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Will to Jim, 13 September 1960

Will D. Campbell

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Department of Racial and Cultural Relations

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST in the U.S.A.

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September 13, 1960

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Dr. James Silver
Department of History
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Dear Jim:

I have read with great interest the book which you were kind enough to send me, *THE SOUTHERNER AS AMERICAN*. Perhaps after the first of the year we can take you up on your suggestion to place copies into the hands of Mississippi leaders and intellectuals. I will have to trust your good judgement to locate them, for I have failed to find them, unless, of course, you have in mind such intellectual giants as Ross Barnett and the noted sociologist Tom Grady.

For the present, I have a small venture which is in need of your guidance. NBC is doing an hour-long television show on race relations in the South to be shown in the winter, and according to the director, in prime time. I assume that they mean by that the Jack Paar show.

They want to do part of the program in the border South where Negroes have no restrictions in voting and where they have been mildly successful in such areas as housing, employment, education, public facilities, etc. They have chosen Nashville for this.

The second part of the show is to be filmed in an area where the Negro is beginning to emerge, but where he is meeting with great opposition. They have chosen Fayette County, Tennessee, and have already spent a few weeks roaming about the county, but the live camera invasion has not yet taken place.

For the remainder of the show, they hope to do some film in a rural county in the ^{Basin} South where the Negroes are "happy" and where the whites intend to keep them happy. That is, where there has been little or no activity on the part of Negroes to gain the ballot,

Galen R. Weaver, Recording Secretary • Will D. Campbell, Assoc. Executive Director

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desegregated schools, fair employment, or anything else. For some reason which I am unable to understand, they feel that somewhere in Mississippi they can locate such a primitive county.

I have agreed to work with them in an advisory, off-the-record, and behind the scenes (where it gets so crowded) capacity. So far, my only contribution has been to mention your name and suggest that the director and I call upon you within the next few weeks for the purpose of further consultation.

Needless to say, such a consultation would also be off-the-record and behind the scenes. If you could suggest to us what you consider to be the county in which race relations remains exactly the same as it always was, and perhaps the names of a few individuals in that county who are the king makers and who are determined that no one should agitate their croppers, this will be helpful.

I have suggested Homes, Neshoba, Newton, Amite, or one of the delta counties. They do not look with favor on any of these except Amite, because in the others there has been some incident which at least implies some activity on the part of the Negro residents.

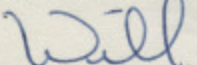
If you will agree to see us, we can come to Oxford at your convenience, or perhaps meet you in Memphis. There will be just the two of us and the director. Far from being the Madison Avenue type, he looks more like an Old Miss halfback. I had thought of suggesting that they expand the group to include Easton King or some other person you might suggest.

I am not at all anxious that my name be associated with this project, and I would guess that you would share this feeling. Thus whether you agree to see us or not, I am sure you will keep it in confidence.

You will be interested to know that Cassius Marcellus Clay made quite an impression in Minneapolis, and that upon leaving the group, which unhappily, you were unable to address, I was presented with an original Bowie knife which I have since employed to produce "great shock" in various parts of the glorious Southland.

When I see you we can discuss the matter which you mentioned in your last letter.

Cordially yours,


Will D. Campbell
WDC:mmm