

Diocese of Newark



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More power to you!

In the interests of the National Conference on Black Power, to be held on the weekend of July 21-23, 1967, we would be both greatly honored and privileged to have you serve, along with a number of other distinguished black Americans, as a member of the National Planning Committee for the Conference. A meeting of the Planning Committee will be held on Saturday, February 25, 1967 at the Episcopal Cathedral House, 24 Rector Street, Newark, New Jersey from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. We sincerely hope that you can arrange to be present for this highly important organizational meeting.

Organizations such as B'Nai B'Rith, the Knights of Columbus, the Sons of Italy, and Negro Businessmen's Clubs and fraternal groups all represent associations for the development of positive ethnic power. In much this same spirit, a consolidated effort must be made now for more equitable power formation among the masses of black Americans for the larger good of the whole nation. I am sure that you especially are aware of how important it is in these immediately crucial times that we learn again to support each other and to stand up for and with each other.

It was this recognition which last year prompted the calling for a National Conference on Black Power. At the planning session in Washington, D. C. over the 1966 Labor Day weekend, unexpected numbers of black young people came. The planning session turned out to be their day; and evidence was clearly given that these young people - in spite of all that we may have heard to the contrary - were open to communication and cooperation with their own older black brothers.

At the conclusion of the 1966 Labor Day weekend planning session in Washington, D.C. for the National Conference on Black Power, Representative Adam Clayton Powell appointed a Committee for Continuation for the Conference. The committee was composed, in addition to Mr. Powell, of Mrs. Jewell Mazique, Messrs. Omar Abu Ahmed, Isaiah Robinson, Ron Karenga, and Dr. Nathan Wright. When Mr. Powell withdrew as convener of the Conference, the Committee was asked to continue plans for the Conference and to make every effort to extend the base of participation. Our Committee has met frequently and after hearing the suggestions of a number of younger and older persons across the country concerned with Black Power, we have determined the following:

- 1 - A National Conference on Black Power is to be called for July 21-23, 1967. This will comply with a suggestion by Mr. Floyd McKissick, National Director of CORE, that we meet two weeks after the annual meeting of CORE and reap the benefit of the publicity which CORE will give the National Conference on Black Power. The Conference and all of its planning sessions will involve understandably only our own black brothers.
- 2 - The theme of the conference will be: "THE UNITY of BLACK PEOPLE for the greater good of all." The express purpose of the Conference is to answer what may be the most promising plea of more than a generation: That the experiences of our older black men and women be wedded with those of the masses of younger black men and women, symbolic of the emerging new breed that has developed out of the past and will be shaped by the future.

Together we must work within the clearly assumed need of power for black people as the basis for self-respect, self-development, self-protection, and self-determination. Hence, our meetings are to be family gatherings for us as black brothers by ourselves, but for the greater good of all.

- 3 - A series of national and regional planning meetings will be held prior to the conference.
 - (a) the first such meeting was held on the first Saturday of February, 1967 for the purpose of preparing a substantial list of our own eminent men and women of success who might be asked to serve as members of the National Planning Committee and underwrite as patrons the basic expense of the National Conference on Black Power. It was at this meeting that your name was suggested as a potential Planning Committee member.

Our younger new breed cannot pay for long-distance transportation plus for conference fees and accommodations and come for a conference anywhere in large numbers. Since it has been

their plea that a wedding of interests take place between them and their older black brothers, it is necessary that every effort be made to facilitate their presence. Further, regional planning meetings at selected cities must be held, beginning in March, to organize for the work which the National Conference on Black Power will spawn, encourage, and strengthen. These expenses must be underwritten in advance.

(b) Brother Omar Abu Ahmed of New York City and Bishop John Douglass Bright, Sr., of the First Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church have agreed to serve as joint hosts for the February 25 organizational meeting of the Planning Committee for the National Conference on Black Power.

(c) At the February 4 meeting, at which names of potential Planning Committee members were proposed, several other matters were agreed upon which should be of deep concern to you.

- 1) Every effort will be made to keep a balance between our older and younger black brothers in the work and planning of the Conference. This is a matter to which we must be particularly sensitive since understandably most of the initial members of the Planning Committee, who are all asked to be patrons, will be our older men and women. We shall address ourselves to this issue on February 25.
- 2) The Planning Committee will be responsible to the Committee on Continuation for the National Conference on Black Power.
- 3) Members of the National Planning Committee would be asked to subscribe \$100 each toward the pre-Conference and Conference expense.
- 4) National officers will be selected for the Planning Committee on February 25. Regional officers will be designated at regional meetings beginning in March.
- 5) Until a treasurer for the Conference is selected, preferably from the middle or far West, Mr. Isaiah Robinson, nationally known for his leadership of the Harlem Parents' Committee, will serve as temporary treasurer.

Bishop Bright has been asked to give the weight of his presence and participation as a patron at present to the work of the Conference. His future role will depend chiefly upon the kind of response which we give on February 25. The Bishop feels that if we can plan successfully in our endeavor, the welfare of the entire nation will have been enhanced, and a miracle of the century will have been performed. The Bishop recently wrote: "All of us know so well that power is merely to do things, to move things, to control things, to direct, to create, to destroy. The desire of Negro America to get Black Power is not to destroy America but to do great things for America, to move America forward; yes, to control part of America like all other ethnic groups, to help direct the affairs of America, to be creative American citizens; yes, to destroy the bigots, the social ills, political ills, the economic ills, racial ills, and to drive them from the shores of America."

Those of us who are asked to serve on the National Planning Committee for the forthcoming Conference have all, in our own way, been working for the empowerment of black Americans for their eventual successful thrust into the mainstream of American life. Because of this, Bishop Bright speaks for me and, I trust, for you as well. In this same regard, my own Black Power and Urban Unrest: Creative Possibilities will be published in cloth and paperback simultaneously by Hawthorn Books, Inc., New York, in March. The Bishop's statement is taken from the book. We must give to Black Power the positive meaning which it must have as a creative necessity at this time in the life of our nation and world. This urgency makes all the more significant what we do both at the July Conference and at our series of pre-Conference meetings in a number of cities. It is here that practical approaches to the regional, local, and national implementation of power, unity, and a new identity marked by pride for us as black people must begin to be written large and clear for the greater good of all.

A small task force is presently at work preparing a position paper for consideration on February 25, spelling out specific economic, political, educational, and cultural program possibilities for the tangible expression of Black Power. Please send to us immediately your suggestions in this regard.

Please return the enclosed card, preferably with your much-needed subscription, at this time. Your early indication of willingness to participate as a Planning Committee member will assure your participation in determining the national thrust of our effort for power and solidarity. Perhaps most important, however, this will insure your key role in giving shape to the local and regional endeavors which must be the basic scene of our work for the far too long overdue empowerment of black people for self-directed self-determination for our own good and that of our nation and world.

Respectfully yours,



Nathan Wright, Jr., Chairman
Committee on Continuation
National Conference on Black Power

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