

PRESS RELEASE

NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATIONAL FUND

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CRISIS INVOLVING ROLE OF LAW IS SEEN BY 'RIGHTS LEGAL CHIEF

NAACP Legal Defense Fund Issues Report for 1963

NEW YORK, N.Y.--The "crisis involving the rule of law," in America is analyzed by Jack Greenberg, director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. in the Fund's 1963 annual report released here today.

Director-counsel Greenberg points out that those responsible for resisting the "constitution and court rulings by force, deceit, by tokenism, by stalling litigation," are often, "exemplars of our society."

The Fund, whose attorneys serve as legal arm for the entire civil rights movement expanded its operation in 1963 and:

*Defended 10,487 citizens arrested during peaceful demonstrations. Legal Defense Fund lawyers carried this load in addition to their regular responsibilities, discussed elsewhere in the report.

*Represented Negro Americans in 30 cases presented to the U.S. Supreme Court. This made the Legal Defense Fund second only to the U.S. Justice Department in cases placed before the High Court for review.

*Maintained a staff of 12 lawyers, based in its New York City national headquarters, who were augmented by 102 cooperating attorneys across the nation.

*Fought 168 separate groups of legal actions in 15 states on behalf of thousands of Negroes seeking basic constitutional rights.

Broad Legal Scope

These areas of litigation are dealt with specifically within the 16 page fluently written document. They include education, health facilities, public accommodations, freedom of speech and assembly, and housing.

Shortage of 'Rights Lawyers

The dire shortage of civil rights attorneys is also surveyed in the report, which notes that, "There seemed to be an ever present corollary: the greater an area's need for civil rights counsel, the fewer there were to be had."

Mr. Greenberg pointed to the distressing situation, saying, "at present, I can count the number of Southern white lawyers handling civil rights cases on the fingers of one hand, and have a finger or two left over."

The Legal Defense Fund reports that there are only "two civil rights attorneys in all Southwestern Georgia; three in Mississippi; none in Tallahassee, Florida (the state capital)--so the sad story went."

However, the Fund did take steps during 1963 to improve this picture. It established "the nation's first legal intern program with the aid of a grant from the Field Foundation."

(more)

It also assisted in establishing the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council.

Hit Capital Punishment

In the concluding section, "New Frontiers of the Law," the Fund stressed that it "must never turn its back on the precedent-setting role it served in years past."

Consequently, its present activities include:

*Cases that show that "infliction of capital punishment denies due process of law when a defendant is convicted for a crime in which he did not take a life."

*Cases seeking to declare unconstitutional segregation in hospitals (the Supreme Court let stand a ruling striking down this practice on March 1st of this year).

*Cases "seeking to secure equal access of all persons without regard to race in urban renewal projects built with federal, state and local aid."

*Cases "arising out of sit-in demonstrations which seek to guarantee the right of Negroes to be served peaceably in public places."

*Litigation "aiming to secure enforcement of Section 2 of the 14th Amendment. A favorable ruling would reduce the Congressional delegations of many Southern states which deny or abridge the right of their citizens to vote."

Financially, 1963 was an encouraging year for the Legal Defense Fund which grossed \$1,131,889.02 and spent almost as much in its fight against bigotry. The projected budget for 1964 is \$1,400,000.