

WE'LL

TAKE

OUR

STAND

**--Nashville,
April 4, 1964**

Southern Student Organizing Committee

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The following statement was adopted by a group of Southern students from predominantly white colleges and communities in a majority of the Southern states--Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia--meeting in Nashville, April 3-5, 1964. This meeting led to the formation of the Southern Student Organizing Committee

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It has been 35 years since a group of young intellectuals calling themselves the Southern "Fugitive Group" met here in Nashville and declared their hopes of stopping the clock and preventing social, spiritual and economic forces which are today still coming of age in the South. They wrote a statement called "I'll Take My Stand" in which they endorsed the old feudal agrarian aristocratic order of the South and opposed what they saw coming in the new order--widespread industrialization and urbanization with democracy and equality for all the people.

We do hereby declare, as Southern students from most of the Southern states, representing different economic, ethnic and religious backgrounds, growing from birthdays in the Depression years and the War years, that we will here take our stand in determination to build together a New South which brings democracy and justice for all its people.

Just a few years after the Fugitives took their stand, Franklin D. Roosevelt assumed the presidency of the U.S. and called our Southland "America's number one domestic problem." He talked about the needs of those Americans who were ill-housed, ill-fed, and ill-clothed. Today, in 1964, when a majority of our nation is living in an affluence which makes the spectres of poverty and racism tenfold more inexcusable, a Southern is in the White House. Yet the struggle for equal opportunity for all men--white and non-white, young and old, man and woman, is by no means completed. Our Southland is still the leading sufferer and battleground of the war against racism, poverty, injustice and autocracy. It is our intention to win that struggle in our Southland in our lifetime--tomorrow is not soon enough.

Our Southland is coming of age, they say. But we both hope and fear for her new industries and her new cities, for we also are aware of new slums, newly unemployed, new injustices, new political guile--and the Old as well. Is our dream of democracy to be dashed just as were Jefferson's dreams and the Populist struggles lost in the blend of feudal power, racial fear and industrial oligarchic opportunism? Only as we dare to create new movements, new politics, and new institutions can our hopes prevail.

We hereby take our stand to start with our college communities and to confront them and their surrounding communities and to move from here out through all the states of the South--and to tell the Truth that must ultimately make us free. The Freedom movement for an end to segregation inspires us all to make our voices heard for a beginning of a true democracy in the South for all people. We pledge together to work in all communities across the South to create non-violent political and direct action movements dedicated to the sort of social change throughout the South and nation which is necessary to achieve our stated goals.

Our region must be an exemplar of the national goals we all believe in, rather than a deterrent to them:

--Not only an end to segregation and racism but the rise of full and equal opportunity for all;

--An end to personal poverty and deprivation;

--An end to the "public poverty" which leaves us without decent schools, parks, medical care, housing, and communities;

--A democratic society where politics poses meaningful dialogue and choices about issues that affect men's lives, not manipulation by vested elites;

--A place where industries and large cities can blend into farms and natural rural splendor to provide meaningful work and leisure opportunities for all--the sort of society we can all live in and believe in.

We, as young Southerners hereby pledge to take our stand now together here to work for a new order, a new South, a place which embodies our ideals for all the world to emulate, not ridicule. We find our destiny as individuals in the South in our hopes and our work together as brothers.

SSOC believes that the South has special problems which create difficulties--and opportunities--for a Southern movement working towards the creation of a new and truly democratic South. SSOC believes that each individual Southerner must be guaranteed the right to participate in the formulation of the social, economic, and political decisions which directly affect his life. SSOC further believes that the South possesses valuable traditions, in both black and white cultures, which will enable Southerners to make a unique contribution to a free and democratic America.

--From the Preamble
SSOC Constitution

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