

SAMMY YOUNGE, Jr.

Born 1943

Died 1966



A MESSAGE FROM HARRY BELAFONTE

Dear Friend,

Sammy Younge, Jr. was born and raised in Tuskegee, Alabama. After serving two years in the Navy, he went back home to study at Tuskegee Institute and to work in the civil rights movement with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Sammy Younge served his country well - but late at night on January 6 of this year, he was shot to death at a gas station in his home town after he protested its segregated wash-rooms. The gas station attendant was charged with murder.

That morning, Younge had taken several Negroes to the county courthouse in Tuskegee to register for voting. The registrar - who remembered him from previous trips - snarled at Sammy, "if you don't get out of here, I'm going to spill your guts all over the floor." Reports of this threat to the F.B.I. and the Department of Justice brought no action.

The threat of death, and sometimes death itself: this is what it's like to work on voter registration in the South.

Today, the student movement enters its sixth year of such work. SNCC began by demanding equal rights at the lunch-counter; this effort spread over the years to include equality in politics, jobs, schools. SNCC has given special emphasis to the right to vote and participate in government. Sammy Younge's life and death symbolize that struggle.

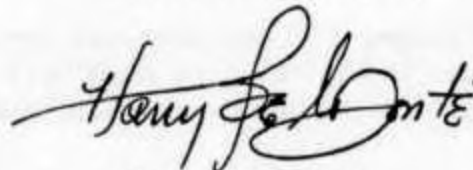
(over please)

To my regret, I did not know him personally. But Sammy Younge is very real to me, for I have known and supported the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee almost from the beginning. Now five years have passed - 1,825 days of danger, discouragement, too little sleep and never enough money. Yet SNCC doesn't give up and it doesn't stand still. Its programs today include voter registration and getting Negroes into office, economic self-help and desegregated schools. These programs are based on a belief in local leadership - by the poor and under-educated as well as more fortunate Negroes.

Many Americans believe that the battle for racial justice is won. But Sammy Younge's death proves how far we still have to go. I am writing now to ask: what will you do to help give meaning to his death?

Let us memorialize Sammy Younge in the most fitting way. Join me in this hour of crisis, when funds are lowest and needs are as great as ever, by supporting those young people who carry on the struggle. Send a contribution, now, to keep them supplied with the two-way radios, cars, food, paper and other items they so urgently need. Send not merely what you can spare but more, to sustain SNCC's vital work for justice.

Yours in freedom,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Harry Belafonte". The signature is fluid and expressive, with a large initial "H" and a long, sweeping underline.

Harry Belafonte