

June 13, 1967

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STATEMENT TO AFRO-ASIAN MISSIONS TO THE UNITED
NATIONS ON EVENTS IN PRATTVILLE, ALABAMA

The following statement, sent to all African and Asian Missions to the United Nations on June 12, 1967, was released today by James Forman, Director of International Affairs for SNCC ("Snick"):

Dear brothers and sisters:

We reject the position of the United States government that intolerable racism in the United States is a purely domestic concern. We find this claim as hypocritical as the claim of the racist government of South Africa that its suppression of the human rights of 13,000,000 Africans is an internal matter, or a similar claim by the government of Portugal. Such claims are typical of colonial powers. We maintain that unwarranted and brutal suppression of black people in the United States is a matter of international concern. We are therefore addressing to you an appeal for your moral support, in the form of direct or indirect pressure upon that government which loudly proclaims its concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people yet will not guarantee basic human rights to black people in this country. We make this appeal in the spirit of SNCC's declaration, made formal in May, 1967, that it is a Human Rights Organization concerned with human rights not only in the United States but throughout the world.

Needless to say, the suppression of the human rights of black people is a long-standing reality in this country. The immediate basis for our appeal is the recent attack on black people in Prattville, Alabama, about which we would like to inform you at this time.

On the afternoon of Sunday, June 11, a meeting of black people to discuss political organizing was held on the grounds of the St. Mark's church in Prattville, Alabama, a small town located in Atauga County, about 40 miles from Montgomery. It is in this county that Mrs. "Ladybird" Johnson has extensive land holdings. The meeting was being addressed by former SNCC Chairman Stokely Carmichael when a police car drove up and an officer began harassing Brother Carmichael for speaking of "Black Power" to the gathering. This officer was Kim Hill, who earlier this year was accused of murdering a black prisoner in the Prattville jail (he was later cleared despite strong evidence of guilt). Hill repeatedly harassed Brother Carmichael for saying "Black Power" and finally arrested him on charges of disorderly conduct and disturbing the peace. This was at approximately 5 p.m.

Black people in Prattville, angered by the arrest, moved swiftly to protest at the jail and elsewhere. Gunfire was exchanged by black and white residents. Later that evening, a meeting of black people was taking place in the home of Mr. Daniel Houser, a local resident. Ku Klux Klansmen and other whites began firing on the house, where there were approximately 40 persons, the majority of them women and children. SNCC Executive Secretary Stanley Wise and Alabama Field Secretary Johnnie Jackson were also in the house. The police cordoned off a large area of the community; newsmen and others were not allowed through. A unit of the National Guard arrived from Montgomery. The house remained under siege until approximately 4 a.m. The local telephone operator repeatedly cut off calls between the house and SNCC staff as well as newsmen. Rumors that Stokely Carmichael had been lynched spread in the town.

At about 4 a.m., police ordered those in the house outside. Stanley Wise, along with Theophas Smith and Ulysses Nunley, two Alabama volunteers working for SNCC, were arrested on a charge of inciting to riot. The other black people broke into the house about an hour later and remained there until late in the morning, Monday, June 12.

Afro-Americans have watched with sympathy and concern the struggle against apartheid and white-settler domination in eastern and southern Africa over the past twenty years. We rejoiced with all freedom-loving people when the victory was won in Kenya. Today, we express our solidarity with the Freedom Fighters who languish in the prisons and detention camps of southern Africa awaiting the day when the heroic efforts of those who are still free to fight will wipe out these inhumanities of man to man once and for all, and place the destiny and welfare of the people in their own hands. It is only natural that we in SNCC should be deeply concerned over the course and outcome of this struggle, for our own members have been engaged for seven years in struggles against a particularly vicious form of apartheid that has existed for centuries in the United States. We can understand South Africa because we have seen the inside of the jails of Mississippi and Alabama and have been herded behind barbed wire enclosures, attacked by police dogs, and set upon with electric prods — the American equivalent of the sjambok. There is no difference between the sting of being called a "kaffir" in South Africa and a "nigger" in the U.S.A. The cells of Robin Island and Birmingham jail look the same on the inside. As the vanguard of the struggle against racism in America, SNCC is not unfamiliar with the problems of southern Africa.

