

John Howard Griffin

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Dear Nell,

How sorry I am for my silence that worried you. Barbara called last night - I had just got in from another of those trips - this time to Michigan, Washington, Virginia, Atlanta - studying the riot causes and speaking and photographing and gathering materials for this emergency book I am preparing on the ghettos. I have run so fast and hard that I could not contact anyone or write. I will be home now, barring emergencies, until the third of March, when I leave for another congested tour to Canada, Illinois, Alabama, Louisiana; then home for a week, then back to Richmond, Virginia and on out to California until the end of the month. This is sort of a last-ditch attempt to get something done to avert the confrontation that is upon us. It hasn't a chance of succeeding, but the attempt has to be made. The situation is simply abominable. In most of the big cities, whites are forming themselves into militia groups, purportedly to "support the police", having gun training etc. I went on TV in Michigan to point out that this was the purest bloodlust and that if any Negro group were doing the same thing, they would be summarily arrested. Father Thompson called me last night to say that the FBI had been there to warn him that the minutemen had moved into the south now and to be very careful, and to notify them the moment the "minuteman sign" appeared on his car or rectory. If we can expose the group (nationally organized) of racists that is setting off these riots, the world will be shocked into some realization and the riots may possibly be averted. We are on the trail and think we will have an answer soon. I am moving very fast, staying in one place only long enough to get my research materials and then moving on before anyone really knows I am there.

I return from that nightmare world, steep myself in my family and in music and friends and go out again. Your letters are very precious to me, even when I cannot answer immediately. Please continue to write. It is the worst and best time of my life. I fall exhausted into bed but somehow there is the high energy to go on after a few hours sleep - though I know it is only nervous energy.

All for the moment. I am hoping to see you at least briefly in April. Nell, you must see all the beautiful things that I cannot now take the time to see, because the nightmare takes all my vision, and listen to all the music I cannot, and create all the beautiful visual world that I cannot. If I just know someone I love is doing all this, it means everything and is as though I were doing it, and I take great nourishment from it.

Best love to you from all of us here,

American Society of Magazine Photographers
Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain

John