

A LETTER FROM PRISON FROM H. RAP BROWN

Parish Prison
New Orleans, La.
2/21/68

Being a man is the continuing battle of one's life and one loses a bit of manhood with every stale compromise to the authority of any power in which one does not believe.

No slave should die a natural death. There is a point where caution ends and cowardice begins.

For everyday I am imprisoned I will refuse both food and water. My hunger is for the liberation of my people. My thirst is for the ending of oppression.

I am a political prisoner, jailed for my beliefs—that Black People must be free. The Government has taken a position true to its fascist nature: Those who we cannot convert, we must silence. This government has become the enemy of Mankind.

Death can no longer alter our path to Freedom. For our people, Death has been the only known exit from slavery and oppression. We must open others.

Our will to live must no longer supercede our will to fight, for our fighting will determine if our race shall live. To desire Freedom is not enough.

We must move from resistance to aggression, from revolt to revolution.

For every Orangeburg there must be 10 Detroit's. For every Max Stanford and Huey Newton, there must be 10 dead racist cops. And for every Black Death there must be a Dien Bien Phu.

Brothers and Sisters, and all oppressed people, you must prepare yourself both mentally and physically, for the major confrontation is yet to come. You must fight. It is the people who in the final analysis make and determine history, not leaders or systems. The laws to govern you must be made by you.

May the deaths of '68 signal the beginning of the end of this country. I do what I must out of the love for my people. My will is to fight; resistance is not enough. Aggression is the order of the day.

NOTE TO AMERICA

America: if it takes my Death to organize my people to revolt against you, and to organize your jails to revolt against you, and to organize your troops to revolt against you, and to organize your children, your God, your poor, your country, and to organize Mankind to rejoice in your destruction and ruin, then here is my life! But my soul belongs to MY PEOPLE.

Iasime Tushinde Mbilashaka. (We shall conquer without a doubt.)
H. Rap Brown

BACKGROUND

Since September 18, 1967, H. Rap Brown, Chairman of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, has been a political prisoner in New York City, forbidden to travel by a court order, which, if disobeyed, would result in the forfeiture of \$15,000 bond and Brown's imprisonment. This tactic of PREVENTIVE ARREST is being tested by the Federal Government as a way of dealing with those whose opinions they do not like. It is the same tactic used in a cruder form in the Union of South Africa and called there "house arrest." Whether it 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.

Upon examining the facts in the case of H. Rap Brown it becomes clear that the conscious intent was not to jail Brown on various false charges, but simply make it impossible to travel around the country and speak. This would hurt not only Brown, but the organization for which he is Chairman and principal spokesman, the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee. Thus, by moving quietly and through the courts, the Government hoped to stop Brown and SNCC without creating a public outcry.

The facts in the case of H. Rap Brown are simple. 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 on 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.