9/10/68

Mr. Richard Sobol
Lawyers Constitutional Committee
606 Common St.
New Orleans, La.

Dear Mr. Sobol,

Having just read the second inaccurate attack on me in the morning paper that gives New Orleans about what it deserves, I write you with some bitterness for holding out a false hope to me and in maintaining a silence that denied me the opportunity of properly looking elsewhere for the help I need.

While I do not know where I would have turned for the legal assistance I require, I do know that once you said you might be interested in the Constitutional aspects it would have been wrong for me to look elsewhere.

Just how meaningful are the rights of Americans when they cannot be asserted, when they can be violated with impunity and when the lawyers whose sacred obligation it is to defend them are themselves aloof?

There are some Constitutional rights aside from possession of a black skin, and if the much-abused black people have been, as a class, those most denied these rights, they are not the only ones. There are also those rights black people will not have if whites also do not. And there are some rights that are at least as basic as the one not to in any way be discriminated against.

Yet my experience with lawyers, notably those considered either "liberal" or "progressive", is that they satisfy their consciences and their obligations by adoption of those once unpopular defendants who today are "in", where their futures will not be damaged by the nature of their "unpopular" clients and causes. On the issue that I regard as the most basic single one today, all are too busy, require impossible advance fees, or make promises they do not keep.

I am entirely without means. I have $35,000 in debt, incurred in a manner that helps or at least tries to help a few of the basic freedoms, including those of lawyers. I am not black, and I am in a field where lawyers of an earlier era, in Germany, also found themselves pre-occupied, with the consequences now well known. Therefore, I have no lawyer, no rights.

You were under no obligation to speak to me, none to represent me. But when you did encourage me, you did undertake an obligation you have not met. In failing to let me know when you said you would and thereafter failing even to acknowledge receipt of any of the letters I wrote to ask your intentions, you made yourself aprt of the denial of my rights, joined, as I see it, the enemies of freedom - in this case, fascists. I think you should be ashamed!

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg