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CONGRESSIONAL BLACK CAUCUS

GOMILLION, BUREL (MR.)

March 12, 1971

Mr. Burel Gomillion
Director of N. A. A. C. P.
Civil Rights Project
Broome County Branch
P. O. Box 328
Binghamton, New York 13902

Dear Mr. Gomillion:

Thank you very much for your letter of March 5 in which you describe conditions at the Auburn Prison in Auburn, New York.

Congressman Charles C. Diggs, Jr., is the Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus, however, I am forwarding your letter to Congressman Louis Stokes. Congressman Stokes is perhaps the most knowledgeable member of Congress in the area of prison reform.

I appreciate your bringing this matter to my attention.

Sincerely,

William L. Clay
Member of Congress

WLC:mlf

MAR 10 1971



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE

BROOME COUNTY BRANCH P.O. Box 328 - Binghamton, New York 13902

March 5, 1971

Representative William L. Clay
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.

Dear Congressman Clay:

Since I have read that you are the Chairman of the "Black Caucus", I'm directing this letter to you in the hopes that its contents will generate some interest and action concerning the problem.

Much has been written about the penal system throughout the United States, and the treatment accorded its Negro, Puerto Rican and poor white population. It is a known fact that Negroes and Puerto Ricans have suffered untold injustices when they have been in the hands of police authorities for minor as well as serious offenses. Here in Binghamton, New York, there is a group composed of concerned citizens who are very concerned about the conditions at the Auburn Prison in Auburn, New York.

I personally attended a meeting in Ithaca, New York, and to hear all the complaints and statements made, I came away wondering if the Auburn Prison was truly being run by supposedly well-educated and responsible people. I listened to accounts of guards being ready to testify that drugs are being smuggled in. This is certainly a great encouragement, because when a man is willing to put his job on the line and help those less fortunate, the situation must truly be an intolerable one. There are also guards who are ready and willing to cooperate in an investigation concerning mal-treatment and poor supervision of the prison.

It is true that Auburn is only one prison in these fifty states, but they have had some very serious incidents, to the extent that we were given to understand that the prisoners' very lives were considered easily expendable.

As the Director of the N.A.A.C.P. Civil Rights Project here in Binghamton, I became greatly concerned and deeply worried about the pressing problem. I was asked by Mrs. Billie Anderson,

March 5, 1971

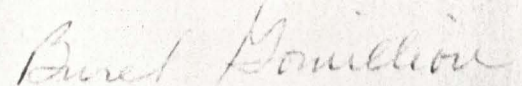
a representative of Opportunities for Broome, to accompany her and Mr. Walter Smith, a representative of the local Urban League, to Ithaca, where we were warmly met by the Dean of Cornell Law School, who, incidentally is concerned and involved from a legal standpoint. Later in the evening, we had a very spirited meeting in Ithaca.

I called a political acquaintance of Representative Shirley Chisholm, and requested that she be made aware of the problem and see if she could lend any support to the extent of her good offices. It is possible that the message was passed on, and some good efforts are already underway. However, I am writing to you as the black caucus chairman, because I feel that if we are able to make a dent in the Auburn Prison problem, then perhaps our small snowball on the edge of the racist's and bigot's furnace will not melt, but will roll away and gain momentum, becoming large enough to cause an avalanche from which they cannot escape.

Because the pressing problems here in Binghamton, of the Civil Rights Project funded by the Model Cities Program, demand my attention, the Broome County Branch of the N.A.A.C.P. has decided that they will take up the fight and put forth all the efforts possible.

I realize your caucus has been deluged with letters stating many other serious problems, but I fervently pray that the black caucus can lend great support to what could become a non-partisan, but tremendously effective program to help the inmates in not only Auburn Prison but many other prisons whose names we are unaware of at this time.

Sincerely yours,



Burel Gomillion
Director of N.A.A.C.P.
Civil Rights Project

BG:mmm