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MEMORANDUM

FOR: Maxwell M. Rabb

FROM: James C. Hagerty

If you have not seen this speech of Roy Wilkins, I thought it would be interesting to you. This is the first time that I have ever seen a personal spokesman for the NAACP give a Republican President such a series of nice remarks. Will you please return it to me when you are finished with it. Thanks.

Integration

Jim H

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Thanks for sending me this speech as I had not seen it. It is a momentous document for the reason you suggest. Put it together with the attached excerpt from the Congressional Record and you have an indication of tremendous changes taking place that we should not fail to get over to the public.
Max



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CONGRESSIONAL RECORD

Civil Rights

SPEECH
OF

HON. ADAM C. POWELL, JR.

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
Wednesday, February 2, 1955

The SPEAKER. Under previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York [Mr. POWELL] is recognized for 30 minutes.

Mr. POWELL. Mr. Speaker, the United States Congress is a 19th century body in a 20th century world. In the field of civil rights we are still conducting ourselves along the pattern of yesterday's world. Tremendous changes are taking place in our country eradicating the concept of second class citizenship. Yet the United States Congress has done absolutely nothing in this sphere. We are behind the times. We are a legislative anachronism. In an age of atomic energy, our dynamic is no more powerful than a watermill.

The executive and the judicial branches of our Government have passed us by so completely and are so far ahead that the peoples of our Nation do not even look to the United States Congress any longer for any dynamic leadership in the field of making democracy real. So many changes, tremendous changes, have taken place under our Supreme Court and under the leadership of President Eisenhower that many of the civil rights bills which I used to introduce are no longer of any value. This year, for instance, I did not introduce the bill to abolish segregation in the Armed Forces—it was not needed. Nor did I introduce the bill to guarantee civil rights in the District of Columbia—it was not needed.

I think it highly significant to point out that the appointment of my distinguished colleagues, Representatives Drees, of Detroit, Mich., and Dawson, of Chicago, Ill., to the Veterans' Affairs Committee and the District of Columbia Committee, respectively, was due entirely to the changing climate.

Two years ago the leadership of this House, Republican or Democrat, would not have dared to place a Negro on either of these two committees because both were committees which dealt with segregation.

Our Veterans' Administration rigidly maintained the bars of segregation, especially in our veterans' hospitals. Two years ago, this Capital was a cesspool of democracy where not only I, as a Negro congressman, was banned from all public places but also visiting chiefs of state and their representatives, if their skin happened to be dark. But under the vigorous leadership of H. V. Higley, Administrator of Veterans' Affairs, there is no longer any segregation in any veterans' hospital. And under the leadership of District Commissioner Samuel Spencer, from Mississippi, if you please, this Capital has become a glorious place, truly representative of the finest of our American way of life. And, again I repeat, all

of this was done without the help of the Congress and oftentimes in spite of the opposition of the Congress.

For 10 years, my colleagues and I have introduced civil rights amendment after amendment, civil rights bill after bill, pleading, praying that you good ladies and gentlemen would give to this body the glory of dynamic leadership that it should have. But you failed and history has recorded it.

I am proud to be a Member of the Congress of the United States. I am proud to be a Member of the legislative branch of the United States Government and I know you are too. But I beseech you to transform this emotion of pride into the deed of leadership. This is an hour for boldness. This is an hour when a world waits breathlessly, expectantly, almost hungrily, for this Congress, the 84th Congress, through legislation to give some semblance of democracy in action. Our President and our Supreme Court cannot do all this by themselves and, furthermore, we should not expect it. We are derelict in our duty if we continue to plow looking backward. No man is fit for this new world, for this new kingdom of God on earth, who plows looking backward. And it is coming with or without us. Time is running out, ladies and gentlemen; Asia has almost slipped from our grasp and Africa will be next. There is no guaranty of our position in Europe. Only a resolute three-pronged drive can make democracy live, breathe, and move now. Only legislative, judicial and executive action can completely guarantee the victory of the free world.

The legislative branch—this Congress—must immediately change its childish, immature, compromising, 19th century attitude and not just become a part of the 20th century world but a leader.

Therefore I ask all of you, on both sides of the aisle, to support this year the bill to eradicate segregation in interstate transportation; to support the omnibus civil rights bill offered by Representative EMANUEL CELLER, chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Prompt hearings on these bills should be held immediately and swift passage with a minimum of friction should be brought about. We should have a bipartisan approach to domestic democracy or our bipartisan foreign policy approach will be utterly meaningless.

