

TEXT OF THE JOINT STATEMENT SIGNED BY THE MOVEMENT FOR PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE (MOVIMIENTO PRO INDEPENDENCIA DE PUERTO RICO), FEDERATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FOR INDEPENDENCE (FEDERACION DE UNIVERSITARIOS PRO INDEPENDENCIA) and THE STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE (SNCC) on January 26, 1967

Mr. Stokely Carmichael's visit to Puerto Rico has served to emphasize that the Black people of the United States and the people of Puerto Rico, although separated geographically, are engaged in a common struggle for liberation against a common enemy.

The Black people of the United States and the people of Puerto Rico are victims of the same structure of economic, political and military power. It is American imperialism which keeps the Black population in conditions of misery and living under all forms of oppression: economic, political, social and cultural. That power structure maintains the same oppression over Puerto Rico, which continues to endure political, military and cultural colonialism as well as economic exploitation.

In the world-wide struggle for liberation, these two struggles -- one for the liberation of a people living within the oppressor nation and the other for the liberation of people over whom the United States exercises direct colonial control -- have a special relationship. The government of the United States uses the youth of our two peoples as cannon fodder in its aggressive war against the Vietnamese people. Their blood is a direct result of the aggression which makes our people victims of the white power structure of the United States.

Moreover, a third of the Puerto Rican people live in the urban ghetto of the United States, where they endure together with the Afro-Americans racism, cultural and economic oppression, and police brutality.

Therefore:

- 1..The Movimiento Pro Independencia de Puerto Rico and the Federacion de Universitarios Pro Independencia recognize SNCC as a brother organization which is struggling to free Black Americans from the white power structure of the United States.
- 2..SNCC recognizes the Movimiento Pro Independencia de Puerto Rico as the vanguard of the Puerto Rican people's struggle for liberation and the Federacion de Universitarios Pro Independencia as the organization representing Puerto Rican students in their struggle against imperialism and as the vanguard of Puerto Rican Students.
- 3..The N.A.A.P.C. and the F.N.A.P.C. offer their support to Afro-Americans in their struggle to obtain political and economic power in their communities -- the struggle for what has been called "Black Power".
- 4..SNCC affirms its support for the struggle of the Puerto Rican people for national independence.
- 5..SNCC, MPI, and FUPI affirm their joint struggle against the drafting of the youth of their people by the U.S. Army for the defense of the cultural integrity of both peoples, for their economic and other rights, they also offer mutual aid and sharing of resources for the common struggle.
- 6..SNCC, MPI, and FUPI affirm that the struggle of the Puerto Rican and Afro-American peoples in the urban ghettos of the U.S. for political and economic control, for better housing, for quality education and better living conditions generally, can be accelerated through common bases and joint action.
- 7..SNCC, MPI, and FUPI affirm that the struggle against American aggression toward the Vietnamese people can be strengthened by joint action.
- 8..SNCC offers its assistance to MPI and FUPI in their effort to bring the colonial situation of Puerto Rico before the U.N.
- 9..MPI and FUPI offer their assistance in bringing international attention to the oppression of Black Americans, and recognition of that oppression not as an internal problem of the U.S. but a matter of direct concern to all humanity.
- 10..The organizations affirm that with a view to strengthening their undertakings by specific activities, they will carry on these efforts with mutual respect and understanding among themselves.

Signed by:

Stokely Carmichael, Chairman, SNCC  
Juan Mari Bras, Secretary General MPI  
Juan Angel Silan, Chairman MPI Youth  
Alberto Perez, Chairman, FUPI

children during a terrible war; we grew up when six million people were sent to the ovens. We had no voice in that deed. We must have a voice now.

Somehow we must regain our humanity and create a new humanism in the world. As the great poet John Donne said, "The death of any man diminishes because I am involved in mankind. Therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls -- it tolls for thee."

This is one reason why the fate of Latin America is of great importance to us. We know, of course, about the independence movement here in Puerto Rico. We know a little -- though not enough -- about the struggle in Guatemala and Brazil; we know a few names like that of Luis Merceios Lima of Guatemala and Hugo Blanco of Peru and your great leader, Pedro Albizu Campos. Our organization is at this very moment preparing to demonstrate in the United States against President-elect Costa e Silva of Brazil, who is now visiting there. We know that there will be more examples of suppression in Latin America, as in the Dominican Republic. There will be new Vietnams in Latin America. We are absolutely opposed to the military-industrial complex of the United States which continues to wage war against non-white people either by direct military action, indirect political intervention, or economic exploitation. Whatever form that suppression takes, it is war.

One of the reasons why I chose to speak in Spanish here today despite my brief contact with the language, is because I respect your language which is part of your cultural identity. Others from the U.S. who come here ought to do the same, and I promise you that the next time I come to Puerto Rico I hope to speak Spanish better. The question of cultural identity is a very important matter to Afro-Americans, because it has been consistently denied us. The society tells us in many ways that to be successful, to be intelligent, to be beautiful, one cannot be Black. For example, when people in the U.S. talk about integration it is always in terms of Black children being able to go to white schools, Black parents being able to move into a white neighborhood. This amounts to saying that nothing Black -- nothing of our own -- can be good. The society teaches our people to try and be as white as possible, and so they are ashamed of their features -- they try to straighten their hair. Throughout the country, but especially in the South, Black people are denied knowledge of their history and culture; they are taught that they are worthless. In a similar way, Puerto Ricans who come to the United States also experience pressure to accept the values of the dominant society in order to be successful.

The creation of what we call "Black Consciousness" -- knowledge of and pride in, our identity as Afro-Americans -- is therefore part of what we mean by Black Power.

Black Power means for us liberation from oppression by the racist white power structure of the U.S. It means that we will control our own Afro-American communities. That we will direct our affairs. That we will have power in the political and economic arenas. In the same way, independence for you means to direct and control your own lives and the wealth of your country, now controlled by a foreign power -- the U.S. -- and its Uncle Toms here. Our people are a colony within the U.S.; you are a colony outside the U.S.

But our vision is not merely of a society in which Black men have power to rule the lives of other Black men. The society we seek to build among Black people is not an oppressive or capitalistic society. It is a society in which the spirit of community and humanistic love will prevail. We do not want merely to see Black money go into the Black pockets; we want to see it go into the communal pocket. We want to see the cooperative concept applied in business and banking and housing. In schools, we want the community to decide how the schools should be run -- not a group of administrators who do not understand the problems of the community.

We seek, therefore to change the power basis of the world. The powerless should now begin to have power. This is one reason why we refuse to fight in the American Army against the Vietnamese people. The American Army takes advantage of the Afro-American masses. It uses them to fight our own brothers. It tells us that we are going to fight for a so-called 'democracy' but we know the hypocrisy of that claim. We know in our flesh and in our blood, what "American democracy" means. For this reason we are absolutely opposed -- I repeat absolutely -- to the drafting of young people of any nationality who are oppressed like us.