

United States National Student Association

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

LETTER FROM MAGNOLIA JAIL

MAGNOLIA, MISSISSIPPI -- The Following is a letter written from jail by a member of the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee. Although the letter was written some time ago, it seems to be worth reprinting now. The letter is dated Nov. 1, 1961.

"I am writing this letter from the drunk tank of the county jail in Magnolia, Mississippi. Twelve of us are here, sprawled out along the concrete bunker. Curtis Hayes, Hollis Watkins, Ike Lewis, and Robert Talbert, four veterans of the bunker, are sitting up talking - mostly about girls; (Charles) McDew... is curled into the concrete and the wall; Harold Robinson, Stephen Ashley, James Wells, Lee Chester Vick, Leetus Eubanks, and Ivery Diggs lay cramped on the cold bunker; I'm sitting with smuggled pen and paper, thinking a little, writing a little; Myrtis Bennett and Janie Campbell are across the way wedded to a different icy cubicle.

"Later on Hollis will lead out with a clear tenor into a freedom song, Talbert and Lewis will supply jokes and McDew will discourse of 'the black man and the Jew. McDew, a black by birth, a Jew by choice, and a revolutionary by necessity, has taken the deep hates and deep loves of America, and the world, reserved for those who dare to stand in a strong sun and cast a sharp shadow.

"In the words of Judge Brumfield, who sentenced us, we are 'cold calculators' who design to disrupt the racial harmony (harmonious since 1619) of McComb into racial strife and rioting; we, he said, are the leaders who are causing young children to be

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led like sheep to the pen to be slaughtered (in a legal manner). "Robert," he was addressing me, "haven't some of the people from your school been able to go down and register without violence here in Pike County?" I thought to myself that Southerners are most exposed when they boast.

"It's mealtime now: we have rice and gravy in a flat pan, dry bread and a 'big town cake'; we lack eating and drinking utensils. Water comes from a faucet and goes into a hole.

This is Mississippi, the middle of the iceberg. Hollis is leading off with his tenor, 'Michael row the boat ashore, Alleluia' Christian brothers don't be slow, Alleluia; Mississippi's next to go, Alleluia.' This is a tremor in the middle of the iceberg - from a stone that the builders rejected."

(signed) Bob Moses

SOURCE: SNCC, The Liberator

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LAW AGAINST DESEGREGATION ACTIVITY SOUGHT

RICHMOND, VIRGINIA -- The Virginia General Assembly has been asked to provide additional legal weapons to combat organized desegregation movements.

The Committee on Offenses Against the Administration of Justice has recommended that Virginia adopt a new criminal law outlawing boycotts aimed at breaking down segregation in public businesses.

The Committee observed that such boycotts, sit-ins or picketing "not only cause litigation and harm to proprietors but also stir up substantial, and at times grave, community unrest with the attendant danger of serious bodily harm to innocent persons."

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It was also proposed that laws be tightened on organizations involved in picketing, sit-ins or boycotts in racial matters.

The report claimed there is "a recent and alarming growth of acts of trespass, picketing and boycotts." It added, "The vast majority of persons punished for acts of trespass and boycott fail to understand their conduct is criminal until too late. These wrongdoers are the victims of unpunishable instigators who warp their minds by praising only the objectives sought. These practices, in addition to their criminal nature, present an ever increasing danger and threat and must be prevented."

The proposed law on boycotts would provide a \$1,000 fine and/or a jail term of up to 12 months.

The Committee left no doubt that its primary target was the NAACP and local Negro improvement associations.. A Negro attorney, Leonard W. Holt, of Norfolk, Virginia, who has been active in desegregation law suits, was singled out for criticism.

Holt said "any such law is clearly unconstitutional." He added, "We (he and his law partners) accept as an honor the condemnation of the Committee...and that of any like-minded legislator, judge or sheriff consumed by feelings of white supremacy."

SOURCE: The Washington Post