

FOR RELEASE: TUESDAY, September 11, 1962:

Following are statements on the suit filed in Jackson by four Episcopal clergymen from several leaders of civil rights and religious groups:

I. STATEMENT OF LESLIE W. DUNBAR, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL COUNCIL:

"The legal action by the Episcopal ministers before federal court in Jackson may clarify an important area of civil liberties. Can the police power of a municipality be used to frustrate peaceful protest by a minority against discrimination, or are the police obligated to protect the right and freedom of peaceful protest? The decision of the case can have wide effect wherever there are troubled race relations."

II. STATEMENT OF THE REV. WYATT T. WALKER, EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.:

"This is a most significant step for it brings directly under the scrutiny of the Federal Courts these specious arrests that are aimed at perpetuating segregation. We are gratified that our brethren of the clergy are charting the way for still another creative attack on the entire evil system."

III. STATEMENT OF RAYMOND M. HILLIARD, CHAIRMAN, NATIONAL CATHOLIC CONFERENCE FOR INTERRACIAL JUSTICE:

"The suit for damages filed by an interracial group of Episcopal clergymen who were falsely arrested and convicted in Jackson, Mississippi, is a responsible and desired action. It emphasizes clearly the rampant violations of individual civil rights perpetrated on behalf of evil racial segregation. We hope the suit will encourage the use of police powers to protect the rights of all citizens."

IV. STATEMENT OF JAMES FARMER, NATIONAL DIRECTOR, CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY:

"I applaud this civil action by the Episcopal clergymen against the police authorities of Jackson, Mississippi, charging false arrest. Unlawfully arrested by irresponsible police action, the ministers were acquitted. Hundreds of other Freedom Riders, similarly arrested, by irresponsible police action, the ministers were acquitted. Hundreds of other Freedom Riders, similarly arrested, have been convicted. The clergymen's suit is thus of great significance. It may serve as a deterrent to the arbitrary police power now being used in many Southern cities to maintain illegal segregation."

V. STATEMENT OF ROY WILKINS, EXECUTIVE SECRETARY, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE;

"The National Association For the Advancement of Colored People  
hails this legal action by members of the Episcopal Society  
For Cultural And Racial Unity. The 1961 segregation gimmick,  
the breach of the peace charge, may well be knocked out by  
the suit of these Episcopalian Clergymen."

THE FOLLOWING IS A STATEMENT FROM THE FOUR EPISCOPAL CLERGYMEN WHO FILED SUIT ON SEPTEMBER 10th, IN FEDERAL COURT IN JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI, AGAINST POLICE AND COURT AUTHORITIES.

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"We sincerely believe the charges and claims set forth in the Complaint we filed in the United States District Court in Jackson yesterday. It should speak for itself. While we have no personal feelings against the policemen who arrested us, acting undoubtedly with the encouragement and approval of their superiors, we believe them to be culpable for their irresponsible discharge of duty. The judge who sentenced us to a fine of \$200.00 and four months in prison bears an even greater responsibility for the frequent and flagrant misuse of statutory law our conviction represented. Acting in concert with other state and local authorities to preserve practices of segregation, he did dishonor to his important office as he judged us guilty with no more of an objective review of charges lodged against us than had been made in hundreds of similiar cases where the circumstances were the same.

"In addition to reasons set forth in the Complaint, we are taking this step for the sake of countless persons who have been arrested on no more grounds than in our case, in Jackson and elsewhere in the South. Most such victims of unlawful arrest have not enjoyed the subsequent acquittal granted us at the county court level. Arrests similiar to ours on breach-of-the-peace charges continue to increase in the South and now must total something in excess of five thousand. It is the new weapon of the dying order to use ostensibly non-racial ordinances, now that it is clear that the old legal barriers will be struck down. Privately even some authorities will admit that the maintenance of Jim Crow is the goal, however capricious the administration of justice becomes.

"We have filed this suit now out of a greater respect for the majesty of the law than has been demonstrated to be held by those officers of the law we have charged and those like them in the Jacksons, Albany and Baton Rouge of the South. Impartiality in the administration and prosecution of justice must be regained in those areas where a dying way-of-life has become the idol over all other loyalties."

The Rev. James P. Breeden  
The Rev. Robert L. Pierson  
The Rev. John B. Morris  
The Rev. James G. Jones, Jr.