SNCC has never visualized the struggle for human rights in America in isolation from the worldwide struggle for human rights. It was inevitable that a time would come when it would formally declare itself, as it did this year, a "Human Rights Organization interested not only in Human Rights in the United States but throughout the world", and would apply to the United Nations Economic and Security Council for status as an affiliated non-governmental organization. SNCC has made it clear by recorded vote at its May, 1967 conference that : "It encourages and supports the liberation struggles against colonialism, racism and economic exploitation" wherever these conditions exist, and that those nations that assume a position of positive non-alignment express a point of view most consistent with

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its own views. Therefore, although our name indicates the original form of our struggle, we do not foreclose other forms of struggle.

In order to implement more effectively its program and to strengthen its link with other groups struggling against oppression, SNCC has appointed a Director of International Affairs, James Forman, and designated the New York office of SNCC as its headquarters for international affairs. The organization's participation in this conference is evidence of its desire to render intensified support to the fight against racism, apartheid, and white-settler domination on the continent of Africa.

As an organization "technically" composed of American citizens, SNCC's first obligation to the worldwide struggle for human rights is to take a firm stand against violations of these rights by the American government.

It is our firm conviction that American intervention in Vietnam militates against any possible constructive action by the U.S.A. in other areas of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. It distorts any clear analysis of the problem, since policy makers tend to interpret all such struggles in terms of Cold War rivalries. (The shameful intervention in the Congo between 1960 and 1965 was justified on the grounds that it was "necessary" to curb Soviet and Chinese influence in Africa.) Policy-makers of the U.S. government divert resources and energy that should be applied to financial and technical assistance -- without strings -- to developing areas, including the ghettos of the United States. It destroys the confidence of Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans in the good intentions of any American nationals, laying the pall of suspicion that there may be CIA among them. SNCC took a formal position on the Vietnam War in January, 1966, and our statement declared, in part, that:

The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee assumes its right to dissent with United States foreign policy on any issue, and states its opposition to United States involvement in the war in Vietnam on these grounds:

We believe the United States government has been deceptive in claims of concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people, just as the government has been deceptive in claiming concern for the

freedom of the colored people in such other countries as the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa, Rhodesia and in the United States itself.

We of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, have been involved in the black people's struggle for liberation and self-determination in this country for the past five years. Our work, particularly in the South, taught us that United States government has never guaranteed the freedom of oppressed citizens, and is not yet truly determined to end the rule of terror and oppression within its own borders.

We ourselves have often been victims of violence and confinement executed by U.S. government officials. We recall the numerous persons who have been murdered in the South because of their efforts to secure their civil and human rights, and whose murderers have been allowed to escape penalty for their crimes. The murder of Samuel Younge in Tuskegee, Alabama is no different from the murder of people in Vietnam, for both Younge and the Vietnamese sought and are seeking to secure the rights guaranteed them by law. In each case, the U.S. government bears a great part of the responsibility for these deaths. (See Appendix A for the full text)

The problem of Vietnam is organically related to the position of the United States with regard to southern Africa. The United States is formally committed to a half-hearted participation in economic sanctions against Rhodesia, but it has vigorously resisted all attempts to commit itself to such a policy with regard to the Republic of South Africa. Although it repeatedly deplors the existence of apartheid there, the United States views the Republic of South Africa as an integral part of a worldwide military system — a site for tracking stations and a haven for sailors going to and from the Far East.

World opinion has moved to the point where it is prepared to support the imposition of sanctions on South Africa in the hope of averting a violent conflict in the future. The U.S. opposes such sanctions — and not only because of its involvement in an East-West conflict. The volume of its investments and its desire not to "rock the boat" are matters that have been well documented by the United Nations and other non-governmental organizations. This working paper need not include the details.

