

THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE  
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TO: Friends of SNCC  
FROM: Betty Garman

#### McCOMB BACKGROUND

McComb city is set in the southwestern part of Mississippi, an area which, in the last year, has come to be almost totally dominated by terrorism. Virtually dating from the late President Kennedy's "human rights" speech of June 1, 1963, the Klu Klux Klan, resurrected and intensively expanded, has been engaging in an active campaign of violence against local Negro citizens. The extent of the Klan's dominance in this area is evidenced by the horrifying chronology of murder, shootings, beatings, and bombings which have been perpetrated on the Negro people there. Since December of 1963, there have been seven known murders of Negroes, among them Louis Allen who had been active in voter registration activities in Amite County, and two young Negro boys whose mutilated bodies were found in the Yazoo River this summer. In Amite County, a seventy-year-old farmer and a mother of eight children were dragged from their homes by a mob of armed men and severely beaten. In Natchez, a local Negro funeral director and his assistant were kidnapped, taken to a field and whipped. In McComb, a local Negro mechanic was similarly beaten.

Numberous ther beatings of Negroes by the Klan have taken place. In McComb this summer, a minister was beaten on a downtown street in broad day-light after he identified himself as a minister working for civil rights. Cross-burnings are so frequent an occurrence they are no longer newsworthy. There have been sixteen bombings in the McComb area alone since the start of the summer project, including the COFO Freedom house where ten civil rights workers were sleeping and in which two were injured. Eleven of these bombings have taken place since August 28 for the situation steadily deteriorates and the terrorists have come to know no restraints. There have been four bombings in the last 90 hours including the home of Mrs. Quinn whose children were injured, and narrowly escaped death. Finally, the House of Worship has become a special target of terrorist activity. In the McComb area three churches have burned to the ground, another partially burnt, and a fifth almost completely demolished by dynamite. In the Southwest as a whole there have been more than ten churches destroyed this summer alone.

Prior to the beginning of the Mississippi Summer Project, some 23 Mississippians came to Washington to testify before a select panel of distinguished Americans about the condition of terror, and to urge federal protection for Negroes, and for civil rights workers there.

COFO leaders all tried to seek an interview with the President, and it was to no avail. The murders of James Chaney, Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman were striking evidence that their plea was unheard.

Before SNCC workers moved into the Southwest in mid-summer, a number of staff and volunteers came to Washington to urge stepped up federal presence in that section, based on evidence of a massive, armed Klan buildup.

Following the formal end of the Summer Project, and its movement into a new phase, the director of the McComb project wrote to responsible government officials to advise them of the increase in violence, and to warn of the prospect that the deteriorating situation might lead to more murder. That violence is now apparent, as is the fact that Negroes are being indiscriminately deprived of their constitutional freedoms.

This statement, therefore, represents a duplication of a number of efforts to make the public aware of the absolute freedom with which terrorists bomb, and burn, and use the official powers of state and local government to prevent Negroes from exercising their basic rights.