

students for a democratic society

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Mailing sent this
week to*

URGENT !! PLEASE GIVE THIS YOUR IMMEDIATE ATTENTION !!

TO ALL CHAPTER CONTACTS AND REGIONAL ORGANIZERS:

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

H. Rap Brown, Chairman of SNCC, has been a political prisoner in New York City since September 18, 1967. He is forbidden to travel outside of New York City by a court order, which, if disobeyed, would mean the forfeit of a \$15,000 bond and imprisonment.

This kind of restriction can only be called preventive arrest, and the U.S. government is testing the repressive effectiveness of such tactics. In South Africa, that divided land whose injustices liberals often decry and American investors profit on, there is a similar procedure. It is called house arrest.

What should not be forgotten is that oppression in the United States and South Africa differ perhaps in form, but not in substance. Whether Rap Brown's travel ban is called house arrest or preventive arrest, the result of the two is the same: an individual's movements are restricted to a proscribed area for an indefinite period.

Examination of the facts of the case makes clear that the conscious attempt was not to jail Brown on various false charges, but simply to make it impossible for him to travel around the country and speak. This would hurt not only Brown, but the organization of which he is Chairman: the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. By moving quietly and through the courts, the government hopes to stop Brown and SNCC without creating a public outcry.

THESE ARE THE FACTS:

On July 24, 1967, Brown spoke in Cambridge, Maryland. He left the city the same evening on his way to Washington, D.C. A while after he had left Cambridge the Pine Street Elementary School, which has a history of being burned, was burned again. The next day the State Attorney of Maryland issued a warrant for the arrest of Brown, charging him with inciting the people to burn the school. Later the same day, the Federal Government warrant was issued for the arrest of Brown, this one charging him with leaving the state of Maryland to avoid arrest on the first charge. The Federal charge made him, of course, a fugitive from justice.

Brown learned of the warrants for his arrest, and, on the following day, arranged through his attorneys to turn himself in to the F.B.I. in New York. On July 26, Brown was leaving Washington, D.C. for New York to turn himself in, when he was arrested by the police at Washington National Airport and immediately turned over to the F.B.I. The F.B.I. was fully cognizant of where Brown was going and for what purpose, but they chose to abrogate the agreement that had been worked out between them and Brown's attorneys, choosing instead to make it

appear that he had been trying to run away.

He was taken to a detention cell in the U.S. Post Office Building in Alexandria, Virginia, held for six hours and then released. The Federal government had decided to drop the charges of "flight from prosecution" against him.

However, when Brown walked out of the Post Office Building, he was arrested on the steps by Alexandria police, who charged him with "flight from prosecution" under a Virginia state law. The Federal Government had bowed out to let the state government do the same work, knowing that in a Southern court there was much less chance for Brown to receive a fair hearing than in Federal Court.

He was taken to the city jail in Alexandria, Va., and after some time was released on \$10,000 bond. Then, the Governor of Maryland asked the Governor of Virginia to extradite Brown to stand trial on the school-burning charge. The Governor of Virginia honored this request. Brown was once again in jail, but his return to Maryland was prevented through legal action taken by his attorneys. On September 18, 1967, Brown was released from jail on yet another \$10,000 bail on the condition that he would not leave the eleven counties of the Southern District of New York, except to travel to consult with one of his attorneys.

Shortly thereafter, Brown was once again arrested on a charge of carrying a weapon while under indictment, was jailed in New York City and released on \$15,000 bond. The restriction on Brown's right to travel was appealed to the Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court who turned down the appeal.

It is clear that if H. Rap Brown is going to be released from his "jail" in New York, it will only be because of pressure put on the Federal Government. This is an important case, because if the Federal Government succeeds in keeping H. Rap Brown "jailed", overnight militants will find themselves arrested on false charges and released, with the condition that their movements be restricted to a proscribed area. It happened to Bill Epton, Black liberation fighter from Harlem, in 1964, when he was arrested on charges of inciting to riot during the Harlem rebellions of that summer. It happened to John Harris, Black liberation fighter in Los Angeles, who was arrested for leafletting, released and now restricted to California. It happened to Eddie Oquendo, Black draft resistor from Brooklyn, who was convicted for refusing to serve in the Army, was released on appeal and is now restricted to the borough of Brooklyn, New York.

It is clear what the Government is trying to do. It is our responsibility to stop them. If they succeed in keeping H. Rap Brown, one of the most well-known Black leaders, restricted to New York, they will have won and will then be able to move with impunity against any militant in the country.

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