Since its inception in 1960, SNCC has always been interested in the African

phase of the struggle against racism. In 1965, on the anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre, SNCC became active in attempts to mobilize pressure against the system of apartheid in South Africa by conducting a week of demonstrations in the offices of the South African consulate and the South African mission to the U.N., both in New York. It has also participated with other organizations in the attempt to get Americans to withdraw their accounts from banks doing a large volume of business in the Republic of South Africa.

Increasing numbers of Afro-Americans — and their allies — are beginning to recognize the indivisible nature of racism. The Chase-Manhattan Bank, for instance, has large-scale investments in South Africa and profits greatly from apartheid. SNCC has recently been lending its support to black employees of Chase-Manhattan who are victims of racist personnel practices. A total of 12 Negro employees have filed charges against the bank with the New York City Commission on Human Rights, charging the "baas" mentality among supervisors, denial of promotions and job training opportunities, and intimidation, harassment and constant surveillance after they had dared to challenge these practices. Finally, nine employees were dismissed for seeking redress of grievances. This struggle continues. (See Appendix B)

The parallels between the African liberation movement and the struggle of Afro-Americans are striking. As both movements have matured and the lessons of previous struggles have been drawn, they have increasingly emphasized the extent to which their fate has been linked — without their consent — to Great Power struggles. They have also seen the need for increasing their effectiveness by stressing the right to make their own decisions, uninfluenced by pressures from other racial and ethnic communities even though they may sustain close working relations with them as allies. In the United States this has taken the form of the "Black Power" movement with SNCC in the lead. Within the United States, conservative organizations—some of them represented at this conference—as well

as all levels of government have tried to undermine, contain, or simply destroy the organization. Numerous incidents might be cited, but a very recent one will illustrate the point. This month, five SNCC-affiliated students from Texas Southern University will go on trial in Houston, Texas. Their trial is the outgrowth of events on May 16, 1967, when 500 Texas police armed with rifles, machine guns, shotguns and dogs, fired upon and then invaded two dormitories at the University. In the wild shooting, one policeman shot another and a patrolman was killed. Despite the fact that the patrolman was shot on the side of a building where there were no doors or windows, and despite the fact that at least two of the five accused students can prove their absence from the scene, these five have been charged with murder. The brutal conduct of the police inside the dormitories, where they destroyed property indiscriminately, kicked a dormitory house mother, and arrested 487 students (some of whom they also beat) — with these crimes, the state of Texas is unconcerned. This is the same state which the President and the Attorney General of the United States call home.

This is only one of many recent incidents of massive police brutality. Such occurrences led the New York office of SNCC to issue an appeal to the African and Asian missions to the United Nations on June 13th, 1967. (See Appendix C)

This, then, is a brief summary of some aspects of SNCC's recent activity and experience which have relevance for those gathered here. What conclusions ~~and recommendations may be drawn for the consideration of this conference?~~

We see the worldwide fight against racism as indivisible. Southern Africa as a stronghold of the Herrenvolk mentality has high priority in the struggle. To win the battle there is to hasten the victory in the U.S.A.. SNCC is dedicated to a joint struggle of all who fight for Human Rights in Africa and in the U.S.A., each backing up the other, each rendering what support it can to the other. Therefore, SNCC has come to this conference not only to express its condemnation of apartheid and colonialism, already affirmed in previous statements, and to offer

its moral support to all Africans engaged in liberation struggles. We also come to assert that we consider ourselves and other black people in the United States a colonized people; a colony within the United States in many ways similar to colonies outside the boundaries of the United States and other European nations.

