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FBI Is Sued For Damages Over Spying

By Bill Richards

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The American Civil Liberties Union filed a federal suit yesterday charging the FBI with harassing a black civil rights worker in 1969 and demanding damage payments for all persons targeted by the bureau's counter-intelligence program Cointelpro against New Left and black groups.

The suit, filed in U.S. district court in Philadelphia, is the first broad-based class action directed against the FBI since the information about its Cointelpro operation became known last year.

The FBI has said that the Cointelpro activities stopped in 1971, but the Socialist Workers Party, in a \$27 million suit it filed last month, has alleged that it was harassed by bureau agents after that.

The ACLU suit yesterday charged that agents from the FBI's Jackson, Miss., office harassed Muhammad Kenyatta with threatening letters during the time Kenyatta was working with the Jackson Human Rights Project at Tougaloo College.

One letter to Kenyatta, who is now head of a black community development group in Philadelphia, warned

to remain away from this campus and threatened to take other measures available to us which would have a more direct effect and which would not be as cordial as this note if he didn't leave.

The letter was signed "Tougaloo College Defense Committee" but was actually prepared and sent by the FBI, according to the ACLU.

The ACLU suit requested that in addition to Kenyatta, each of the persons involved in 362 separate Cointelpro actions receive \$125,000 in compensatory and punitive damages.

John Shattuck, an ACLU national staff counsel involved in the suit, said yesterday that the ACLU is also seeking specific information on Cointelpro activities and the names of all persons involved.

The Justice Department has said that there were 540 Cointelpro operations suggested by agents in various FBI field offices between 1968 and 1971. "We want to fill in the gaps," said Shattuck.

He said the 10-page complaint in the suit also asks that the FBI notify all persons in Cointelpro activities that they were among the targets.

The suit seeks an injunction forbidding the FBI to continue any activities similar to Cointelpro and a formal declaration by the bureau that the program has been terminated.

The FBI spokesman Thomas B. Coll said the bureau would have no comment on the suit until it has had a chance to study it.