

To: SNCC Staff
From: Tina Harris

Who is responsible?

For four-hundred years, "human beings" have been robbed of their humanity. No-where in the history of the world has a group of people suffered this particular kind of savage slavery. We are like "bastard" children, for even the name Negro connotes a peculiar kind of "bastardry." We have been expected to adopt the puritan ethics of a dominant white culture, ethics which we all know were practiced by the "master" during the daylight hours. At night it was conveniently forgotten. And yet, black people are expected to be super-human, if we drink, fight, fornicate, we're degenerate, and irresponsible.

For the last couple of weeks here in Atlanta and elsewhere, I have been observing an unusual phenomena, which is a widely held attitude by a great many of our intolerant staff members that they are "responsible" while those of us who allow ourselves to engage in somewhat very human means of outlet are "irresponsible." For an example, someone remarked to me that a certain group were acting in an irresponsible manner because they drank while on the road. This responsible "freedom fighter" admitted that he was in the movement because he had rejected the hypocritical pseudo-liberal values of his parents. However, it never occurred to him to question himself as to what his conduct might be, if he had to spend long hours, doing one-night stands, to express to members of a cancer ridden society what the "freedom movement" is all about. Did this responsible SNCC worker ever get to know any one of these gentlemen, or did his phony liberalism prejudice that? It seems to me that if we are going to use the values of middle class America as a criteria for determining who is responsible, then that criteria should apply to everyone, black or white.

For example, a certain young lady seems to be undergoing some mental upheavals, she hasn't been to work, or if she does appear, very little is accomplished. Her work is either done by others or simply left undone. However, our young lady has not been prohibited from partying, movieing, etc., which as an individual is probably her means of letting off steam. There has been no human cry that this particular young lady is irresponsible. On the other hand, one of my black brothers remarked that if he had his way, he would fire a certain black sister because she drinks, (she apparently was seen drinking on the job.) I wonder, brother -- if you have ever tried to find out why our sister drinks, is it because she's irresponsible or maybe like the young lady above is also undergoing some mental upheavals. I think it's time for us all to stop and do a little soul searching. For if we are intolerant of each other, then we are even more criminal, than the worse racist.