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Office of the President

January 26, 1965

The Honorable Edward Kennedy
The United States Senate
Washington 25, D. C.

I'm respectfully requesting, Senator Kennedy,

that you take immediate action in personally calling the Governor of Mississippi, and the head of the Mississippi State Highway Patrol, to protest the action described in the enclosed exhibit.

I strongly urge that you demand that all charges be immediately dropped against my son and myself. I also feel that you should request a formal apology for the insulting treatment given a citizen of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts whose only crime was to visit his son in Starkville, Mississippi. In view of the facts given, I believe that my son's life will be in constant danger unless there is a formal protest lodged by you.

A lack of protest would mean that we are condoning the acts described and encouraging the possible repetition of acts similar to the murder of the three Civil Rights workers last year.

Another, but lesser consideration, is the fact that I am the president of a nationwide investment corporation, licensed to do business in the majority of states of the United States. Many states request information as to whether I have ever been arrested, and a record of being jailed for resisting arrest could adversely affect my right to do business in some states. Obviously, I could not expect justice in the Mississippi Courts, and, therefore, request your efforts in my behalf for a retraction of the false charges.

Please advise me immediately of what action you are taking in this matter.

Sincerely yours,

Bernard Carver

FIN/bsd
Enc.

Residence address:
59 Nahant Avenue
Winthrop, Mass.

EXHIBIT

Circumstances leading to the Jailing of
Bernard Carver in
Starkville, Mississippi

I entered the state of Mississippi for the first time in my life on Saturday morning January 23, 1965 for the purpose of visiting my son, Ronald Carver.

At approximately 8:00 P.M., we left Starkville in two cars to drive a few friends to their homes in the next town at Maben. There were both colored and white occupants in our car.

I was driving the rear car. Since I noticed that I was being followed by a Mississippi State Highway Patrol car, I was unusually cautious to see that I did not violate any traffic laws.

Upon reaching the center of Maben, State Highway Patrolman Floyd Williams stopped my car and took my drivers license away. He claimed my two offences were following a car too close and driving with an expired license. The first alleged offence is obviously a debatable issue, which I denied. The second alleged offence was also false and was later dropped, since the evidence could not support it.

At this point he told me to pull over to the side of the road and wait while he investigated a serious accident. (Later events indicate he may have notified local residents who threatened my son's life with shotguns while I was taken away to jail).

I directed my son to phone immediately for legal aid. While he was in a nearby phone booth, Williams returned and told me to come with him. Naturally I did not dare leave my son alone at that hour of the night under such terrifying circumstances. I told him I wanted to wait for the call for legal aid.

He thereupon charged me with resisting arrest and physically started to pull me out of my car. There was no point in my making any further objections, and I departed the scene in the State Highway Patrol car and left my son and his friends.

I was denied permission to phone for legal aid.

I questioned Williams as to whether this was a reasonable procedure for an alleged minor offense.

I was told, "your son is shit and you are shit, just like him. I fought for my freedom in the war".

We proceeded to the Oktibbeha County Jail in Starkville, where I was again denied the use of a phone and was very worried about my son's safety.

All my personal belongings were taken away and I was placed in a jail cell. The lights were turned out, and I was in total darkness for nearly an hour. This was a most terrifying experience.

I was afraid to make any noise to attract attention, since I could conceivably be physically harmed on the fiction of attempting to escape. So, I had no alternative but to remain quietly in extreme mental anguish during the only jail experience in my lifetime. I could not believe this could be real in the United States. It sounded like a story from the days of Nazi Germany.

I was finally taken out of the jail cell and fingerprinted and photographed for a criminal record. I was told at the time that this was a legal requirement. The next day legal counsel advised me that they had no right to do this but obviously all my rights were ignored including my right to request legal counsel.

By this time legal aid from Jackson, summoned by my son, notified the FBI and arranged for my release and the posting of bail.

In the meantime, immediately after I was arrested in Maben and left the scene with Williams, three carloads of people appeared on the scene with shotguns. My son and his friends fearful of a repetition of the previous Mississippi murders, fled for their lives with the cars in pursuit.

They managed to escape and went to the Starkville jail to inquire as to my whereabouts.

My son was then arrested, fingerprinted and photographed for a criminal record and put in the jail. His charge was interfering with an arresting officer, obviously a fiction.