The fair employment opportunities bill did languish in the Committee on Education and Labor, of which I am a member, under the chairmanship of both the Republican and the Democratic leaders, and that should immediately be considered.

The opponents of a fair employment opportunities bill state that they do not believe that the Federal Government should intrude in States rights. I do not agree with them, but until such time as we do pass a national FEPC, I am introducing today an FEPC bill for the District of Columbia. There can be no argument of violation of States rights now. An FEPC bill for the District of Columbia would automatically allow this

Congress to become a part of the glorious, victorious, forward march of our executive and judicial branches in the District of Columbia.

We who believe in civil rights urge first: Unity of thought and action for the passage of an interstate antisegregation bill to ban segregation on all interstate carriers. This bill has been introduced by the gentleman from Massachusetts, Representative HESSELTON. Also, I have introduced a companion bill.

Last year when the House Committee on Interstate and Foreign Commerce was considering legislation to end segregation in interstate travel, a 29-year-old witness appeared. He was Lt. Thomas Williams, formerly of the United States Air Force. Lieutenant Williams had volunteered for duty when he was 19 years old. He served in the Air Force with merit until 1953 when he was dropped. The testimony he gave to the committee showed that he was dropped following his arrest in the State of Florida because he refused to move from a so-called white section of an interstate bus. That young man, in the uniform of his country, was jailed and fined even though the United States Supreme Court had told carriers to end racial segregation. That case is still before the courts on appeal. After he was dropped by the United States Air Force, Lieutenant Williams was so eager to serve his country that he enlisted in the New Jersey National Guard. He served for nearly a year. About 2 weeks ago, while flying a jet plane, he was killed serving his country before he had a chance to see democracy come to pass.

We believe in the second place in unity of thought and action toward the passage of an omnibus civil-rights bill.

We believe in the third place in unity of thought and action for the passage of a fair employment opportunities act.

I would like to serve notice that some of us intend after a reasonable time of waiting for our committees and our committee chairmen to act to use every parliamentary device we can to bring before this Congress civil-rights bills of worth and value. We intend to use, after a reasonable period of time, Calendar Wednesdays and discharge petitions. I trust that the leadership will give us cooperation and that we will not be stymied by the use of counterparliamentary methods to prevent us from bringing Calendar Wednesday forward.

On this day, when we bow our heads and hearts in the memory of one of the greatest human beings that ever lived, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, may we not use some of the breadth of his greatness in our hearts and minds, realizing those great words of his that "We have nothing to fear but fear."

So let us be strong.
We are not here to play, to dream, to drift.
We have hard work to do, loads to lift.
Shun not the struggle that is God's gift.
Be strong. It matters not how deep entrenched the wrong,
Nor how hard the battle goes, nor the night how long.
Faint not, fight on.
Tomorrow will come the dawn.



x

~~Address of ROY WILKINS, Administrator,
National Association for the Advancement
of Colored People, before the Second
Annual NAACP National Youth Legislative
Conference, Metropolitan Baptist Church,
1225 R Street, N.W., Washington, D. C.,
8:15 p.m., February 3, 1955~~

(1)

Mr. Chairman, Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen:

x This conference has been called to consider the general topic, "Youth and the Challenge of Integration." I am sure that a thorough discussion will have been had by the time the sessions adjourn on Sunday.

I suspect that we have fallen into the fashion of the day which is to study, survey, and issue recommendations on the behavior of our youth. As a variation on the incessant theme I propose tonight to advance some observations on adults and the challenge of integration, for such problems as confront us in advancing integration stem largely from the creeping pace--the almost immobility--of certain sections of our adult population.

The May 17 opinion of the United States Supreme Court that racially segregated schools are unconstitutional has had an impact far beyond the area of public school education and has served to focus attention generally, among thoughtful Americans, on the broad question of racial segregation in American life, with its attendant denial of equality in citizenship.

Under the stimuli of war-time requirements and imperative adjustments to a new and threatening world situation, plus a constant prodding from the victimized and the exploited, significant changes have taken place in recent years. There is no need, before this audience, to do more than list them: abolition of segregation as a policy in the armed services; abolition of segregation in civilian services, as well as in schools in military establishments; outlawing of restrictive housing covenants; outlawing of the White Primary election; improvement in the administration of justice in the courts; the abolition of segregation as a policy in the District of Columbia; admission of Negro students to graduate and professional colleges of many tax-supported universities, hitherto lily-white; the enactment of 12 state and 30 municipal fair employment practice laws; the voluntary opening of many church and municipal colleges and seminaries

to Negro students; and the emergence of firm anti-segregation attitudes in great church bodies, in many college fraternities and societies, and in the great labor organizations.

