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DEFENSE COMMITTEE
p.o. box 382 ellicott station
buffalo, new york 14205

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December 2, 1969

NAACP Special Contribution Fund
1790 Broadway, 10th Floor
New York, New York 10019

Attn: Mr. Nathaniel Jones

Re: Mr. Martin Sostre
Mrs. Geraldine Robinson

Dear Mr. Jones,

On Saturday, November 29, I visited Mr. Martin Sostre at Wallkill Prison, Wallkill, New York. I am writing this letter at his request. He is primarily concerned with two points at this time: (1) legal counsel for his co-defendant, Mrs. Geraldine Robinson and (2) payment of \$700.00 borrowed from our defense committee by Attorney Charles McKinney during Mrs. Robinson's trial last May (1969) in Buffalo.

Mrs. Robinson has been in the Western Reformatory for Women since early September 1969. Since Mr. McKinney did not turn up for sentencing without any prior notice to our defense committee or to the defendant herself, we and Mrs. Robinson contacted Atty. Willard Myers, a sympathetic Buffalo attorney who on various other occasions appeared with Mrs. Robinson during pre-trial and post-trial court appearances when Mr. McKinney failed to show up. Mr. Myers is interested in handling the Robinson appeal of conviction and in preparing the Application for Certificate of Reasonable Doubt. I mentioned these facts to Atty. Joan Franklin in a letter dated October 1, 1969. She said she had spoken to you about it and that I could expect to receive a letter from you; to date, I have not received it.

Sir, Mrs. Robinson is a political prisoner, the young mother of five children, who has spent three months in prison already. If, in truth, as Atty. Myers has said, her "undetermined sentence" (misdemeanor) can be no more than one year, in a few months, she will be eligible for parole. We feel it would be a grave injustice if this conviction is not appealed, and Mrs. Robinson is forced to remain imprisoned. In truth, Mr. Jones, her trial brought out the many lies, distortions of fact, collusion between police officials and the all-too-clear frame-up not only against Mrs. Robinson but also Mr. Sostre who is serving a 41 year 30 day sentence after a farcical trial -- this vindictive sentence must be looked upon as "life" for this courageous fighter for Black liberation. Attorneys Joan Franklin and Barbara Morris are currently handling the appeal of conviction in the Sostre case. Will the NAACP Special Contribution Fund retain Mr. Myers for

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cont'd.

Mrs. Robinson's appeal?

Re: \$700.00 borrowed by Mr. McKinney from our defense committee in May 1969 -- Miss Franklin, in a letter dated November 12, 1969, stated, "that Mr. McKinney has authorized, via telephone, the sum of \$700.00 to be paid to the Martin Sostre Defense Committee. We hope to receive written authorization within a week to finalize this matter." To date, we have heard no other word.

The funds that we have been able to raise over the past two and one half years since the inception of our defense committee, have enabled us to continue to provide Mr. Sostre with law books and journals with which he not only has prepared a good deal of research for his appeal of conviction, but a case against Rockefeller et al recently heard before Federal Court Judge Constance Baker Motley in Foley Square. The latter is sure to lead to prison reform at the very least. Mr. Jones, Mr. Sostre did all this work from solitary confinement. We have provided him with a huge number of books on Black history; he not only has set up a lending library for the other inmates at Wallkill, but is conducting classes in Black history. We have sent him subscriptions to newspapers and magazines, which they are currently holding from him. We have sent him each month nutritional food packages to try to counter the vitamin and calorie deficiencies from which he is still suffering after 13 months in solitary at Green Haven Prison -- he was put in solitary for "practicing law without a license."


We have continued to propagandize the frame-up against these two political prisoners until now the cases have become nationally and internationally known. We have published two pamphlets on the case, and have printed hundreds of thousands of leaflets on the case. The need for the most basic things -- cases of mimeograph paper, ink, envelopes, stamps, etc. is ever-present. For these and other reasons, the \$700.00 borrowed by Mr. McKinney "until after the NAACP reimburses me" is urgently needed to continue our work.

Mr. Jones, we ask that you give your attention to both of these matters as soon as you possibly can.

Please accept our gratitude on behalf of Mr. Sostre and Mrs. Robinson. Many thanks, too, to the former NAACP Legal Department and the current NAACP Legal Contribution Fund for the legal aid being rendered to Mr. Sostre and Mrs. Robinson.

I anxiously await your reply.

Sincerely,


(Mrs.) Jeanette Merrill, Secty.
Martin Sostre Defense Committee

cc: Atty. Joan Franklin
Atty. Barbara Morris