

NAACP Intervenes In Behalf Of 4,000 Los Angeles Rioters

SUIT FILED AGAINST 3 COURTS, 21 JUDGES

LOS ANGELES—The NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund today filed suit in California's Supreme Court in behalf of more than 4,000 persons arrested during the recent Watts riots.

The suit names three Los Angeles courts — the Municipal, Juvenile, and the Superior Courts, along with 21 Los Angeles judges.

All are charged with neglecting their responsibility to inform the Negroes of the charges against them, to inquire as to whether they could afford legal counsel and to appoint counsel when needed.

Negro petitioners named in this suit, and others interviewed, asserted that they had no legal representation at their initial arraignments and the District Attorney argued that bail be set at three times the regular \$1,000.

Meanwhile, in New York City, Jack Greenberg, director-counsel of the Legal Defense Fund explained that "this suit does not seek to represent people guilty of crime."

But, "there is no doubt that an indeterminate number of Watts defendants are innocent of charges placed against them, and will not receive the kind of representation which the U. S. Constitution guarantees to all defendants, rich or poor, Negro or white, innocent or guilty."

Two Negro petitioners, both young mothers (one of four, the other of six) remained in jail until their preliminary hearings, although neither had prior convictions.

The civil rights attorneys argue that if the courts had inquired as to the background of these women, both would have been released on their own recognizance, as they later were after their preliminary hearings.

More specifically, the suit states that the judicial officials cited "have failed and refused to appoint

private counsel not associated with the Public Defender's office."

It was not noted that the Public Defender's staff had not been expanded sufficiently to "give adequate time for preparation and investigation to defend petitioners."

The suit further asserts that "none of the petitioners has been continuously represented by one Public Defender through successive proceedings, resulting in each Public Defender having to freshly acquaint himself with the cases."

Moreover, "the Public Defender's office has never been required to handle over 4,000 defendants with multiple charges during a six week period such as occurred after the riots began.

Legal Defense Fund Assistant Counsel Leroy Clark, joined by local NAACP attorneys Raymond L. Johnson and Herman T. Smith, pointed out that lists of attorneys willing to represent indigent persons were given to judicial officials cited in the suit.

However, the officials still failed to appoint private lawyers from this list in sufficient number to relieve the over-extended case load of the Public Defender's office.

The Legal Defense Fund, which entered the case upon request of the local NAACP chapter, filed the case in California's Supreme Court rather than a lower court "because it is a matter of grave public importance and raises serious questions of constitutionality and authority of respondent officials to continue with criminal prosecutions of over 4,000 persons," according to Mr. Clark.

The civil rights attorneys ask that the courts:

1. Appoint lawyers with adequate preparation, investigation and counseling before conducting further proceedings
2. Nullify any prior proceedings in which petitioners or members of their class, after securing adequate counsel, can demonstrate that they were disadvantaged by lack of counsel.
3. Furnish petitioners with name of private counsel if the Public Defender's office is found to have inordinate case load and (such attorneys)



URBAN LEAGUE FUTURE — Left to right: Desmond H. Sealy, Shelia Maroney, Whitney M. Young, Jr. — new group of rights workers — two college graduates get Urban League fellowship awards and congratulations from Whitney M. Young, Jr. (right) executive director, National Urban League. They are among 28 graduates who are receiving advance education to fit them for work in the civil rights movement with the Urban League — overturning barriers to Negro citizens in jobs, housing, good schools, and health and welfare.

28 Preparing For

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