

For further information call Ann Orlov, Secretary, Boston ESCRU  
(UN 4-4518), or Pam Emerson, Friends of SNCC, (UN 8-0939)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

AN OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT JOHNSON

Cambridge, Massachusetts  
August 25, 1965

Dear Mr. President:

We are both saddened and shocked at the murder of Jonathan Daniels in Haynesville, Alabama --- saddened by the loss of this dedicated person who had just begun a life of service to others, and shocked by the realization that in all likelihood his killer, even if indicted, will not be convicted. For this murder is only the most recent in a series of murders and attempted murders including those of Medgar Evers, Jimmy Jackson, Mickey Schwerner, James Chaney, Andrew Goodman, Lemuel Penn, James Reeb, Viola Liuzzo, Richard Morrisroe, and Donald Thompson, to name but a few, where the killers, though known, are still at large and unpunished.

These events demonstrate that some White Southerners have a license to murder, a license too frequently issued to them by police officers who refuse to vigorously investigate and apprehend, by public prosecutors who sabotage their cases, by judges who are openly biased and by juries which refuse to convict.

It is this license that has emboldened the Klan to accelerate its campaign to terrorize Negroes and those Whites who support their cause. It is this license which has helped to fill the deep wells of hatred in the Negro communities in the South and also in the

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North where hatred has finally overflowed into violence. Indeed, it is this license which saps one of the basic foundations of a democratic society -- respect for the law.

We, the undersigned, believe that the White Southerners' murder license must be revoked. Respect for the law depends upon its equal application to all, otherwise it degenerates, as it has in the South, into a tool to subjugate others.

Accordingly, we urge you, Mr. President, to present to the Congress proposed legislation to permit federal investigation and prosecution of all acts of racial violence and terror in jurisdictions which have demonstrated their unwillingness to mete out equal justice. We ask further that the penalties for such crimes be no less severe than for similar crimes not involving race.

Signed: Mr. Malcolm E. Peabody, Jr., President  
EPISCOPAL SOCIETY FOR CULTURAL AND RACIAL UNITY

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., President  
SOUTHERN CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

Mr. James Forman, Executive Director  
STUDENT NON-VIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE

Mr. Matthew Ahmann, Executive Director  
NATIONAL CATHOLIC CONFERENCE FOR INTERRACIAL JUSTICE

Mr. James Farmer, Director  
CONGRESS OF RACIAL EQUALITY

Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, Director, Religion Action Center  
UNION OF AMERICAN HEBREW CONGREGATIONS

The Rev. Dr. Robert W. Spike, Executive Director  
COMMISSION ON RELIGION AND RACE, NATIONAL COUNCIL OF  
CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN AMERICA

also Whitney M. Young, Executive Director  
National Urban League