The fight against racism is a responsibility of all who believe in Human Rights, but it is the victims who bear primary responsibility for waging the struggle. We have accepted our responsibility for the attack on the American front. We salute those who are waging the battle in southern Africa. We want their assistance in our struggle and pledge ourselves to theirs. But we also affirm that strategy and tactics must be decided by those who bear responsibility for waging the struggle, on both fronts. Among African leaders, a remarkable degree of consensus has developed during the past five years on the acceptance of the strategy of a multi-pronged attack upon apartheid, racism, white-settler domination, and the remnants of colonialism in southern Africa. As part of that strategy, they have enlisted the support of the United Nations in arraigning South Africa before the bar of world opinion; in condemning oppressive policies in Portuguese territories; in voting to assume administration over Southwest Africa; and in declaring economic sanctions against Rhodesia. These leaders have also tried to bring the U.N. to the point of voting sanctions against South Africa.

We support that effort to obtain action in the United Nations and, as our recent appeal to the Afro-Asian nations indicates, we shall attempt to do the same for our own struggle. The United Nations is not only a world forum where grievances are legitimately aired. Its constituent nations have signed agreements with regard to Human Rights. Although these agreements are often violated, it is the duty of the citizens of the constituent nations to pressure their own nation and others to abide by these agreements. SNCC has never accepted the position that racism in the U.S.A. is a domestic issue that should not be aired before the United Nations. We call attention to the case of Julian Bond, a SNCC

staff member who was duly elected to the Georgia State Legislature and then denied his seat because he refused to repudiate the SNCC statement condemning the U.S. war in Vietnam. For almost a year, Brother Bond was denied his seat and the people of his electoral district thus denied representation. The legislature's action was clearly motivated by the fact that he was a black militant, an affront to the white supremacist legislature. During this period, Brother Bond was invited to lunch by a number of African delegations to the United Nations. Extensive pressure was brought to bear on those delegations not to attend the luncheon, on the grounds that his case was a matter of domestic concern — an internal affair of the United States. Most of the delegation resisted this pressure, recognizing that racism in the United States is a matter of international concern. This is our position also.

It is thus our privilege to continue in the footsteps of the late Malcolm X, who worked hard to secure the support of African and Asian nations for raising the question of American racism in the U.N. We believe in such efforts, as we believe that the efforts by African leaders to obtain United Nations action have been useful in the shaping of public opinion and in preparing a background of sympathy and support for their local efforts. But we also recognize that many African leaders know the United Nations alone cannot bring them their liberation, as important as its activities are. They have no illusions, nor do we.

The Organization of African Unity (O.A.U.) has set up a Liberation Committee to give aid to Freedom Fighters throughout the continent, and has made clear that in the final analysis, African member-states will be prepared to render other forms of assistance if needed. The struggle proceeds in varied forms — guerrilla tactics here, controlled sabotage there; non-violent positive action in other contexts.

High priority should be given at a conference such as this to discussion of how nations and non-governmental organizations will relate to new forms of struggle against apartheid, racism and colonialism which may be adopted in the

future. There are those who still hope that effective economic sanctions are possible. There are also those — among them, we of SNCC — who are pessimistic about the possibility of ever enlisting the aid of the two crucial nation states, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, in supporting sanctions. American businessmen and politicians oppose sanctions; British Labor Party leaders insist that the economic cost to them will be too great; and the war in Vietnam is a barometer of how far these countries will go to protect their vested interest in racism and exploitation, especially the United States.

If no effective action is taken by the United Nations, and as African liberation movements intensify their armed struggle, what will be the response of the nations in the U.N. and of its associated organizations? Will certain powers decide to intervene to protect "missionaries" and "white civilization" or raise the cry of "Communism" to strangle liberation efforts, as happens within the United States whenever blacks vigorously oppose the status quo? Will organizations concerned with human rights provide humanitarian assistance to the casualties of this struggle, as they do in the cases of international warfare, or will they define Africans as "savages" (rather than "Freedom Fighters") and deny such assistance? Will those who sing praise of the heroes of the French, Russian and American Revolutions define the black heroes as "Satanic creatures of darkness?" Is it possible, even now, before the climax of the struggle comes, to define positions, if and when such situations arise? We believe that to do less is not only unrealistic but also a betrayal of the values which all opponents of apartheid say they support. This working paper suggests that such questions as these are of great urgency in the present phase of the struggle against apartheid.