When the May 17 decision arrived, therefore, it was but a logical, and inevitable, step in the general trend. Just as the nation in the mid-Nineteenth century could not survive half slave and half free, so in the mid-Twentieth century it cannot survive part first-class and part second-class citizens. If we were to vindicate fully our founders, our professed ideals, and our destiny, these mean lines of demarcation had to be erased.

In the public school question it is the young people-- with but few exceptions--who have quickly grasped the truth and proceeded accordingly. I never tire of quoting a youthful high school editor in Mexico, Missouri, who wrote last September:

"A process known as integration has begun.

About all it amounts to is some 40 new students going to Mexico High School. We don't think it should be a strange adventure or an exciting experiment or a big production. We just hope the townspeople don't show too much concern, because we feel that, generally, we high school students will take the change in stride."

But, alas for his wisdom, the adults in some localities-- most of them in official positions or in political office--are "making a production" out of school integration. Where these officials have taken a firm stand for obeying the law, as in the District of Columbia, Missouri, Maryland and some other states, integration is proceeding without difficulty. Where there has been wavering or hostility in high places, the law (for the present) is not functioning.

Some of the arguments of the opposition forces are interesting. They say, for example, that they fear integration will lower the general standards of education in their areas. By this they are confessing what we knew and contended all along: that while the "separate but equal" system was undeniably separate, it was far from equal. Yet these same people argue that the way to meet the problem

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they envisage is to continue the separate system!

There are those who now fear for the Negro teachers and who weep great crocodile tears for them. We do not share those fears, and, it may be added, neither does the vast majority of Negro teachers. We have thousands of excellent Negro teachers, qualified by professional training, experience, temperament, and family background to teach any children, in any school, anywhere. Naturally, like the whites, we have some who are untrained, unqualified and incompetent. They and their white counterparts will be among the unmourned casualties of integration.

There are those who fear for a minority of Negro children in a predominantly white school and for a white minority in a predominantly Negro school. Others mention cafeterias, rest rooms, playgrounds, and athletics. And, of course, we have with us always those who yell "intermarriage!"

Let us recognize that some of these fears, because of background, tradition and myth, must not be laughed away; but they are by no means insuperable and they can and will be dealt with as we go about making the law work. They can never be resolved through unthinking repetition and hysterical action.

For action designed to defy or circumvent the court's opinion has been taken or is contemplated in several states. These frantic plans will warrant analysis and corrective action when and if they begin to function. We promise to use whatever methods are indicated in a situation to bring to Negro children and their parents the equal, racially unsegregated public education which has been declared their constitutional right. If the schemes being hatched result in the separation of pupils uniformly and completely on a racial basis, then challenges may be expected. The subterfuges like assignment of pupils, delegation of power, gerrymandering, employment of police power, and subsidies for private schools will have to be measured against the clear pronouncement of the nation's highest court. Some of these, like subsidies for private schools, are so fraught with complex dangers to whites as well as Negroes that it does not appear that the average white citizen understands at this time what his politicians have done to him and his children,

But there is some soul-searching in progress. Down in Mississippi, where defiance of the court's opinion has been stridently vocal, the Jackson Clarion-Ledger, one of the state's largest dailies, published on January 9, 1955, a remarkable editorial confession and admonition, some passages of which deserve quotation here:

"Mississippi has long been condemned, largely because of our neglect of the colored schools. Now is the time for us to place ourselves in the ranks of the progressives. We cannot do this, however, as long as we practice deception and dishonesty in our treatment of the Negro school children.

"It is common information that many county superintendents have spent thousands of dollars in the purchase of new school buses. These new buses are given to the white children and the old school buses, many of them worn out already, are given to the colored children. In one county in Central Mississippi there is a saying among the Negroes that no Negro child has ever ridden in a new school bus. This is not being fair and it is not being decent."

After reciting instances of the raising of white superintendents' salaries by forty to fifty percent with money that should have gone, under the law, to supplementing the salaries of principals, the editorial states:

"These high salaries for the white superintendents were taken from the helpless, defenseless Negro principals of that county. This is not being decent. This is not being fair."

