

Thelma McDaniel Collection 1935-1989. Collection 3063. "CORE/SNCC Meeting Flyer," Box 2 Folder 1 (1966).

### **"With Liberty and Justice For All"**

It's all about Civil Rights during the 1960s in Philadelphia, isn't it? This homemade flyer announces an organizational meeting in Philadelphia for racial equality. The leaders of this call to action are Stokely Carmichael (later known as Kwame Ture), the flamboyant firebrand leader of SNCC; William Mathis, local leader of CORE; and Father Paul Washington, who will host this event at his Church of the Advocate in a Negro neighborhood. The importance of Black pastors in the struggle for racial justice cannot be overstated. Other prominent pastors that lent their names to support this rally are the Reverends Leon Sullivan, Jesse Jackson, and M.L. King.

When slavery Constitutionally ended, hordes of hopeful Negroes migrated to Philadelphia from the South. They became dispirited upon discovering the "City of Brotherly Love" had its own social issues. The flyer's slogan "Down South—Up South" is ironical. Negroes fled from down south to discover the same bigotry up south, i.e., "up north." Discrimination was not regional; it was everywhere! The newly arrived Negroes in Philadelphia were no longer slaves, but neither did they have the same rights as their white brothers and sisters. At this defining moment in history, however, there was optimism about correcting civil rights abuses with the passage two landmark decisions. First, the abhorrent "separate but equal" clause in education was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in the *Brown v Board of Education* (1954). Second, the passage of the Civil Rights Act which banned discrimination based on "race, color, religion, sex, or national origin." (1964) The CORE/SNCC call for a civil rights rally indicated that these two seminal measures had not been fully implemented even though they resonated throughout the land; these powerful remedies for social equality were languishing.

Discrimination continued in Philadelphia's hotels, restaurants, theaters, workplaces, trade unions, residential neighborhoods, and schools. Moreover, newspaper advertisements specifying race as a condition for a job or housing were commonplace until the practice was banned in 1954. By the 1960s civil rights organizations had robustly ramped up the struggle against institutional racism. Two of these groups were SNCC and CORE.

CORE, an acronym for Congress on Racial Equality, refused to accept racial inequality in Philadelphia joined SNCC, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, to rally against bigotry. They organized a mass movement to confront systemic segregation. Tactics and strategy were used to inconvenience the proponents of racial intolerance. Some of these civil disobedient tactics included active resistance against unjust laws, sit ins, strikes, picket lines, clogging up the courts and the jails with protesters, vigorous negotiations, and bringing bigoted businesses to a halt nonviolently. Also, attempts were made to shut down the city until unjust practices were abandoned. Though there was some bickering between the groups over the implementation of "Black Power" and "Nonviolence," both CORE and SNCC believed Philadelphia could redeem itself.