

Office of Communication
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
289 Park Avenue South
New York 10, New York
(Rameroy 5-2127)

Jackson Movement -
Spring 1963
June 9

Rev. Everett C. Parker, Director

Statement by the Rev. R. Edwin King, Chaplain
of Tougaloo Southern Christian College, Tougaloo,
Mississippi, at Broadway Congregational Church,
New York City, Sunday, June 9, 1963.

1EKT1612

The Jackson movement has brought the campaign for freedom to the leading city of Mississippi. In many ways Jackson is a greater symbol of bigotry and white supremacy than Birmingham. Mississippi is the home of the White Citizens' Council, and of Ross Barnett. The press and others have convinced the people that Oxford was a racist victory. Mississippi has not given way to accept any integration. Negroes are at the University only so long as Federal troops can occupy the campus and guard them. Last Fall Governor Barnett shouted "No, No, Never, No." Today the Mayor of Jackson, Allen Thompson, brags that Jackson will never will never form a bi-racial committee of Negro and White citizens to help bring change in a responsible way. Mayor Thompson claims his city has the best race relations in America and almost no one, White or Negro, wants anything changed.

In the past two weeks this myth has been destroyed. The Negroes of Mississippi are not "happy in their place" and have gone to prison by the hundreds to let the Mayor, the Governor, and the world know that Freedom is long overdue in the great and sovereign State of Mississippi.

The present campaign began last Fall with plans to boycott downtown stores which discriminated against Negro customers. The first pickets were Tougaloo College students. A white couple on the faculty, John and Eldri Salter, also marched on the picket line. During the Christmas season someone shot into their home on the College campus. A bullet passed less than a foot above their baby's crib. Since December there have been several other picket demonstrations to publicize the boycott. Before May a dozen persons had been arrested. During the past six months college and high school students have secretly distributed some 65,000 leaflets calling for a boycott of the downtown stores. Students visited churches often to speak about the boycott. White merchants refused to even talk with the boycott leaders.

Early in May, as a response to Birmingham, the Jackson Negroes, with the state NAACP as spokesman, issued a statement to the Mayor and leading businessmen calling for the establishment of a responsible bi-racial committee. The Mayor rejected this as did the business men. Mas action was then decided on by the Negroes.

The Jackson Movement represents most segments of the Negro Community--ministers, businessmen, the women, and the college students and the working man.

Before the first demonstrations began many people worked to try to find a way short of this. A number of prominent White ministers (including the two Roman Catholic bishops, the two Episcopal bishops, and the Methodist bishop) met with Negro ministers to discuss the crisis facing Jackson. The ministers had not gotten together in many years for such a serious discussion. Most White ministers did not even know the Negro ministers. But the White ministers talked to the Mayor and to the Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce. Because of the possibility that the White ministers might persuade the Mayor or others to form a bi-racial committee, demonstrations were postponed three or four times. Finally the Mayor told a group of Negro ministers that there would be no changes in Jackson, Mississippi. He would yield at no point. Demonstrations began the next day at the Woolworth's lunch counter.

Since then between six and seven hundred people have been arrested. The people, mostly students, but including several hundred adults, sing of Freedom. But this Freedom is not just a blessing for the Negro of Mississippi. The average White man needs to be freed from the prejudice, hatred, and fear which is destroying his own integrity and his soul. Those who have demonstrated for Freedom have done so in a powerful yet non-violent way, with the quiet dignity of faith and love standing up to depravity and hate. Never has the sickness of prejudice been so revealed as in these past weeks in Birmingham and in Jackson.

MORE--