

*File - Capitol Ave Riots*

PROPOSAL FOR AN AFRO-AMERICAN EDUCATION  
AND CULTURAL CENTER

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Introduction:

Key to the struggle for human rights that Afro-americans are engaged in, is the development of internal strength. Throughout the history of the struggle this need for internal strength has been phrased in many ways: Identity, Dignity, Pride, Black Consciousness. The question then, is how is fulfillment of this need structured and programmed?

The culture of a people -- what defines a people internally, is not seen and is constantly in flux. Music, art works, recorded history are all cultural expressions but not culture itself. A positive awareness of the expressions of culture as clues to the nature of what one is is necessary to the vitality of any people. Perhaps the most tragic effect of the racism directed against Afro-americans has been the systematic destruction of our cultural identity. A concerted effort must be made to search out programs that can deal with this denial.

Any program which seeks to rectify close to 400 years of cultural denial must of necessity be long ranged. Using their history, Afro-americans must define themselves in terms of their aspirations as a community for the future.

The Idea:

The Afro-american Cultural and Education Center would serve two specific functions. During the day, it would operate for the benefit of pre-school children. Through programs in dance, music, reading and recreation, it would seek to instill at an early age a positive self-awareness.

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Part of this pre-school program would be designed to involve the parents of these children as much as possible. Community support from financial to participation, would be solicited and hopefully, this program will be self-supporting in one year.

In the evening, the center would be run as an Afro-american coffee house. The evening program would feature folk music and jazz musicians, poets, movies, lectures, discussions and debates. Coffee, tea, sandwiches and pastries would be sold and a small admission fee would be charged. The concept of the coffee house is to provide entertainment for the community while at the same time engaging in a social program with the community. Whatever funds are gained from this effort, will be turned into the development of another such center in a different section of the city community.

#### Implementation:

In December of 1965, a small coffee shop was opened up in Atlanta on Hunter Street called the "Lovin' Spoonful." It sought to provide the ghetto community of Northwest Atlanta with the opportunity to go to a place where both enjoyment of the Afro-american's contribution in many areas of art could be appreciated and discussions of various social issues could be pursued in a relaxed and informal atmosphere. The high overhead and the unwillingness of the managers to be prohibitive in terms of money, made it impossible to sustain the coffee house. Rent plus the cost of living even minimally, eventually forced the closing of the "Lovin' Spoonful." Since closing of the Lovin' Spoonful, several persons from the Atlanta community

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have been discussing the reopening of a similar coffee house. One person has committed himself to the full time operation of it if funds can be found to guarantee one year's existence without the worry of rent and feed costs. Several other persons have volunteered part time help if ever the coffee house is reopened. Lecturers and entertainers can be gotten for the cost of transportation at most. Location of the center will be on Hunter Street, the main street of the Northwest Atlanta ghetto.

There is a group of young parents and students who have expressed interest in the pre-school program. Volunteer help can be gotten from this group and at least two full time staff personnel. The main cost in operating this program is material, much of which will have to be developed. The Student Voice, Incorporated, an Afro-american publishing house in Atlanta, is now laying plans for publishing children's material and it will be available at low cost. Other effective material will have to be searched into through institutions such as the Ban Street School in New York and individual educators.