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Correspondence, John C. Stennis, November 14-December 8, 1969

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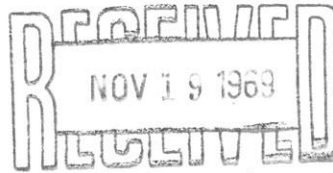
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John

WASHINGTON OFFICE



JOHN STENNIS

Meridian, Miss. 39301

Senator Stennis

Dear Sir:

The Constitution begins with "We, the people..." which means every single individual, not a group or class or race. I am but one Southern individual who would like to express what many Southerner's feel. I am not writing this letter out of anger, nor do I wish to cause any hard feelings or start any disruption in school. I am writing this to let you know that the people do care. Senator Stennis, we appreciate what you have done for our state in the past, and we realize that you are trying your best now to do what is right for our state.

As we all know Communistic invasion has begun and slowly grown in our country. The people as a whole are very aware of this fact. We, the people can see our way of life as it changes, and we realize that our freedom and democratic way of life is being slowly eliminated. Democracy is a form of government with the people's voice considered. The Supreme Court has recently passed a ruling without the people's voice. We, the people of the South in this case, feel we've been forced into a situation which only portrays chaos and suffering. This would surely seem to violate our freedom and our pursuit of happiness.

Our Mississippi school system was, as I'm sure you know, one of a Freedom of Choice. I feel, as many do, that this was quite fair for both Negro and White students. Never before in the history of our nation has man been forced to mingle with another class or race. Freedom, the key word in a nation that is strongest, a nation envied by all other nations. If white students had desired to go to a Negro school they would have done so in the fall. Negro students who wished to attend a white school did so, and all seemed to be doing relatively well. However, due to the recent ruling for full and immediate de-segregation in Mississippi, our school system will be disrupted and possibly destroyed.

It has been said by several different sources that someday the Communist will be able to take our country without lifting a hand, because we will fall from within. It is quite evident that this take-over has already begun in America. Both white and Negro feel un-easy, un-safe, and worried due to the recent lack of unity in U.S. affairs. Our country lacks the feeling of security and the tie of unity it has so long strived on.

The people of the South can not understand why the Supreme Court forces us to de-segregate and does not enforce this in the North. To force intergration in America agains't the people's will

is like forcing Americans to have one church, one religion; not only is this im-practical but it surely invades the individuals rights of freedom.

I feel that the school program should be a matter of each state without Federal interference. There are many cases in state affairs where only state officials who are familiar with the people and circumstances should make state laws. A person who lives in the North could not possibly understand how this ruling of de-segregation could effect the people of the South. I hope before this ruling is put into action that considerate thought is put on it. If the people of the North feel that it is so right to de-segregate then I feel they would be more than happy to abide by the same law. I grew up believing that public schools were for the public and for the purpose of teaching, but the last ruling of the Supreme Court seems to neglect both these purposes. I am a Southerner, but first an American in a Free America, where both White and Black are treated equal and neither are forced to mingle with another class, religious group, or race.

Senator Stennis, I have included a petition for you to use as you see best. I hope that this letter has helped you to see the way we feel and that something may be done before our school system is destroyed.

Respectfully yours,



lr

29-c General
(unofficial)

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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

T. EDWARD BRASWELL, JR., CHIEF OF STAFF

December 8, 1969

[REDACTED]
Meridian, Mississippi, 39301

Dear [REDACTED]:

This is a special word of thanks for your fine letter and enclosed petitions regarding the public school situation in Mississippi. Frankly there has not been a problem on which I have worked harder or longer than the work I have done trying to protect our public schools since the 1954 Supreme Court decision. Since that decision, I have been one of those taking the lead year after year in fighting the many battles that have kept our schools largely on a sound basis until now.

I am leaving no stone unturned in my continued efforts to bring about a more practical approach to this problem through conferences with the President and other officials, legislation, attempts to get sensible men appointed to the Supreme Court and the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, and any other course available to me.

I am strongly supporting and sponsoring in the Senate the section of the HEW Appropriation bill put in by Congressman Whitten in the House to provide for freedom of choice by parents in the selection of schools which their children will attend. Also, I have introduced an amendment to this bill that would prevent the use of federal money to force integration in the South until an equal effort is made in the North. I have just recently pointed out on the Senate Floor and in Committee hearings the shocking fact that near total segregation exists in many schools in the North.

Further, I am continuing to have conferences with President Nixon, Attorney General Mitchell, Secretary of HEW Finch and others in an effort to get some relief before our public schools are destroyed.

██████████ - 2 - December 8, 1969

I was greatly disappointed in the Supreme Court's decision denying additional time in the Southern District cases.

Again my thanks for your interest and support in this most serious situation. I want to assure you that I am doing every thing I can to relieve this present crisis.

With warm good wishes, I am

Your friend,

John Stennis
United States Senator

JS/her