIC RIGHTS AND PRINCIPLES

The white and Negro races have lived together in Selma and Dallas County for many generations in a state of peace and tranquility; and Selma will continue to be the home of both races long after agitators have done their evil work of poisoning the minds of some of our Negro citizens.

We have enjoyed mutual confidence and trust between the races, and this will again prevail regardless of current unrest. This trust and confidence has been attested by the record of financial institutions of the country, which, in both good years and bad, have furnished tens of millions of dollars to farmers, both white and Negro, to make the harvest crops. The Negro farmer has benefited immeasurably through improved and modernized methods, as shown and demonstrated to him by his white counterpart. Through the efforts of white leadership in the county, great strides have been made in the field of industrial development; and this has created thousands of jobs for Negro workers. Without such leadership there would never have been such opportunities for these Negroes.

The spirit of cooperation between the races has been further attested in recent years by the facts that more of our tax money, largely contributed by whites, has been spent on education for Negroes than for whites, and the fact that more Negro than white schools have been constructed.

To maintain such a society of mutual confidence, trust and respect between the races, there must be mutual recognition of and respect for certain basic rights and principles. These include:

1. The right to sell and rent property according to individual inclination and amenable to the written laws of the country.
2. The right to own and operate private business in such manner as is deemed sound and proper by the operators thereof, with unchallenged authority to select such personnel as the owner desires and to use such methods as have demonstrated themselves to be most conducive to sound and profitable management.
3. The right to select one's own associates, whatever the occasion.

These basic rights to be enjoyed by all people of both races, and the white citizens of Dallas County are firmly united in their determination to preserve them, because of their conviction that freedom as conceived by our Founding Fathers, does not grant any minority, be it white or Negro through threats or otherwise, the right to force its will upon the majority. Neither do we believe that the majority has the right to impose its will upon a minority. We believe that freedom means equal and untrammelled opportunity for all citizens to better themselves through their own efforts - not by legislation and not by demonstrations backed by threats, which inevitable result in both force and reprisals.

We further believe it to be axiomatic that any action taken by any group whether by a minority or majority, if such action is either unlawful, or is lawful with unlawful intent, will bring reprisals which are frequently more detrimental to the innocent than to the guilty. These guilty ones are usually agitators, who having done their evil work, will probably vanish from our community, leaving us to pick up the pieces and repair the damage.

Time is fast running out. It behooves our more intelligent and responsible Negro leadership to think well and seriously upon what has transpired in the past and what life in this community might become if a two-edged sword is unsheathed to shear apart the white and Negro races. Responsible Negro leaders should take immediate steps to put down agitation among their people. In this effort, they can count upon the full cooperation of our white citizens, the governmental bodies of our city and county and all of our law enforcement facilities.

We believe that through mutual understanding and efforts of the responsible citizens of our community, both white and Negro, confidence, trust and

respect between the races in Selma can and will be restored and maintained.

The undersigned stand firmly united in their belief in, and adherence to, these basic rights and principles of people of both races.

SELMA RETAIL MERCHANTS ASSN.  
 Multi-M. Lillienhals, President  
 DALLAS COUNTY FARM BUREAU  
 Walter C. Givhan, President  
 SELMA RETAIL CREDIT BUREAU  
 Frank Wilson, President  
 DALLAS COUNTY BAR ASSN.  
 Theodore L. Wade, President  
 SELMA AND DALLAS COUNTY CLEANING  
 HOUSE ASSN.  
 THE PEOPLES BANK & TRUST CO.  
 Rex J. Morthland, President  
 THE SELMA NATIONAL BANK  
 Roger C. Jones, President  
 CITIZENS BANK AND TRUST CO.  
 J. Bruce Pardue, President  
 THE CITY NATIONAL BANK  
 of Selma William B. Craig, Pres.  
 MARION JUNCTION STATE BANK  
 James M. Wilmer, Ex. VP. & Cashier  
 SELMA AUTOMOBIL DEALERS ASSN.  
 W.F. Driggers, Pres.

DALLAS COUNTY DRUGGIST ASSN.  
 E. O. Ward, Pres.  
 SELMA BOARD OF REALTORS  
 William K. Hicks, Pres.  
 DALLAS COUNTY CATTLEMEN'S ASSN.  
 W. R. Martin, Pres.  
 SELMA & DALLAS COUNTY CHAMBER OF  
 COMMERCE: R. E. Ellsby, Pres.  
 SELMA RESTAURANT ASSN.  
 William Speed, V.P.  
 DALLAS COUNTY DENTIST STUDY CLUB  
 E. A. Wilkinson, Pres.  
 ALL SERVICE STATION ASSN.  
 Nick Patterson, Pres.  
 1st FEDERAL SAVINGS & LOAN ASSN.  
 Charles S. Frazer, Pres.  
 ACCOUNTANTS OF SELMA AND DALLAS  
 COUNTY  
 SELMA JUNIOR CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
 Robert J. Robinson, Pres  
 COMMITTEE OF 100 PLUS  
 Otis G. Adams, President

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These signatures, to one not aware of the patterns of Southern racism, would be convincing. And certainly they must be convincing to the residents of Selma, Alabama, most of whom have never known a Negro as an equal. This declaration is worth examining as a cogent statement of the mind of the white South, and may demonstrate the arguments that can be given to change that mind.

