EDITORIAL

Brothers and Sisters,

In the time between the conceptualization of RHYTHM and the actual pressing of it, political assasination and arrest have hit the RHYTHM staff so hard that it is difficult to find a calm and rational stance in this our first editorial. First, our editor, Donald Stone, was dragged off and dumped in the federal pen in Texarkana, Texas for 3½ years with little chance of parole. This bust came out of a 1966 demonstration against the drafting of black youth in which about $25 worth of damage was done to the door of the Atlanta draft board. For this, Stone and four other brothers were given a total of 24½ years, or a year per dollar.

This was hard to take. These brothers had been full-time SNCC workers all of their mature lives, and Stone is a deep friend of all of us on the staff. But we were mentally prepared for this bust, and had outlined an editorial on how the hunky has historically amputated dangerous black leaders from the body of the people, and we were going to make some suggestions on black self-protection, and we were going to rap for a minute on the role of a magazine in the ongoing struggle of African people to achieve self-determination. . .

Now the telephone rings in the early dawn and a close sister tells us from D. C. that two good brothers, brothers we've worked with closely and well, Ralph Featherstone and Che (William Payne) have been murdered in Maryland.

> *"The car they were in exploded. The details are very shaky. I'm just calling to let y'all know. I have to hang up now."*

Like a tape. She must have memorized those lines so that she could make the calls that had to be made without cracking up.

So we search our screaming nervous system for an objective stance on assasination and incarceration of black political workers and all we can think of is how much better it would be if we supplied the pig-beast with some martyrs for a change. We need Feather and Che as workers in the struggle, not as symbols of struggle. As a people we have delivered more eulogies over murdered heroes than any people ever needed to. We love Stone too much, and we were too close to Feather and Che to make historical specimens of them. But we will share these random thoughts:

> *.Let all of us who knew Ralph and Che remember them as two black-loving, hunky-hating brothers, and let's not allow anyone to modify their stances for posterity.*

> *.It is our belief that the most crucial work for this particular era of African existence is the building of Revolutionary Nationalist institutions. By "institutions" we mean schools, political parties, cultural centers, military units, presses--all those programatic structures that enable a people to see beyond survival; in short, the elemental ingredients of a viable nation.*

We know that Stone shares this belief, and that it was the key point of Che's and Feather's personal programs. Besides being editor of this journal, Donald Stone was a founder of the Atlanta Center for Black Art, the community school for black youth of which RHYTHM is a function. Ralph was manager of one of the most relevant book stores in the country, Drum & Spear in Washington, D. C., and was an associate of the Center for Black Education, (D.C.) and Malcolm X Liberation University, (Durham, N.C.). Che was co-founder of the H. Rap Brown Education and Recreation Center in Atlanta.

> *.They were Pan-African Revolutionary Nationalists and they must never be memorialized in any other context, i. e. let's not have any Ralph Featherstone Memorial Black Studies programs, because the only black studies that Ralph respected were those that directly involved black youth in a life of revolutionary struggle. He had no respect for the professional intellectualism that the college campuses nurture, but committed himself to building independent Nationalist institutions.*

> *.So like most of us who consider ourselves Nationalists, Ralph and Che and Stone had been working within the black community for the last few years, trying to build lasting revolutionary institutions. The concrete-issue conflicts with the white power structure that characterized the movement of the '50s and the '60s had not recently been their main preoccupations. Though they certainly paid more than their share of dues in some of the nastiest political struggles ever fought in the deep South, they had withdrawn from the issues of "civil rights", both symbolic and objective, and spent their time building alternative nationalist programs to which African people can relate in a positive way. Stone, Ralph and Che rarely had any contact with white people.*

The lesson here is that though we are constantly frustrated by the many contradictions that exist between African people, we often develop a false feeling of security and happiness from exclusive association with our own. But the devil, goddamn him, keeps working, and that's what makes him the devil. So the history-taught hunky-hating that moved us to Nationalism recedes into black love, which is of course a good thing, except that we lose some of our edge. The bestial murder of Feather and Che makes it obvious that history has not foreclosed on this sensibility. That sensibility is, after all, the reason for Rap's persecution in Cambridge today, assuming that he is still alive. So let us revive that hatred for the devil in all his hideous forms so that it becomes an active compliment to our love of self. Let us sing with brother DuBois:

I hate them, oh!
I hate them well,
I hate them, Christ!
As I hate hell!

If I were God,
I'd sound their knell
This day.

(From the Riddle of the Spinx)