

Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)

For Immediate Release

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FORMER CIVIL RIGHTS WORKERS DEMAND FEDERAL VOTING RIGHTS
INVESTIGATION

Dozens of civil rights activists who worked in the South in the 1960s for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee today called for an official investigation into evidence that thousands of blacks were denied the right to vote in the 2000 presidential election.

In a collective statement, the activists, who were many times beaten and arrested while helping black citizens to register and vote, wrote: "We still mourn the colleagues and friends who lost their lives in the struggle. What is at stake here is precisely what we fought for in the Sixties - the right of everyone to vote and for everyone's vote to be counted."

Among the signatories of the statement is Julian Bond, a longtime SNCC activist and now chairman of the NAACP.

The statement cites accumulating evidence that a disproportionate number of blacks weren't permitted to vote because their names were not listed on voter lists, or because the polls closed while they were waiting on line; and that a disproportionate number of blacks voted in precincts with antiquated equipment so that their votes were not counted. Especially disturbing to these civil rights workers, many of whom in the 1960s experienced abuse and intimidation firsthand, was the odd coincidence of a roadblock set up by state police near a black Tallahassee

precinct.

This statement concludes with a demand for a federal investigation and a national call that the exclusion of black voters must never happen again.

The SNCC statement was also endorsed by 300 participants in attendance on Dec. 2 at the Southern Human Rights Conference, as well as the Southern Regional Council and the American Friends Service Committee.

Mendy Samstein, a SNCC veteran of Jackson and McComb, Mississippi, said: "It's encouraging that the Justice Department is apparently starting an inquiry in Florida.

We want a full-fledged Justice Department investigation into the many charges of voting exclusion. Mindful of the courage shown by journalists in the Deep South during the 1960s, we also hope that the press will vigorously investigate these charges."

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The full statement and list of signers follow:

As activists in the 1960s struggle of black Americans to achieve voting rights, we believe that far more is at stake in Florida than choosing whether George Bush or Al Gore is to be our next president. In the sixties we fought to overcome a century of systematic and brutal disenfranchisement. Our cry was One Man, One Vote, a cry that resonated throughout this country because it appealed to the basic American sense of justice and fairness.

Today we need to remember the importance of that concept and the sacrifices that were made to ensure its realization. We still mourn the colleagues and friends who lost their lives

in the struggle. What is at stake here is precisely what we fought for in the sixties-the right of everyone to vote and for everyone's vote to be counted. One Citizen, One Vote!

Substantial evidence is accumulating that many people were denied the right to vote. Was it just a coincidence that a State Police roadblock was set up near a predominately black precinct in Tallahassee that stopped voters going to the polls? We know that thousands of ballots were not counted in Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties because machine counts of hand ballots are grossly inaccurate - despite all the hysterical Republican drumbeat to the contrary. We have increasing documentation of thousands of registered voters being turned away because their names were not listed or because their polls closed while they were waiting on line. These are voting injustices that must not be ignored.

We are horrified at the prospect that in the year 2000, we Americans would resign ourselves to the results of an election achieved by questionable and undemocratic means. We urge all Americans who believe in the sacredness of honest elections to support the legal battle for a full and fair counting of the votes in Florida and to demand a Justice Department investigation into incidents of voter irregularities. We must not let this happen again!

Sandra Adickes

Elaine Baker

Frances M. Beal

Debbie Amis Bell

James Bond

Julian Bond

Joan Browning

Ron Carver

Charlie Cobb

Nancy Cooper Samstein

Connie Curry

Dave Dennis

Betty Garman

Ira Grupper

Gene Guerrero

Ed Hamlett

Bruce Hartford

Casey Hayden

Faith S. Holsaert

Matt Jones

Marsha R. Joyner

Mary King

Dorie Ladner Churnet

Joyce Ladner

Julius Lester

Fred Mangrum

Sheila Michael

Mike Miller

Linda Moses Dehnad

Penny Patch

Bill Perlman

Martha Prescod

Judy Richardson

Wally Roberts

Howard Romaine

Dinky Romilly

Mendy Samstein

Cleve Sellers

Judy D. Simmons

Nancy Stearns

Marsha Steinberg

Barbara Summers

Susan Thrasher

Maria Varela

Penny Weaver

Carl Imiola Young

Dorothy M. Zellner

Zoya Zeman

Mitchell Zimmerman

-30-

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