**SNCC Denounces the Vietnam War, 1966**

January 6, 1966

The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee assumes its right to dissent with United States foreign policy on any issue, and states its opposition to United States involvement in the war in Vietnam on these grounds:

We believe the United States government has been deceptive in its claims of concern for the freedom of the Vietnamese people, just as the government has been deceptive in claiming concern for the freedom of the colored people in such other countries as the Dominican Republic, the Congo, South Africa, Rhodesia and in the United States itself.

We of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee have been involved in the black people’s struggle for liberation and self-determination in this country for the past five years. Our work, particularly in the South taught us that the United States government has never guaranteed the freedom of oppressed citizens, and is not yet truly determined to end the rule of terror and oppression within its own borders.

We ourselves have often been victims of violence and confinement executed by U.S. government officials. WE recall the numerous persons who have been murdered in the South because of their efforts to secure their civil and human rights, and whose murderers have been allowed to escape penalty for their crimes. The murder of Samuel Younge in Tuskegee, Alabama is no different from the murder of people in Vietnam, for both Younge and the Vietnamese sought and are seeking to secure the rights guaranteed them by law. In each case, the United States Government bears a great part of the responsibility for these deaths.

Samuel Younge was murdered because United States law is not being enforced. Vietnamese are being murdered because the United States is pursuing an aggressive policy in violation of international law. The United States is no respecter of persons or law when such persons or laws run counter to its needs and desires. We recall the indifference, suspicion and outright hostility with which our reports of violence have been met in the past by government officials. We know for the most part that elections in this country, in the North as well as the South, are not free. We have seen that the 1965 Voting Rights Act and the 1964 Civil Rights Act have not yet been implemented with full federal power and concern. We question then the ability and even the desire of the United States government to guarantee free elections abroad. We maintain that our country’s cry of “preserve freedom in the world” is a hypocritical mask behind which it squashed liberation movements which are not bound and refuse to be bound by the expediency of the United States cold war policy.

We are in sympathy with and support the men in this country who are unwilling to respond to the military draft which would compel them to contribute their lives to United States aggression in the name of the “freedom” we find so false in this country.

We recoil with horror at the inconsistency of this supposedly free society where responsibility to freedom is equated with responsibility to lend oneself to military aggression. We take note of the fact that 16% of the draftees from this country are Negro, called on to stifle the liberation of Vietnam, to preserve a “democracy” which does not exist for them at home.

We ask: Where is the draft for the Freedom fight in the United States?

We therefore encourage those Americans who prefer to use their energy in building democratic forms within the country. We believe that work in the civil rights movement and other human relations organizations is a valid alternative, knowing full well that it may cost them their lives, as painfully as in Vietnam.

**An Interview with Black Panther Jimmy Slater**

CEJ: Why did you join the Black Panther Party?

JS: I learned about the Black Panther Party from friends and other people who were familiar with the organization. We began to understand the positive community programs that the Panthers had going on throughout the community…When I became a volunteer worker, I was eighteen. I was between nineteen-and-a-half and twenty years old when I became a full-fledged member of the Party…I became a member of the Black Panther Party in the late sixties, (1968), and I left the Party in the mid-seventies (1977)…

We had to go through a procedure that involved serving as volunteers first and then later being accepted as full members of the Party. Practice was the criterion of the troops; and on the basis of practice, we were called upon to become full-time members…I was one of those brothers out on the street, but every one of my leaders was educated. The Party placed an emphasis on education and always tried to persuade every individual around us to pursue higher education…I ended up attending Laney Junior College (Oakland) and going all the way to San Francisco State because of the push from the Black Panther Party. I really didn’t have any intention of doing that before I joined the Party.

CEJ: What community programs were offered by your branch?

JS: We had a free health clinic and a free breakfast program in Cleveland. We used to serve out of the Catholic church and a number of the Black churches around. My mother’s church was one of those churches. We served breakfast out of the basement. We also had a free clothing program. WE utilized the facilities from the churches to set up this program, and we had volunteers – church members, my mother, and a lot of other seniors there who would volunteer to work with us. And they were the ones who really kept the free clothing program going. The free health clinic was blown up. I believe the year was 1969 or somewhere in that area…We would imagine that the police, COINTELPRO (COunter INTELligence PROgrams), [blew it up]. Any positive program that served and mobilized the community was attacked. It was one of the things we had going that served a lot of people who needed free medical aid, and it was attacked to undermine the Party’s efforts.

…When the Angela Davis free breakfast program was implemented, they (government officials) weren’t giving away free lunch at schools…At one point, we were testing for sickle cell anemia. We found this to be a very vital need in the Black community because at the time no one was testing Black people for sickle cell anemia…

CEJ: What type of COINTELPRO tactics were levied against your particular branch?

JS: Every kind you could name. From the point of planting people among us to creating friction and divisions among comrades within the organization. There were several examples. Now, we would have a peaceful demonstration, and everything is going okay. And then you have a fool out there hollering and talking about murdering and kill the pig…Another thing was that COINTELPRO played a great part by sending leaders of the East Coast fabricated messages that were supposedly from leaders of the West Coast. In other words, COINTELPRO manipulated contradictions and played upon friction within the organization…We had COINTELPRO to deal with on one hand and the police on the other. We had spies sitting all around us and working with us in some cases. WE found that out after everything had closed down…