

VANDERBILT - NASHVILLE

STATEMENT FROM THE GENERAL CABINET OF THE STUDENT CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

Preface

We, as members of the Student Christian Association, first feel it necessary to confess our guilt for being indifferent to the problems of race relations over a long period of time. As individuals and as a group we have failed to be truly concerned about a social situation of such gravity. We regret that our concern and activity comes only after an incident which cannot help but be a judgment upon all people.

Furthermore, we plead for patience and understanding for all parties involved. We ask that prayerful consideration be given to other points of view before action is taken by any individual or group.

Recognizing the above qualifications, we, as members of the Vanderbilt community and as members of an organization whose principles are involved in this incident and as individuals who are concerned with the issues wish to express our considerations concerning the Nashville sit-ins and the expulsion of Mr. James Lawson.

I. GENERAL SOCIAL CONDITIONS AND THE PURPOSES OF THE NEGRO STUDENTS

Individual and social prejudices exist which are manifested in the practices and principles regulating commerce in the city. The lunch counter situation is only one example of the many inequalities which arise from racial prejudices throughout the nation.

We are in sympathy with the general feelings and with the desire of the Negro students to raise protestations against these unfair practices.

II. THE METHOD OF PROTEST

We realize that the existing social conditions need protesting and yet from the Negro point of view there may not have been an entirely legal, yet effective, means of protest, thus forcing them to make their protest in a mildly unlawful way. The possibility that there were no lawful, effective means of protest in view for the Negro should deeply concern this community. Nevertheless, we feel that membership in the community demands that every lawful means be exploited before an unlawful action is taken.

Whether or not the means which were used may be held in approval, we feel that it is imperative that the social conditions from which this protestation arose should receive the far larger portion of our concern and action. Even if we disapprove of the means, we should not let this overshadow the larger issue.

III. THE UNIVERSITY'S ACTION

We believe the University acted in accordance with its precedents with respect to an individual's personal conduct. Because it is one of the University's prime responsibilities to support individual morality, we deem it unfortunate that its policies and regulations should come into conflict with an individual's concept of his moral duty.

In the eyes of many people the University's action is an infringement on the individual's moral convictions; however, we feel that in this case, rather than his moral integrity it was the implicit identification of his cause with the University which was subject to serious question.

Consequently, we realize that action on the part of the University was necessary, although some of us question whether expulsion was the only solution.