

STATEMENT BY JULIAN BOND  
REPRESENTATIVE ELECT--  
GEORGIA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
JANUARY 10, 1966

Before I begin my remarks I want to thank my friends and associates who have guided me toward reaching a position.

After a thorough search of my conscience, and with understanding for those who have counseled with me, I must say that I sincerely feel that I have done no wrong, but I am right in expressing my views on whatever subject I wish to speak.

My first obligation is to my constituents, and I have released a statement to them. I wish to read it.

"A Message to my Constituents"

There has been, during the past few days, a great deal of public discussion about me, my right to serve in the Georgia House of Representative Representatives, and my right to speak my mind.

I stand here before you today, charged with entering into public discussion on matters of national interest.

I hesitate to offer explanations for my actions or deeds, for no charge has been levied other than the charge that I have chosen to speak my mind, and no explanation is called for, for no member of the House has ever, to my knowledge, been called upon to explain his public statements or public postures as a prerequisite to admission to that body.

I therefore offer to my constituents a statement of my views: I have not counseled burning draft cards, nor have I burned mine. I have suggested that congressionally outlined alternatives to military service be extended to include building democracy at home.

The posture of my life for the past five years has been calculated to give Negroes the ability to participate in the formulation of public policies. The fact of my election to public office does not lessen my duty or desire to express my opinions, even when they differ from those held by others.

As to the current controversy, because of my convictions that I have arrived at through examination of my conscience, I have decided that I personally cannot participate in war.

I stand here with intentions to take an oath that will dispel any doubts about my convictions and loyalties.

Ladies and gentlemen, the fundamental issue involved here is the right of any person in our country to dissent and to criticize governmental policy, be it national, state or local. I reaffirm my right to do this. I hope that throughout my life I shall always have the courage to dissent. Morality in politics shall always guide me in making decisions, regardless of the voices that wish to stifle protest.

I know that the attacks on my integrity result from the fact that I work as the Information Director of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and that I am dedicated to the cause of human rights. I have worked on voter registration in many parts of the state, along with my fellow workers. Many of you sitting here will recall that four years ago I attempted to sit in the galleries of this chamber. I was refused the right to watch the deliberation of my state government. People within the civil rights movement, especially the Atlanta Student Movement, were deeply involved in attempts to integrate seating facilities of the gallery of this chamber where I now stand. Moreover, many of you know that a man reported to be a representative of the State of Georgia pushed myself and James Forman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and then ran into the chambers of the House where we could not pursue him. Because of this incident and the many other acts of terror I have seen inflicted upon Negroes in Georgia and throughout the South, I was very apprehensive about my personal safety this morning as I approached the capitol and sat in my seat.



This feeling was accentuated because one of my fellow workers, Sammy Young, Jr was recently killed in Alabama as he sought to exercise his constitutional rights. Other civil rights workers have been beaten in our own state and people have been killed in Georgia in the process of exercising their rights.

I am black and I feel these injustices. I am black and I remember my treatment in the House. I know there are Negroes still in Georgia who are afraid to register to vote. I know there are public accommodations in the State of Georgia that are still segregated. I know that veterans and soldiers are still fearful for their lives as they ride down our highways.

Therefore I ran for election in the 136 Assembly district because I want to fight racial injustice in the State of Georgia and in the United States. I know that this body has the power to change the course of race relations in Georgia and thereby in the United States.

I intend to help do this within and without the legislature, seated or unseated. I have promised my constituents that I shall not relinquish the struggle for human dignity. I intend to keep that promise.

There are those who would say civil rights is one thing and politics another. I reject that concept. I contend that we must build a new politics in Georgia, a humanistic politics concerned with the needs of people. This approach must transcend race, creed or status in life.

While I personally know that many of my opponents would deny those of my race their constitutional rights and have aligned themselves with racist politicians, I do not wish to dignify their attacks. In a telegram of support for my position to the governor and to the speaker of the house, Dr. Martin Luther King said:

"It is interesting also to note that many of Mr. Bond's political colleagues and critics did not feel that they were violating the U.S. constitution when they sought to perpetuate racial segregation from their vaunted positions, or at the very least, turned a deaf ear when their friends and colleagues support segregation and blatant racial discrimination."

Dr. King also said:

"I can vividly recall back in 1954, when the same Georgia legislature resounded with criticism of the U.S. Supreme Court and its decision on school segregation, but there was no such question of loyalty then."

I do not wish to reopen the past. I am willing to look forward to the future. But I must assert, assert with passion, that Georgia has the opportunity to lead the movement for humanitarian politics. I also assert that history will prove that segregation and discrimination will vanish from this state. My opponents cannot stop that development.

Let us remember that Negroes have died for the right to vote in Georgia. They are now saying what good it do us to get the right to vote, to elect representatives only if those elected must face "attitude tests" or loyalty oaths.

I further assert this body has no basis to expel me or to censure me. It has the duty to me and to my constituents and to the state of Georgia