



April 19, 2023

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Courtland Cox
Chair

Larry Rubin
Treasurer

Cynthia Palmer
Secretary

Rep. Justin Jones
425 Rep. John Lewis Way N.
Suite 422 Cordell Hull Bldg.
Nashville, TN 37243

Dear Representative Jones,

BOARD MEMBERS

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Frank Smith

Karen Spellman

Maria Varela

Dorothy "Dottie" Zellner

We, veterans of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), send our support and appreciation for your determined efforts to stand up for the rights of the people of Tennessee. Your fight for democracy is definitely in the strong tradition that grounded SNCC and others working for social justice in America. As you know, like you, the late Julian Bond, a SNCC veteran, was expelled from the Georgia legislature in 1966 in an attempt to undermine the will of his constituents. He was denied his seat because he refused to be intimidated by the white members of the Georgia legislature. Instead, he continued to support SNCC's statement against the unjust war in Vietnam. Like you, he was voted in again. However, after the state legislature refused to seat him a second time, he was, finally, returned to his seat through a unanimous U.S. Supreme Court decision. The expulsion made Julian a national figure who continued to battle for the human and civil rights of all Americans throughout his life.

Over the past 75 years, Black veterans returning from World War II, sharecroppers, civil rights organizations, women's organizations, the religious community, the LGBTQ+ community and others have fought to make America a more just society for all its citizens. Our efforts have borne fruit, and the America of 2023 is much more democratic than the America of 1945.

However, some Americans continue to resist the inevitability of this more democratic America. They fight to deny basic human rights to Black and other communities of color, to women, the poor, and to the LGBTQ+ community. Their resistance in recent years has resulted in anti-democratic forces coalescing around MAGA (Make America Great Again). The main tenet of MAGA is to return America to the less democratic America that existed in the 1950s. SNCC veterans have learned, over the past 63 years, the organizing work necessary to create a more democratic America is never done. So, we truly celebrate your determination to carry on the struggle, as we continue to do.

Our mentor, Ms. Ella Baker, reminded us, at the beginning of our struggle in 1960, "we who believe in freedom cannot rest until it comes." The fight by you and your generation to create a true multi-racial democracy in America will be difficult, but it will be achieved.

The struggle continues.

Courtland Cox, Chair
SNCC Legacy Project

EMERITUS MEMBERS

Bernice Johnson Reagon