

SDS Displays Anti-Draft Exhibit

Fifth Estate Collective

1967

A news article in the January 21, 1967 MICHIGAN CHRONICLE, a Detroit Negro paper, reported their paper had received several phone calls complaining about the use of the word “nigger” in an anti-draft display at Wayne University.

The display, sponsored by the Wayne chapter of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), outlined different alternatives to the draft including conscientious objection (CO) and going to Canada. Also, the display suggested potential draftees could “cop out” by displaying erratic or disagreeable behavior at the induction center.

The offending piece was entitled “Uncle Sam Wants You, Nigger” and urged Negroes to avoid the draft because both the Vietnam war and the draft were racist in nature. The leaflet continued, “Become a member of the world’s highest paid black mercenaries. Support White power—travel to Vietnam and you might get a medal. Fight for freedom—in Vietnam.

“Receive valuable training in the skills of killing off other oppressed people. Die, nigger, die—you can’t die fast enough in the ghetto. So run to your nearest recruiting chamber,” concluded the poster, which was issued by the Harlem Progressive Labor Club.

A spokesman for SDS said that the offending poster was put in the display at the insistence of a group of militant black students and was printed by a group of black radicals in Harlem.

He noted that the students were missing the point of the poster. “Even government statistics show,” he said, “a disproportionate number of Negroes are drafted and serve on the front lines. Also, in Louisiana the head of the state draft board is an officer in the Ku Klux Klan.”



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