

NEWS RELEASE
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Berl Bernhard
Staff Director
United States Commission on Civil Rights
Washington, D.C.

Urgently request that the United States Commission on Civil Rights hold a full scale hearing on civil rights in Mississippi immediately. It is now apparent that the Department of Justice lacks the necessary manpower and legal equipment and support from the Judiciary to fulfill its obligations to the State of Mississippi and the country in the minimum area of voter registration. You cannot, without selling out your responsibility to Congress, the President, and the country, delay a full scale hearing by the Commission any longer. The fact that the murderer of Medgar Evers comes from Greenwood is not insignificant by any means. It strongly supports the theory that a ring of killers operates out of Greenwood with an official wink from the police and other law enforcement agencies in Mississippi. Apparently the Department of Justice and the FBI are unable to operate in any manner with these people. The fact that three Negroes have been killed in the past six weeks by officers of the law in Tallatchie, Holmes, and Panola Counties, is also not insignificant. The Department of Justice has voting suits in all three counties and it is the unattached Negroes that the law officers are most likely to take vengeance on.

The Department of Justice has an inescapable obligation to guarantee voter registration rights to Negroes in Mississippi and the South. Yet it admits its inability to provide protection for applicants for registration and for voter registration workers, to say nothing of the ordinary citizen who is an innocent victim. In this case, the Commission has inescapable obligation to expose the full range of Mississippi's contempt for the laws of the country. The country cannot demand the strong legislation needed from Congress because it does not understand and cannot connect these stray facts which drift through Mississippi's Cotton Curtain. Only a hearing of the full Commission can command the authority to present these facts to the country. The argument that such a hearing would seriously impede the suits filed by the Justice Department in Mississippi can itself no longer be seriously considered. The Federal Judiciary in Mississippi has demonstrated that it is by no means able to respond to these suits and to the emergency of our times with intelligent constructive judicial action.

Robert Moses

Director Mississippi Voter Registration Project
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee