

STUDENT NONVIOLENT COORDINATING COMMITTEE
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SPEECH DELIVERED BY STOKELY CARMICHAEL, SNCC CHAIRMAN, BEFORE THE STUDENT BODY AT
THE UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO
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Brothers of Puerto Rico:

I hardly know the Spanish language, but I would like to say a few words in your language. To affirm and cultivate one's own language is a necessary step in the struggle for liberation and self-determination.

I appreciate the invitation extended to me by the people of Puerto Rico through the Movement for Independence and the University Federation for Independence. I bring you the warmest greetings of solidarity from my organization -- the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee -- and the Afro-American people in their struggle for liberation and black power.

We feel that there is a close relationship between our struggle for black power and your struggle for independence. Black power means for us liberation from oppression by the racist white power structure of the United States. It means that we will control our own Afro-American communities. That we will direct our own affairs. That we will have power in the political and economic arenas. In the same way, independence for you means to direct and control your own lives and the wealth of your country, now controlled by a foreign power -- the United States -- and it's Uncle Toms here. Our people are a colony within the United States; you are a colony outside the United States.

Brothers, we see our struggle linked to the struggles of the peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America against foreign oppression, particularly by the United States. We all have the same enemy. For this reason, we strongly support your just struggle for independence. For this reason we support all peoples who are struggling for self-determination.

The Vietnamese people are today suffering in a brutal war. To conduct that war, the American Army takes advantage of the Afro-American masses. It uses them to fight our own brothers. It tells us that we are going to fight for a so-called "democracy" but we know the hypocrisy of that claim. We know, in our flesh and in our blood, what "American democracy" means. For this reason we are absolutely opposed -- I repeat, absolutely -- to the drafting of young Afro-Americans and the drafting of young Puerto Ricans and the drafting of young people of any nationality who are oppressed like us. If we are to fight, we will fight -- but in our own country, to liberate our people.

Brothers of Puerto Rico, let us unite to achieve our goals. The forces of oppression, although very powerful, are only a minority compared to the power which all the oppressed of the world can wield. We shall destroy those forces. Let's go!