

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STATEMENT TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
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*Special Note: Formulated by the Association of 111 members with Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr., President of Florida A and M University, serving as a member of the Board of Directors and one of 15 who had conference with the President.

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Mr. President:

We represent the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, an organization representing all of the predominantly black colleges and universities of the nation.

We come to express the anger, outrage, and frustration of the black people of this nation. We wish to convey to you the disenchantment of blacks, especially black youth, with our society and with the Federal Government.

This feeling is engendered by a number of longstanding conditions: manifestations of racism in all areas of American life; inadequate educational opportunities for blacks and other disadvantaged minorities; widespread poverty and hunger in this affluent nation; high unemployment rates among the blacks and racial discrimination in employment; racial differentials in law enforcement procedures; and deplorable housing conditions. While there has been improvement in many of these areas over the years, progress has been all too slow.

This feeling is also engendered by the policies and practices of your administration: the "southern strategy" which leads to the conclusion that blacks are dispensable; the neglect of urban problems; insufficient support of education, especially of schools and colleges attended largely by blacks; your nomination of justices to the Supreme Court; your hesitancy to support strong measures to assure the voting rights of black citizens; your own failure to use your great moral influence to bring the people of this great nation together. Added to this is the tone of your administration as exemplified by the statements of the Vice President and the Attorney General with resultant fears of repression; by statements by members of your administration of "benign neglect" and "law and order" without justice.

We add that blacks, and especially black students, have the same concerns as other Americans. They are concerned about Vietnam and Cambodia and the large proportion of our national energies devoted to militarism; they are concerned about manifestation of racism; they are

deeply concerned by the recent tragedies of Kent State, Augusta, Georgia, and Jackson State.

Mr. President, these are strong words which will convey to you the feelings of the black people and especially the black students of this nation.

These are the bases of unrest and violence. These are the causes of the increasing alienation of black youth. We are convinced that these are the basic problems, too, that this nation has the strength, the resources and the moral fibre to solve these problems.

So, Mr. President, with the background of Augusta, Jackson State, and last night in Savannah, we present to you the following list of questions posed to lead to an agenda for action to meet this dire need in American life:

1. What actions need to be taken to convince young black Americans that racism--institutionalized and casual--is being eliminated from American society?
2. What actions are being or should be taken to protect the rights of young black people?
3. What positive aid can be given to those American institutions concerned with enlarging the opportunities for young blacks?
4. What more can be done to convince young black people that the divisions in American life are being healed?
5. What are the specific acts which the government can undertake immediately to mobilize public opinion, public sentiment, and public action in support of the legitimate aspirations and hopes of young black people?

In that context, we make the following proposals:

1. A Presidential message on national television reaffirming the Federal Government's resolve to protect the lives of black citizens. It must be clear that there is no compromise with any regional groups on the rights of black Americans.

2. A liaison mechanism be set up to involve more black Americans in the formulation of domestic policies. All major councils involving advice to the President should include black Americans. This meeting with black college Presidents should be but the first of a series of meetings with various segments of the black community.
3. Black college students are their own best spokesman. A Presidential conference with such a group should be held as soon as possible. A sense of their mood is crucial to understanding the urgency of greater responsiveness to the black community.
4. Executive orders should be issued embodying federal recommendations to all state and local law enforcement agencies on the use of guns for crowd control. A specific recommendation is no loaded guns on campuses.
5. Appointment of a black Deputy Attorney General of unquestioned commitment to civil liberties to be responsible for investigations and recommendations for prosecutions of those responsible for the killing of unarmed citizens and to monitor the use of law enforcement assistance.
6. An immediate and comprehensive review of the budget proposals for fiscal 1972 be undertaken to increase the funding of all those programs most responsive to improving the educational institutions of black Americans and to strengthen the overall internal life of the black community across the nation.

We trust our comments have defined the special context within which the black college student views the other issues of importance, Vietnam and Cambodia and the large proportion of our national energies devoted to militarism. Our firm hope is that a new window has been furnished you through which you can view the reality of whether the nation is being brought together.