

## Who was William L. Patterson?



William Patterson was an African American lawyer and leader in the communist party and head of the International Labor Defense, a group that offered legal representation to communists, trade unionists, and African Americans in cases involving issues of political or racial persecution. He was also the executive director of the Civil Rights Congress.

In 1951 he presented the document *“We Charge Genocide”* to the United Nations, charging the U.S. federal government with complicity in genocide for failing to pass legislation or prosecute persons responsible for lynching in the United States, of which most of the victims were black men.

Patterson's document goes over how the police, lynch mob groups, and KKK killed African American men and the lack of action by the government to stop these acts.

It also goes over economic genocide:

*“Negroes are the last hired and the first fired. They are forced into city ghettos or their rural equivalents. They are segregated legally or through sanctioned violence into filthy, disease-bearing housing, and deprived by law of adequate medical care and education. From birth to death, Negro Americans are humiliated and persecuted, in violation of the Charter and Convention. They are forced by threat of violence and imprisonment into inferior, segregated accommodations, into jim crow busses, jim crow trains, jim crow hospitals, jim crow schools, jim crow theaters, jim crow restaurants, jim crow housing, and finally into jim crow cemeteries.”*

*-We Charge Genocide, by William Patterson*

You can find the document *“We Charge Genocide”* by Googling:  
[blackpast.org](http://blackpast.org) we charge genocide

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