Here again, under the pressure for integration, is revealed the true state of affairs in the "separate but equal" school system. In the light of this confession, it can be seen why the Federal government should not grant hundreds of millions of dollars to such states for school construction. Not a dollar of Federal funds, taken from all the people, should go to subsidize a segregated

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school system, inherently evil and unequal, which has been declared unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court.

And that brings us to Washington. It seems appropriate here, since we are meeting in Washington, to comment briefly on the conduct of adults in the Federal government in connection with racial segregation and citizenship.

All the progress in this field, sometimes halting and sometimes grandly sweeping, has been accomplished with the Congress of the United States either sitting on the sidelines or interposing obstacles to the trend. Of all America, if we are to judge by their actions, only our Senators and Representatives have been impervious to the changes that have occurred since 1940.

The important advances in the civil rights field have been made through the courts, through the education and persuasion of public opinion, and through the Executive branch of the government.

Not a single piece of civil rights legislation has been passed by the Congress in a span of over 78 years. In this area our Federal lawmakers are rooted in the Nineteenth century.

We have seen how the courts have moved. The Executive branch of the government has realized the need for change. Under Mr. Truman a legislative program which recognized the government's obligation on civil rights was placed before the Congress. Nothing resulted, either under the Democrats or the Republicans.

President Eisenhower has given personal leadership to the abolition of second-class citizenship in all areas where the Executive can act. However, his party, and particularly his party in both houses of Congress, did nothing in the 83rd Congress after the sweeping victory of 1952.

Now we have a new Congress under the control of the Democrats. It began its life January 5 by refusing to discuss and act upon the Senate rule which kills legislation before it can reach the floor--the filibuster rule. Only that grand Old Warrior, Senator Herbert H. Lehman, of New York, stood ready to do battle for the right, and for this devotion to principle and to the pledge in his party platform of 1952, he was punished by being denied a seat on the Judiciary committee. In this Rule 22 we have part of the explanation

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for the mental retardation of the Senate on the civil rights question.

A little group of Senators, who are determined that even if the Negro is not in chains he shall not be free, operate as the controlling wing of the Democratic party. In Rule 22 rests their veto power. On civil rights they browbeat both their Northern wing and a section of the Republicans.

While demanding that their Northern colleagues not press questions that disturb their Southern constituents, they are supremely indifferent to requests that they not act in a manner calculated to disturb Northern constituents.

There are signs that the Negro voter, always aware of this trafficking, is now considering whether the time and the opportunity to act are not approaching. There is in the White House a man who is steadily winning their admiration by his forthright pronouncements on civil rights and by the leadership he has given in his branch of the government.

In the Congress Senator Lyndon Johnson, the Majority Leader, has his eye on Texas; Senator William Knowland, the Minority Leader, has his eye on Formosa; with but few exceptions, the chairmen of the powerful House and Senate committees come from states where the Negro is a second-class citizen, and their eyes are on 1956 and, they hope, their continuing chairmanships.

Well, the eyes of Negroes are on 1956, too. A growing number among them is beginning to wonder if their Federal government, under a man like Mr. Eisenhower, might not make real progress on civil rights if there were more Republicans like the President in the Congress.

They know that all Republicans are not good and all Democrats bad. But they think they can help get rid of bad Republicans, whereas they have little chance to get rid of bad Democrats. They

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striking off the shackles of colonialism--to which has been tied the evil doctrine of "white supremacy"--that here in our own land a small band in the Congress of the United States should any longer be permitted to perpetuate the spirit, if not the letter, of pre-Emancipation America.

It is to the intelligence and understanding of its youth, and especially to the honesty and courage and energy of youth, that our nation must look for the dynamism that remains the heart of the American dream. It is the youth of all faiths and colors and nationalities, daring to ask not only "Why?" but "Why not?", who will transfer our precious principles from parchment to practice.

No greater or more exacting test of those principles can be found than that in the area of human relationships in our great country. Within our borders we are working to realize the age-old yearning of mankind for a life without chains and without artificial restrictions based upon race, color, religion, nationality--for a society where men, not some men, will have equality of opportunity to achieve according to their capabilities.

Why should this not be so? Why not, indeed? And who in each succeeding generation is better qualified to ask "Why not?" than our youth, upon whom the burden of fashioning and re-fashioning always falls? This task involves more than a youthfully quick execution of a maneuver, or meaningless solution of a theorem. It demands the re-fibering of man with the thousand-fold strength of freedom. In this hour of tribulation it could mean the saving of us all.

RW:EJS