I. The "peace and tranquility" argument: "The white and Negro races have lived together in Selma and Dallas County for many generations in a state of peace and tranquility..." This argument is the most pervasive fallacy in Southern white thought. Perhaps the whites, who did not fear police brutality, reprisals and lynchings with no legal recourse, lived in peace; the Negroes have not.

II. The "paternalism" argument: (The fact that whites have helped Negroes proves that trust and confidence between the races exists) "Through the efforts of white leadership...great strides have been made in the field of industrial development; and this has created thousands of jobs for Negro workers. Without such leadership there would never have been such opportunities for these Negroes....In recent years...more of our tax money, largely contributed by whites, has been spent on education for Negroes..."

Nor could industry exist without the workers. It is well known that industry has come to the South because there is a low wage level and few unions. The jobs however, go to whites, who are afraid that if they demand higher wages Negroes will take over the jobs from which they will be fired. Further, the statistics on Negro wage levels reveal the lie of prosperity that this statement advances.

As for spending on education, numerous school districts in the South have increased expenditures for Negro schools in an effort to keep the Negro citizens from bringing suits for school integration. Negro school facilities remain far below the white schools.

Finally, justice cannot truly exist under despotism, no matter how benign.

III. The "property rights equal human rights" argument: "To maintain a society of mutual confidence...there must be recognition of certain basic rights...(1.) The right to sell and rent property according to individual inclination...(2.) The right to own and operate private business...with unchallenged authority to select such personnel as the owner desires... (3.) The right to select one's own associates, whatever the occasion."

First, it is worth noting that in this list of basic American rights there is no mention of the right to vote, the right to participate fully in the political life of the community and nation, the right to equal protection under the law.

Second, while one may hold the position that a man should have the rights listed above, it is not the case that the government of the United States agrees. Many states have fair housing and fair employment laws maintaining that the right of an individual to buy where he pleases must be balanced against the right of an owner to sell and that the right to employment is as important as the right to hire.

The third right, the right of association, is one which the civil rights movement advocates. To be in the same room with another does not mean that he is chosen as a friend. In fact, not until people are able to meet freely can they choose whether to associate with each other. The "right of free association" (used here incorrectly) reveals the fear which underlies so much of the segregationist rationale -- the fear of social equality and the racist base of that fear.

IV. The argument against "force": "Freedom as conceived by our Founding Fathers does not grant any minority, be it white or Negro, the right to force its will on the majority..."

The Selma movement has not used force, not only nonviolence. Rather, it is the police who have used force and the signers of the advertisement who for years have forced Negroes out of the normal human intercourse of the community. The argument is calculated to win adherents, but does not have any base in fact.

V. The "self-betterment" argument: "We believe that freedom means equal and untrammelled opportunity for all citizens to better themselves through their own efforts -- not by legislation and not by demonstrations backed by threats, which inevitably result in both force and reprisals."

The Selma movement would agree that freedom means equal opportunity, but the white power structure forgets that legislation is needed to secure and protect this freedom. This is what the equality movement means -- equal opportunities insured by law.

What avenues are left when Negroes do not have the right to demonstration or legislation, the traditional American means of calling attention to and correcting injustices in the system except "self-betterment," i.e., the status quo or segregation.

(It is ironic to note that the power structure feels that demonstrations, which are not backed by threats in Selma, lead inevitably to force and reprisals.)

VI. The "agitators" argument: "These guilty ones are usually the agitators, who having done their evil work, will probably vanish from our community, leaving us to pick up the pieces and repair the damage."

It is the agitator in the washing machine which removes the dirt. And the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee trusts that the local leadership has the ability to decide whether to cooperate with SNCC workers. Nor do we intend to leave and allow the "pieces" to be put back in the old pattern of racial segregation and discrimination.

We are not ashamed to be called agitators, for the response of the Negro community indicates their long desire for self-fulfillment and justice.

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The unwritten message in this declaration should be an opening for people to see that those who support the White Citizens Councils of the South and their principles, are not just "white trash" and "riff-raff." But rather, businessmen and elected leaders, and often, as in the case of Birmingham, Northern money interests which condone and advocate the measures used to maintain segregation.

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STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
8½ Raymond Street, N.W.  
Atlanta 14, Georgia  
688-0331

"ONE MAN - ONE VOTE"