

241 West 12th Street,
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June 11th, 1964

President Lyndon B. Johnson,
The White House,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. President,

We, a group of citizens concerned with the increasing threat of violence and bloodshed in Mississippi, appeal to you to use now, and to the full, the administrative and executive powers which lie in your hands, to prevent the deaths and brutality which are sure to come to Mississippi this summer unless steps are taken to prevent them.

We urge that you make a declaration of intention that the United States Government will protect the rights and guarantee the personal safety of the people, Negro or white, residents or non-residents, in the State of Mississippi.

We address this appeal to you with a special sense of urgency, having listened, on June 8th of this year in Washington, to a score of Negro witnesses, men, women and children from Mississippi who reported to us incidents of brutality and terror we scarcely believed could happen in the United States. Not only were children beaten, people shot and men murdered for no other offense than seeking to vote and claiming their rights, but those who complained to police have themselves been arrested, beaten and jailed while the wrongs against them received no legal redress either from local police, the FBI, or the Department of Justice. These witnesses have experienced terror from unknown members of the community - shots in the dark, bombings of houses, beatings and reprisals, and the organized burning of crosses in 62 counties on one night. Sheriffs have joined in or instigated the beatings, and violence was practised by the police to whom complaints were made.

In some instances, FBI agents closely associated with the local police failed to fulfill their duty as officers of the Federal Government. The failure to prosecute those who committed violence, the prejudice and hostility evident in the courts, the absence of action on complaints to the FBI or even of answers to complaints made to the Department of Justice, have all constituted a form of lawlessness made even more shocking by the fact that it is practised by

those entrusted by the Federal Government to uphold the laws of the United States.

We have heard testimony from parents whose sons and daughters, within two weeks, will be among the thousand college students in Mississippi this summer to staff freedom schools, community centers and voter registration drives. We learned they had been warned that jail and violence awaited any person who dared to come to Mississippi to carry on the educational activities so needed in that State.

We are satisfied on the basis of the testimony that the State of Mississippi faces a crisis today which endangers the lives of its citizens, both Negro and white, and it is clear that the threats of violence and the preparations to employ violence are not only threats to human life but to the moral integrity of this country.

We ask you to assure the citizens of the United States, and particularly those who are threatening violence against their fellow citizens in Mississippi, that law and order will be guaranteed from this point forward. The protection which our Government provides to American citizens in foreign countries must surely be extended to all within the boundaries of the United States.

Among specific and immediate actions, we therefore ask:

1. That you assign a sufficient number of Federal marshals to protect the constitutional rights of the citizens of Mississippi.
2. That you instruct the Department of Justice to take the initiative in enforcing the provisions of the United States Constitution in the State of Mississippi.

3. That hearings by the Civil Rights Commission be held at the earliest moment in Mississippi and continued during the coming months, in order that the kind of testimony we heard on June 8th may be extended into a complete record of situations for which remedies must now be provided.

Harold Taylor, Chairman
of the panel of citizens.

PANEL

Dr. Robert Coles; Psychiatrist, Harvard University.
Noel Day; St. Mark Social Center, Roxbury, Mass.
Paul Goodman; Author, New York City.
Joseph Heller; Author, New York City.
Murray Kempton; Writer, New Republic, Washington, D.C.
Judge Justine Polier; Family Court, New York City.
Gresham Sykes; Exec. Director, American Sociological
Society, Washington, D.C.
Harold Taylor; Educator, New York City.