

To Jim Forman from Mary E King

[Undated, presumed 1963]

Nov. 25

JIM -- from Mary

I don't have any answers, but many questions, and here are some of the things that I have been thinking about SNCC vis a vis the death-violence and death-violence of the past few days.

1. The Washington SNCC conference is at a strategic time and location. We should be able to make some fairly astute comments - realizing that we are pretty much operating in the dark as far as the future goes.
2. This may be an over-statement, but SNCC may be able to ~~xxxxxx~~ influence the course of the civil rights movement at this point, with the D.C. conference placed where it is, more than we realize.
3. The program of the conference should, as much as possible, be geared to the moment -- even if this means speakers changing their pitch somewhat.
4. There is no one in Congress that we can trust at this point. A probable Congressional shake-up will keep traditional liberal support in abeyance for now at least.
5. Much time while in Washington should be spent sounding out Johnson's allies, and trying to get the lie of the land politically now.
6. The whole question of demonstrations and how we cast an image of Kennedy -- question: Is much sentimental stuff needed, or is attributin "the raising of issues" sufficient? i.e. I think we should say Kennedy's value lay in his raising the issues and questions of our day, not in his momentous work, etc.
7. Time should be spent looking up LBJ's record in civil rights. and on the Equal Employment Committee which he headed.
8. We should perhaps evaluate the possible actions of local and state officials rather than LBJ exclusively, since they will know that LBJ will be weaker on civil rights -- how much more strongly will they let their actions run unchecked.
9. Casey's question: Is it possible to create friction between the Justice Dept. and Johnson so that the JD will come out civil rights champion?
- 10/. Quote from Bob Moses: "the conference may be the one place in the whole country where people can get together and talk about something that can be meaningful for the whole country without having to pay homage which is trivial...The thing which struck me most is what we really feel now, that there is a vacuum, so that there is no intellectual leadership which is ~~xxxxx~~ also public, that has a public concern, that can speak to public issues, and that has an audience -- so that we're reduced to ~~ix~~ banalities. It just doesn't seem that anywhere in the country we have a counter-balance to the idea that if a President dies, he was a hero therefore and we must all now eulogize him. So if there are any real issues at the bottom of this we must cover them up and avoid real confrontation because it divides. And see, SNCC doesn't have to go through that."