SNCC, as a non-governmental organization dedicated to Human Rights but with its own distinctive approach to the problem of fighting racism, will have its own unique response to make, as will each non-governmental organization at this conference. On one level, this is simply a matter of trying to help create ever-widening circles of awareness of the dimensions of the problem and interpreting

the aims, aspirations, and techniques — including armed struggle — of those who fight for freedom.

The problem of rallying forces inside the United States to a level of understanding and awareness of the nature and dimensions of the struggle for liberation in southern Africa where they can make effective contributions is hampered by a conservative press as it is in Mozambique, Angola, Rhodesia, Bissau, and South Africa. We must build viable organizations and alternative forms of communication to offset the negative influence of a hostile press if United States armed intervention to suppress African liberation struggles is to be prevented. Numerous agencies are devoting time and energy to this task. We shall play our part with increasing vigor in the years ahead.

On another level, we visualize the application of those techniques of organization and struggle that have won us our limited victories at home to the task of trying to prevent U.S. intervention against liberation struggles in Africa. There is the task, too, of mobilizing support for the African liberation struggle, as African leaders ask for it. In turn, we hope that our African brothers may assist us in our struggle in appropriate and feasible ways. On the educational level, we would refer again to the question of the press. As the domestic American press is dominated by white conservatives, the U.S. Information Service operating overseas seeks to cultivate an image of the American government on the side of African-Americans — an image of constant progress being made. Needless to say, this is not the truth. But we must still work to counteract the constant flow of propaganda to that effect and the constant omission of news which might challenge the image. We welcome your assistance in this effort.

In concluding this paper, we would like to summarize and list our basic points and concrete suggestions:

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

1.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2144 (XXX) of 26 October/1966 on "Question of the violation of Human Rights and fundamental freedoms, including policies of racial discrimination and segregation and of apartheid, in all countries, with particular reference to colonial and other dependent countries and territories".

We recommend and vigorously urge that this matter be placed upon the provisional agenda of the next session of the General Assembly, and we especially recommend and strenuously urge that a special seminar be convened and held to study and investigate the nexus between racial, political, economic and cultural discrimination in the United States, and racial discrimination and apartheid in Southern Africa.

We further recommend and urge that the policies of racial discrimination in the United States be condemned as posing a grave threat to international peace and security and a violation of the human rights charter; and that a resolution of the General Assembly be duly recorded as condemning the trend in the United States toward racial pogroms and condemning racial discrimination in the United States as a crime against humanity.

2.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2142 (XXI) of 26 October 1966 on "Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination".

3.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2189 (XXI) of 13 December 1966 on "Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples".

4.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2202 (XXI) of 16 December 1966 on "The policies of apartheid of the government of the Republic of South Africa."

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2151 (XXI) of 17 November 1966 on the question of Southern Rhodesia.

6.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2145 (XXI) of 27 October 1966 on the question of South West Africa.

7.

We recommend the full and immediate implementation of General Assembly resolution 2184 (XXI) of 12 December 1966 on the question of territories under Portuguese administration.

8.

We especially encourage and recommend that all member states and non-governmental organizations use every means of persuasion at their command to influence the government of the United Kingdom to take all necessary measures, including in particular the use of force, in the exercise of its powers as the administering power to put an end to the illegal, racist minority of Southern Rhodesia."

9.

We recommend that the ties between non-governmental organizations and the people of Southern Africa be strengthened, that effective and continuing means of communications be established between NGO and the people of Southern Africa. We further encourage non-governmental organizations to take more vigorous and decisive roles in the liberation struggles and in United Nations activities to end racism, apartheid and colonialism.

10.

We intend to add further recommendations to our position during the course of the conference on racism, colonialism and apartheid in Southern Africa.

