

Dear Brother and Sister SNCCer:

5 April 1964

SNCC is the most militant civil rights group in the country. Are we living up to our historic calling? As even some "establishment" people are now saying, basic changes are necessary in our society and in our values if true freedom is to come. Let me point out some areas wherein I feel that the Movement will have to lead, if our goals are to be reached. This approach can be summed up by the slogan "The Freedom Movement Stands For Emancipation In Every Area Of Human Life" - this includes the social, political, sexual, economic, religious and aesthetic realms.

The word "radical" is very relevant here, meaning "going to the root" of the problem. SNCC and all of us should no longer be interested in merely the superficial manifestations of racism and injustice, such as segregation, but we must tackle the underlying causes and conditions such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, the cold war, prejudice, victorianism, and our undemocratic political and economic systems. This struggle is international, being one of humanity versus undemocratic rule by a race, class, or foreign country. Neither anti-Communism nor anti-Westernism provide a fruitful foundation for change. New Directions must be sought out. The Free Southern Theatre in Jackson, Mississippi, the campaigns of Negro candidates in the deep South, and our involvement in rent strikes are important steps in the right direction.

However, isolated projects are not enough. We must develop an ideology to justify, to explain, and to base our action upon. Nonviolence is not enough. Nonviolence for what? Let us develop an ideology of Freedom. This freedom must be both freedom from brutality, tyranny, poverty, segregation, militarism, religious mythology, sexual puritanism, and the brutal profit motive; but also it must be freedom to determine ones own destiny, freedom to love and have sex as one chooses, to have time to learn of the beauty of nature and art, to have time and resources to become creative, to develop ones own religion and not be forced to accept that of ones family or friends, to live in peace with all other countries, to run candidates for office and initiate new political programs, to struggle for a redistribution of income, and freedom to persue a life's work of ones own choosing.

In SNCC we have learned that merely realizing an immediate goal of a Movement is not enough - after a lot of people are registered to vote, one has to develop worthwhile candidates to vote for and good programs to support - and in integrated situations people must learn to live as human beings, not as black and white - and when we get some young people to work with us on a project, we must educate their parents to the value of civil rights work, and their teachers to the meaning of a full education, not a Jim Crow one.

SNCC workers must be very mature people. We are called upon to assume adult burdens which most adults irresponsibly shirk. Venereal disease, different economic and political beliefs such as socialism and pacifism, pregnancies of young unmarried people, atheism and agnosticism, sexual activities supposedly unusual, or love of abstract impressionism - all must be accepted as part of life not to be gossiped about or smirked at, but defended and appreciated as involving each individual's sacred right to live his own life.

Let each of us SNCCers take some time out from our work and think about our basic feelings toward the Movement. Why are we in it? What will we have to accomplish in order to be successful? I hope that we can come up with a framework of values - an ideology - upon which we can base our action. This Freedom Ideology must be broad enough to include the fact that the goal for the South must be far beyond just becoming another North, to include the fact that integration means nothing if we are all buried in a nuclear war, and to include the fact that we need to be freed from the bondage of political, economic, religious and sexual superstitions as much if not more than from racial ones.

Fraternally Yours,

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