He was then released at the same time I was.

In the meantime the police towed my car away and I had to pay towing charges to obtain its return. This extra expense only added further insult to the injuries suffered and probably was for harassment purposes to prod me to leave the state.

The following night my son's friends were followed wherever they drove. My son is determined not to leave the state under these terror conditions. My wife and I are in constant fear for his safety and respectfully urge a strong protest against a repetition of these acts be made. We feel the charges should be withdrawn and our criminal record destroyed. We also demand a formal apology for such abusive and terrifying treatment.

Boston, Massachusetts
February 3, 1965

I, Ronald Phillip Carver, hereby make the following voluntary statement to Arthur V. Sullivan, Jr. and Thomas D. Manning who have identified themselves to me as Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

I was born April 23, 1946, Newton, Mass., have a home address of 59 Nahant Ave., Winthrop, Massachusetts, and graduated from high school from the Commonwealth School, Boston, Massachusetts, in June, 1964. Shortly after graduation I went to Atlanta, Georgia and worked in the National Office at Atlanta of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee and was a non-salaried employee doing communication and photography. I remained in Atlanta, residing with various of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee workers, until the end of August, 1964 when I returned to my Winthrop, Massachusetts home.

I remained at home until the beginning of October, 1964, at which time I drove my 1955 blue Chevrolet, two-door sedan to Jackson, Mississippi to join in the work being done by the Council of Federated Organizations (COFO) as

an unsalaried worker. I was assigned to work as a COFO field worker in the Starkville, Mississippi area on what was called the Starkville Project. Since then I have been working as a COFO field worker in the Starkville area and residing at 10 Henderson Street in Starkville.

On the evening of January 30, 1965 Ron Bridgeforth, Jimmy Jones, Eddie Mackay and Mary Anderson, all Negro COFO field workers on the Starkville Project, accompanied me in my car to Columbus, Mississippi which is a little over twenty miles from Starkville. Our only purpose for traveling to Columbus was to attend the local motion picture theater, the Varsity Theater, to see a movie. When we arrived in the vicinity I parked my car in the allotted parking space, located in the middle of the street, and went up to the theater ticket window to purchase the tickets, leaving my companions in the car as we desired to avoid any possible problems arising over the fact they were Negro and I was white. After purchase of the tickets I went back for my companions and we all went up to the ticket taker who took our tickets without comment or incident and we entered the theater and took seats together. We entered the theater about 9:15 p.m.

About 10:00 p.m. I was paged by name by a woman who acts as manager of the theater, whose name I do not know, asking me to come to the ticket counter. Ron Bridgeforth went with me to the back of the theater, our other companions remaining in their seats, where we were met by a Mississippi Highway Patrolman who did not otherwise identify himself. The patrolman asked which of us was Ronald Carver and I responded that I was. He then asked me to accompany him outside, which I did, accompanied by Ron Bridgeforth. The patrolman took us over to my car and asked me whether I normally parked the car in the manner that it was parked. It was then that I saw I had not driven the car far enough into the space when parking and that the car's rear end was extending about two feet further into the street than it should have been. I told the patrolman that I had not realized I had left the car with its rear end extending into the street and he told me to park it correctly, which I did. When I got out of the car he asked me for the keys and I gave them to him. He then ordered me to get into the back seat of his patrol car. After I got into his car, Ron Bridgeforth came over and asked the patrolman if he could ask where I was being taken and the patrolman in substance answered, "Nigger you can, but you better get out of here" but did not state where I was being taken.

The patrolman drove me to the Lowndes County Jail in Columbus, Mississippi which is about one mile from the theater and we arrived at the jail about 10:15 p.m. During the brief ride from the theater to the jail the only conversation consisted of the patrolman asking me where I was from and after I responded, "Boston, Massachusetts", he asked if I was a neighbor of the Kennedys to which I answered, "Yes". He then reminded me that he was an officer of the law and any answers on my part to him required a reply of "Yes, Sir" or "No, sir", not merely "Yes" or "No".

When we arrived at the jail he took me into an office and told me to empty out my pockets which I did. He then told another prisoner who is a trustee, Fred, whose last name is unknown to me, a Negro male, 5'6", well built, dark skinned, age not known, to search me. I understand that the identity of this trustee is known to the COFO office in Columbus. After the search the Negro trustee took me across the hall and unlocked the door to the cell block section for whites. In placing me in the cell block he kneed me in the buttocks. This did not cause me

pain or bruise me. He made no comment in doing this and locked the cell block door behind me.