January 6, 1966

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Samuel Young was murdered because U.S. law is not being enforced. Vietnamese are being murdered because the United States is pursuing an aggressive policy in violation of international law. The U.S. is no respecter of persons or law when such persons or laws run counter to its needs and desires. We recall the indifference, suspicion and outright hostility with which our reports of violence have been met in the past by government officials.

We know for the most part that elections in this country, in the North as well as the South, are not free. We have seen that the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act have not yet been implemented with full federal power and concern. We question then the ability and even the desire of the U.S. government to guarantee free elections abroad. We maintain that our country's cry of "preserve freedom in the world" is a hypocritical mask behind which it squashed liberation movements which are not bound and refuse to be bound by the expediency of the U.S. cold war policy.

We are in sympathy with and support the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to the military draft which would compel them to contribute their lives to U.S. aggression in the name of the "freedom" we find so false in this country. We recoil with horror at the inconsistency of this supposedly free society where responsibility to freedom is equated with responsibility to lend oneself to military aggression. We take note of the fact that 16% of the draftees from this country are Negro, called on to stifle the liberation of Vietnam, to preserve a "democracy" which does not exist for them at home.

We ask: Where is the draft for the Freedom fight in the United States?

We therefore encourage those Americans who prefer to use their energy in building democratic forms within the country. We believe that work in the civil rights movement and other human relations organizations is a valid alternative to the draft. We urge all Americans to seek this alternative, knowing full well that it may cost them their lives, as painfully as in Vietnam.

B: SNCC Statement on Chase Manhattan Bank

FACTS REGARDING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AT CHASE MANHATTAN BANK

FACTS REVEAL THAT NOT ONLY DOES THE CHASE MANHATTAN BANK FINANCIALLY SUPPORT APARTHEID IN SOUTH AFRICA, BUT IT PRACTICES ITS OWN PERSONAL APARTHEID ON ITS NEGRO EMPLOYEES HERE IN THE UNITED STATES AT ONE CHASE MANHATTAN PLAZA, NEW YORK CITY — THE MAIN BRANCH, HEAD OFFICE.

THE FACTS TO SUBSTANTIATE THIS STARTLING CHARGE ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1. On March 22, 1967, seven male Negro employees filed complaints with the new York City Commission on Human Rights, under the direction of William Booth, charging their supervisors with discriminatory practices in the areas of:
 - a. Job related training and schooling
 - b. Promotion and advancement opportunities
 - c. Unequal and unfair distribution of work loads
2. On March 23, 1967, five female Negro employees filed complaints with the same Commission, charging similar practices on the part of their supervisors.
3. During the interim of the filed complaints and the Commission's lengthy investigation, several attempts on the part of the Negro employees to meet with responsible bank officials to resolve the differences were denied by the bank.
4. After the complaint had been filed and the Bank officials notified, those Negroes who had filed the complain and other Negroes friendly toward them became the victims of even more intensified discrimination, intimidation, harassment, constant surveillance (as though they were criminals), insidious acts, vicious remarks, and even pressured resignations by Bank authorities.
5. On May 3, 1967, a detailed report was submitted in writing to the City Commission on Human Rights, stating the continuation of discriminatory practices and acts described above and offering recommendations of the complainants to be submitted to responsible Bank officials as possible solutions to the racial problems.
6. Several attempts by the Human Rights Commission to bring the complainants and the bank officials to a friendly conference table were refused by the Bank authorities. Thus, the Commission was forced to subpoena the responsible Bank officials to a conference table on June 6, 1967. The Bank's representation at that conference was so pathetic that at one point in the discussion, the attorney from the Commission told the senior Bank official: "I would like to inform you that some of your replies to these people's questions are very out in left field".
7. On June 26, 1967, a Negro employee (provoked and harassed by one of the guilty supervisors) was discharged from the Bank because of some petty nonsense on the part of that same supervisor. Eight other Negro employees spoke up in defense of their co-worker, charging that the discharge was unfair. One by one, they in turn were discharged from the Bank's employ and told to leave the premises immediately. Nine men, most of whom have wives and children, lost their jobs in less than one hour and a half!!