

MAY 23, 1966

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SNCC STATEMENT ON WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee believes the White House Conference entitled, "To Secure These Rights," is absolutely unnecessary and rejects its invitation to participate in this useless endeavor for the following reasons:

1. The foundation and consequences of racism are not rooted in the behavior of black Americans, yesterday or today. They are rooted in an attempt by Europeans and white Americans to exploit and dehumanize the descendants of Africa for monetary gain. This process of universal exploitation of Africa and her descendants continues today by the power elite of this country. In the process of exploiting black Americans, white America has tried to shift the responsibility for the degrading position in which blacks now find themselves away from the oppressors to the oppressed. The White House Conference, especially with its original focus on the Negro family as the main problem with which America must deal, accentuates this process of shifting the burden of the problem.

2. Regardless of the proposals which stem from this conference, we know that the Executive Department and the President are not serious about insuring constitutional rights to black Americans. For example, murderers of Civil Rights workers and black citizens roam free in this country with the desire to kill more freedom fighters; and the National Government claims it is impotent in many situations to bring about justice. For example, Police Chiefs, Sheriffs and State officials who have victimized black people beaten and jailed them and further suppressed our dignity are fully aware they were in effect given a blank check by the Executive Department of this government to inflict these lawless acts upon Negroes, since it is common knowledge throughout the south that killing a "nigger" is like killing a coon.

3. We believe that the President has called this conference within the United States at a time when United States prestige internationally is at a low ebb due to our involvement in the Vietnam Civil War, the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa and other parts of the Third World.

We cannot be a party to attempts by the White House to use black Americans to recoup a loss of prestige internationally.

4 Our organization is opposed to the war in Vietnam and we cannot in good conscience meet with the chief policy maker of the Vietnam war to discuss human rights in this country when he flagrantly violates the human rights of colored people in Vietnam.

5. We reaffirm our belief that people who suffer must make the decisions about how to change and direct their lives. We therefore call upon all black Americans to begin building independent political, economic, and cultural institutions that they will control and use as instruments of social change in this country.

/signed/ Central Committee

James Forman, Charles Cobb, Fred Meely, Robert Mants, Ralph Featherstone, John Lewis, Ivanhoe Donaldson, Courtland Cox, Robert Smith, Jack Minnis and Stokely Carmichael