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TWENTY WEST FORTIETH STREET • NEW YORK, N. Y. 10018 • BRyant 9-1400

October 17, 1966

Dear Friend:

A few months ago the slogan "Black Power" was introduced into the civil rights struggle. Since then it has created alarm and confusion among Americans of all races and has made it plain that civil rights groups differ not only in strategy and tactics but also in objectives.

It is therefore appropriate at this juncture in history to state--or, more accurately, to restate--the fundamental principles which have guided the NAACP since 1909. Our objective now, as then, is the full participation of Negro Americans, without discrimination, in all phases of American life.

During these six decades we have employed many methods to achieve that objective. If these methods have any single common denominator, it is that they have always been non-violent. Today non-violence is stridently challenged on the premise that Negroes must defend themselves when attacked. But the right of Negroes and of all others to self-defense is not truly an issue. The NAACP has always defended this right.

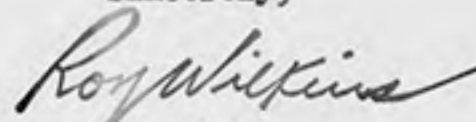
What we oppose is the doctrine that Negroes should stand in armed readiness to retaliate and deal out punishment on their own. The record of unpunished murders of Negroes and civil rights workers makes this position emotionally understandable, but its fruit would be disastrous. As private vigilante vengeance, it would inevitably breed white counter-vigilantism and would furnish a pretext to any law officer wishing to "crack down" on Negro protest.


A more serious issue is posed by the slogan "Black Power." No matter how often it is defined, this slogan means anti-white power. In a racially pluralistic society, "Black Power" has to mean that every other ethnic group is the antagonist. It has to mean "going it alone." It has to mean separatism.

We of the NAACP will have none of this. We have fought unceasingly for genuine pride of race and for the inherent nobility of equal citizenship. We deny that racial dignity requires the ranging of race against race.

We are Americans as well as Negroes. While we will fight to defend this country, we are also determined to improve it. I urge you to help us in this historic struggle by contributing generously to the NAACP Special Contribution Fund. Your contribution is a vote against all forms of racism; it is an affirmation of the principles for which NAACP stands.

Sincerely,


Roy Wilkins

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