

CORE ANNOUNCES THE PASSING OF ROY INNIS, CIVIL RIGHTS ICON AND CHAIRMAN OF CORE

The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) announces with sadness, the passing of Roy Innis, a lifelong champion of equal rights, a charismatic leader of the 1960s-civil rights movement, and Chairman of CORE. Mr. Innis passed away peacefully on Sunday, January 8, 2017 in New York City from a long fight and complications of Parkinson's disease.

Roy Innis was born in St. Croix, U.S. Virgin Islands and moved to New York City with his mother in 1946 where he attended Stuyvesant High School. At age 16, Innis joined the U.S. Army and at age 18, he received an honorable discharge. He entered a four-year program in Chemistry at City College of New York. He subsequently held positions as a research chemist at Vick Chemical Company and Montefiore Hospital.

Innis joined CORE's Harlem chapter in 1963. In 1964, he was elected Chairman of the chapter's education committee and became a forceful advocate of community-controlled education and black empowerment. He led CORE's fight for an independent Police Review Board to address cases of police brutality. In 1965, he was elected Chairman of Harlem CORE, after which he mounted a vigorous campaign for establishment of an independent Board of Education for Harlem. A proposition to this end was presented to the 1967 New York State Constitutional Convention.

In the spring of 1967, Innis was appointed the first resident fellow at the Metropolitan Applied Research Center (MARC), headed by Dr. Kenneth Clark. In the summer of 1967, he was elected Second National Vice-Chairman of CORE. Also, in 1967, Innis and nine other black men formed the Harlem Commonwealth Council (HCC), an investment corporation whose long-term goal was to create independence and stability in Harlem. As the first Executive Director at HCC, Innis laid the ground work for what has become a highly successful model of economic development in the black community. During that same period, he was the co-editor and founder of the Manhattan Tribune Newspaper.

Innis was elected National Director of CORE in 1968. In the same year, he drafted the Community Self - Determination Bill of 1968 and garnered bipartisan sponsorship of this bill by one-third of the Senate and over 50 congressmen. This was the first time in U.S. history that a bill drafted by a black organization was introduced into Congress.

Responding to the continuing crisis centering on school integration, Innis offered an alternative plan consisting of community control of educational institutions. As part of this effort, in October of 1970, CORE filed an amicus curiae brief with the U.S. Supreme Court, *Swann vs. the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*. Seeking to enhance and to build on the black pride movement of the mid-60s, Innis and a CORE delegation toured seven African countries in 1971. He met with several Heads of State, including Kenya's Jomo Kenyatta, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere and Liberia's William Tolbert. In 1973, Innis became the first American to attend the Organization of African Unity (OAU)

in an official capacity. In 1973 he participated in a televised debate with Nobel Physicist William Shockley on the topic of black genetic inferiority.

Roy Innis' involvement in criminal justice matters spans his entire career in CORE. Innis' investigation in the early 80's led to the uncovering of evidence that Wayne Williams was not solely responsible for the Atlanta Child Murders. His defense of victims' rights to defend themselves led to his support and involvement in highly publicized cases such as: the "subway gunman," Bernhard Goetz; "subway token booth clerk", James Grimes; the "candyman good Samaritan", Andy Fredericks; the "black Bernie Goetz", Austin Weeks; and the accused "remember me subway shooter", Clemente Jackson. Roy Innis is a nationally known advocate of 2nd amendment rights and was a long-time Board Member of the NRA.

While colleagues (friends and foes) considered some of his ideas to be controversial, Innis always based his positions on the sound principles of "truth, logic and courage."

Both the organization and his children: Cedric, Kwame, Niger, Kimathi, Mugabe, Arenza, Patricia, Corinne and Lydia along with a host of grandchildren appreciate the many messages of support that have been received. We understand many people loved and admired Mr. Innis and would like an opportunity to celebrate his life. Private and public funeral arrangements and a program will be announced shortly.

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New York City, NY

For further information:

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