The patrolman who had brought me to the jail was still in the office when the trusty kneed me and while he was in a position to have seen the kneeling I do not know that he did. I do know that the prisoners in the cell block saw it as I was asked why the trusty had done it to me. I don't know which prisoner asked the question. At the time I entered the cell block there were four other prisoners in the section but one was drunk and unconscious. All were of the white race. A second prisoner was about 40 - 50 years of age, gray hair, had been a farmer and worked on a tug boat, and was in jail on charge of desertion. A third prisoner had blond hair, was thin and about 6'5" tall - offense not known. I don't recall the fourth prisoner and the names of all four are unknown to me.

About five minutes after I was placed in the cell block, a white male trusty, approximately 35 years of age, 5'10", medium build, brown graying hair, whose name I do not know, came into the cell block and took me into one of the back cells in the cell block. He told me to take off my glasses and put them on the table, which I did. He then

began punching me with closed fists about the face and after about five blows knocked me to the floor. He picked me up and told me to keep my hands down and to stop screaming. He then continued to hit me about my face with closed fists about ten times more until he knocked me down again. After knocking me down the second time he left the cell and cell block but did not lock me in the cell. The only thing I can recall him saying to me during or after the beating was in substance, "Now you will know how to act in the future". At no time during the beating did I attempt to strike back at him and merely tried to cover my face with my arms to protect myself from the blows. This white trustee and I were alone in the cell during the beating which was not visibly witnessed by anyone else. I am sure that the other prisoners, while not seeing the beating, did hear me screaming although they made no mention to me of it at any later time.

After the white trustee left I went out of the cell and joined the other prisoners in the cell block. It was now about 10:30 p.m. and for approximately one-half hour three of the four prisoners in the cell block, the fourth was still unconscious, berated me and were verbally hostile about the civil rights work I was doing; however, they

did not attempt to strike me. As I feared attack from the prisoners I attempted for approximately an additional two hours to divert the conversation to other general topics and away from civil rights.

Other prisoners were brought in during the night and while I finally pretended to sleep in one of the cots, I did not sleep during the entire night as I feared additional beatings. None of the prisoners attempted to strike me although they continued to evidence hostility and I did not see any of the trustees, after the white trustee left me about 10:30 p.m., until the following morning, Sunday, January 31, 1965. I have no knowledge where the trustees stayed in the jail during the night other than none slept in the cell block section I was in.

About 8:30 ^{A.M.} p.m., January 31, 1965, the white trustee who had beaten me returned to the cell block and let some of the other prisoners make phone calls to arrange for bail. I asked him if I could make a call and he said, "No".

Shortly thereafter we were served breakfast by a third trustee, a white male, who I only saw through the grill work in the door and could not further describe.

After breakfast, about ^{9:30} 9:00 a.m., the white trusty who had beaten me came into the cell block and told me my bond was being arranged and he brought me into the office. Another white male, referred to as the jailer, was behind the desk in the office and he showed me a Western Union money order made out to me in the amount of \$400.00 for my bail. He had me endorse the money order and then gave me back my personal belongings. I then asked him what I had been charged with and he stated, "Improper parking and blocking the highway". I asked him where my car was located and was told it was at Trotter's Service Station in Columbus.

After leaving the jail I went to the service station to get my car but was told that the car had been impounded and that I could obtain it only through a release from Mississippi Highway patrolman Roy Elder whom I presumed was the patrolman who arrested me, but whose name I never obtained. In fear of further problems, I left my car and went to the COFO office in Columbus. From there I returned to my Winthrop home by commercial airlines.

No one told me why I had been beaten and I heard
no one give any instructions to have me beaten.

The only noticeable mark, ^{Today, Feb 1, 1965} as a result of the
beating is a bruise on the bridge of my nose. However,
my eyes were somewhat swollen on Sunday, January 31, 1965,
and my upper left cheek bone is sore. I went to my family
physician on February 1, 1965 and had X-rays taken. My
physician advised me that the X-rays were negative and
that my injuries were merely bruises.

Ronald Phillips Carter