

NEWS RELEASE
STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI-- The District Attorney who will decide whether to press state murder charges against 21 men accused by the FBI in the murder of three civil rights workers is a member of the White Citizens Council, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) said this week.

William H. Johnson, Jr., District Attorney for Mississippi's fifth Judicial District, is also a member of the State Sovereignty Commission, the state's watch-dog committee on segregation SNCC Chairman John Lewis said.

Lewis said "the Citizen Councils and associated racist groups so dominate Mississippi's local and state law enforcement agencies and judicial system as to form a conspiracy against giving equal protection before the law to anyone who acts against the state's strict segregation policies, "and to protect anyone who acts to reinforce that system."

"In short," the SNCC Chairman said, "any white men who commits a crime against a Negro will go free, and any Negro who commits any action against the established social order will be at the mercy of the type of thinking that race-hate groups thrive on."

"For instance, when a Negro is arrested in Canton," Lewis said, "he falls under the jurisdiction of Police Chief Dan Thompson or sheriff Jack Cauthen, both members of the Steering Committee of the Canton Citizens Council. They are tried in Municipal Court by the Mayor, Stanley Matthews. They are prosecuted by the city attorneys, R.L. Goza, W.S. Cain, or J.R. Fancher, members of the Council's Steering Committee. If they are convicted and they appeal their cases, they must appear before Judge Russel Moore III, who prosecuted Freedom Riders in 1961 and is on the Board of Directors of Patriotic American Youth, a right-wing segregationist white student organization."

"If their cases go to the State Supreme Court, they are heard by Judge Tom Brady, who has been on the State Executive Committee of the Association of White Citizens Councils since 1955," Lewis said.

"In Greenwood, seat of Leflore County, Mayor Charles Sampson, City Judge O.L. Kimborough, City Attorney Hardy Lott and Police Commissioner B.A. Hammond are all members of or on the Board of the Greenwood White Citizens Council," Lewis said.