

January 5, 1965

FROM: Barbara Simon

TO: SNCC Executive Committee

PROPOSAL FOR A CULTURAL ARM OF SNCC

Because of the systematic cutting off of Afro-Americans from their African heritage by whites, we have become a nation without a country--both mentally and physically. In order to try to compensate for this a large number of Black people have tried to integrate into the alien European culture. Needless to say, this has not succeeded.

Now is the time for Black people to know that we have a separate culture. We hope to show through education that "culture" is not synonymous with European culture, but that culture is the expression of life as it is lived by the people.

We should be exposed to our African and Afro-American heritage so that we can see how our culture developed during our colonization in America.

I suggest that "Afro Arts" be the name of the program.

Suggested Activities:

- 1.) A group should be formed which would tour the North and South singing the songs of the Movement for Black audiences.
- 2.) African dance groups should be able to tour our projects. (one group has already expressed an interest.)
- 3.) Persons who are visiting this country from the Bandung (dark-skinned) world should be contacted to speak at workshops which we would set up in the South.

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4.) Workshops in African and Afro-American history should be conducted by people from these groups for the SNCC Staff and other interested groups (churches, schools, etc.). These workshops would travel from project area to project area.

5.) There should be an annual conference of Black groups which would meet to discuss and have a critical analysis of what we are doing now, what we did in the past, and what we should do in the future. Since our national office is in Atlanta, the first meeting should be here. Some of the groups that are commonly grouped together under the name "nationalist" should be included.

6.) There should be a publication which is specially geared to the needs of the Black community. I think that such a paper already exists, Muhammad Speaks, but many people do not read it because of the stigma that is attached to the name, "Muslim". This publication should report on things such as the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, the MFLU, Poor People's Corporation the Watts insurrection and other items of interest in the Black community.

7.) Exhibits of African and Afro-American art should be set up.

8.) There should be a theater which would operate along the same lines as the Free Southern Theater. However, it should remain in an area long enough to conduct drama workshops. The plays should be such that Black people can relate to them easily.

9.) Most of these suggestions could be encompassed into a summer festival which would tour project areas.