

MANNING MARABLE:

CORE: The demise of an ideal

I first learned about the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in the spring of 1961, during the civil rights movement. In December, 1960, the Supreme Court ruled in *Boynton v. Virginia* that racial segregation was illegal on all interstate buses and trains, and in all transportation terminals. On May 4, 1961, thirteen members of CORE, including national director James Farmer, traveled into the Deep South.

Predictably, the biracial group encountered violent resistance. John Lewis and another "Freedom Rider" were assaulted in Rock Hill, South Carolina on May 9. White mobs in Anniston, Alabama, attacked and burned one bus. In Montgomery, Alabama white racists pulled Freedom Riders off the bus and gave them a brutal beating. In Jackson, Mississippi, Farmer and a group of 26 Freedom Riders were given 67 day jail sentences for sitting in the "whites - only" sections of the city's bus depot. Farmer's jail term served to mobilize every CORE chapter.

Hundreds made the journey south to join the Freedom Riders.

In Later years, CORE became a "Black Power" formation, aligning itself with the more radical Student Non - violent Coordinating Committee. CORE leader Floyd McKissick stood second only to Stokely Carmichael as a nationally - known proponent of black nationalism. McKissick and CORE attacked the Johnson Administration's illegal and immoral war in Vietnam. One might disagree with CORE's controversial political stands, but not even its worst critics could claim that the organization did not identify with the goals and ideals of the oppressed Black community.

Today, this statement is no longer true. Inch by inch, CORE has retreated from the vanguard of progressive struggle into the open arms of the forces of Reaganism, racism and economic reaction. From "Black Power" of the 1960s, CORE and its leader Roy Innis have abandoned their militant history for acceptance

into the posh corridors of the ruling military - industrial complex.

In 1976, CORE pushed the plan to recruit Afro - Americans to fight as mercenaries against the new progressive government of Angola. Innis advocated support for UNITA, a black puppet organization which is backed by the Republic of South Africa and the United States. Objectively, CORE was placing its name and prestige in the service of international terrorism and white supremacy.

Finally, last month, CORE reached an all - time low in the annals of the civil rights movement. At the fortieth anniversary convention of the organization, CORE gave a special award to a rightwing reactionary, Gen. William Westmoreland, who commanded U.S. troops in Vietnam. Innis declared that any criticisms of Westmoreland were unfair because "the man was (just) carrying out orders."

CORE also presented a special

award to black vice president of Anheuser Busch brewery. The firm is currently engaged in a struggle with Jesse Jackson, Operation PUSH, and other civil rights leaders over the lack of adequate affirmative action and critical black economic support. Thus Innis and CORE, by applauding Anheuser Busch at this time, have undermined efforts of civil rights activists.

At some point, we must begin to hold our so - called black leadership accountable when they objectively and pathetically serve the interests of multinational corporations and international racism. For unlike the Jesse Jacksons, whose emotional grandstanding and florid rhetoric may simply irritate, Innis has moved beyond the boundaries of political opportunism into the camp of the enemy. The rich history of CORE and its vision of equality has been uprooted by a group of self - serving black elites who reinforce the processes of racist exploitation and economic oppression.