

*Conference attended by "Freedom Riders" Russ & Mary
Jorgensen & Cecil Thomas before going to jail in Jackson
Miss.*

MISSION TO MISSISSIPPI

Jackson, Miss., July 20, 1961

CONFERENCE STATEMENT

We, as clergymen and concerned laymen of the Protestant, Catholic and Jewish faiths, moved by our religious commitments as well as by our concern for our beloved United States, have gathered together at Jackson, Mississippi to study and to pray together for solutions to the problems which confront us in the field of race relations. Deeply conscious of our own sin and that of the states from which we have gathered, we join together in common agreement with the following principles:

1. No person informed by the doctrine of the brotherhood of man can tolerate the existence of laws which place disabilities of any kind on men of a particular race, color, or creed.
2. It is to the eternal credit of those who have been striving for social change that they have confined themselves to non-violent techniques, and we commend their example to all who would emulate or oppose them.
3. We recognize, however, that Freedom Rides can only draw attention to the nature of the problem, and cannot solve it. Recognizing also that legal pretexts used against the Freedom Riders and others can only result in delaying the ultimate solution, we call upon our brothers in the Southern states to help their political leaders to search for just and equitable final solutions.
4. In deep shame and sorrow, we recognize that religious forces in the United States, far from taking leadership in the search for solutions have, with some notable exceptions, succeeded simply in reflecting the customs of the various communities from which they come. With all the earnestness at our command, we beg the leaders of our own faiths to recognize that the racial problem is the most serious internal problem threatening our society, and that, because of its nature, failure of the churches to aid in the solution of this problem is a failure to communicate the religious convictions with which we have been entrusted.
5. They are mistaken who refer to this problem as one primarily or even most closely affecting the South. All of us must recognize that the differences between the various states are only those of circumstance and form. Employment and housing discrimination in the North is as much a badge of second class citizenship as voting discrimination in the South. All of us are Americans, regardless of the state in which we live. The uncommitted nations of the world do not make the distinctions that we make between "Mississippian" and "New Yorker". The eyes of the world are on America in this matter. The fact of segregation is a great propaganda weapon in the hands of international Communism.
6. Finally, we must recognize that we are all part of the community of mankind and that if one is not free, no one is free. We seem determined to be the authors of our own tragedy, seeming not to realize that, insofar as we deny freedom to our brothers, we deny it to ourselves. Believing humbly that we speak in the spirit of the living God who has created all men to be free to respond to His purposes for them, we call upon all men of good will to join us in work and prayer to the end that America may continue to represent freedom and equality to the nations of the world.