

Conference speeches

WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE



"TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS"

SPEECHES

JUNE 1-2, 1966
WASHINGTON, D. C.

**Major Addresses
at the
WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
" TO FULFILL THESE RIGHTS."**

June 1-2, 1966

FOREWORD

By
Ben W. Heineman, Chairman

The White House Conference To Fulfill These Rights was a significant milestone in this nation's drive to remove all the remaining barriers which prevent Negro Americans from full and free participation in our society.

More than 2500 men and women, representing every facet of American life, came to Washington on June 1 and 2, 1966, to pool their knowledge, energy and resources in this common cause.

Out of their discussions came agreement on basic programs and approaches; the foundation of what should be considered the nation's immediate business in the achievement of equal opportunity. This blueprint for action, published in a separate document, is realistic and attainable.

Because their messages played an important role in setting forth these goals, the five addresses to the entire assembly are reprinted in this pamphlet.

We believe that these statements by President Lyndon B. Johnson, Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, Honorary Chairman A. Philip Randolph, Solicitor General Thurgood Marshall, and Council Member Roy Wilkins, will be a continuing source of inspiration to all whose support is needed as we, as a nation, move forward to "Fulfill These Rights."

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ADDRESS OF
LYNDON B. JOHNSON
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Banquet Session, June 1, 1966

Mr. Randolph, Mr. Heineman, all the delegates to this
Conference:

It was one year ago at Howard University that I called
for a conference whose theme and title would be "To Fulfill These
Rights." I said that its object would be to help the Negro
American move beyond opportunity to achievement.

Now you have come tonight from every region of this great
land, from every walk of life, to play your part in this momentous
undertaking and in this great adventure.

You are here because you represent the humane and the
progressive spirit of our people. Through two centuries of trial
and triumph that spirit has moved the American democracy from an
ideal to a powerful reality.

You are here tonight because your country needs your
collective judgment. The dilemma that you deal with is too deeply
rooted in pride and prejudice, too profound and complex, and too
critical to our future for any one man or any one administration to
ever resolve.

No matter how committed to its resolution, this issue is
beyond the mastery of one man or one group of men.

You are here, finally, because in your variety of background

and circumstance you symbolize those who have a stake in including the Negro American in our society. And that is everybody--Negro and white, rich and poor, manager and worker, city dweller and suburbanite.

I do not mean to say that every American feels that he has such a stake, because if he did there would be no need for this conference. Some believe that they can put enough miles or enough dollars between them and the Negro's problems to escape the consequences of those problems altogether.

Yet we know that the country is not large enough, nor any man wealthy enough, to offer or to gain a sanctuary from the effects of widespread poverty and widespread discrimination.

Some believe that the Federal Government can assume their personal responsibilities for justice to the Negro American. They contend, even when they refuse to admit it, that the mere existence of Federal funds and programs and civil rights laws make private action unnecessary.

Yet we know that no national government, however enlightened, can, by itself, change the conditions of Negro life in America.

There are some who think that the Negro should be denied inclusion in our society. There are some, too, who counsel the Negro to refuse a share in the society, even where it is offered--to "go it alone," to seek and acquire power independently, so he may owe nothing to others.

Yet I genuinely believe that our whole experience as a people is otherwise. Those who have tried to divide us have always ultimately failed. Those who have built castles of prejudice have seen them come crumbling down. Those who have whispered the counsel of despair and the counsel of separatism have been ignored.

For our beautiful America is not a planetary system with many atmospheres, many calendars, and many temperatures. It is one large island of earth inhabited by mortal men of many races, faiths, and colors of skin.

They all cry the same way. They all laugh the same way. If they are to build just and fruitful lives for themselves and their children, then they must do it here--and I earnestly believe we must do it together.

This does not require that righteous anger ever be silenced. This does not require that harmony be purchased at the price of individuals' freedom.

What it does require is a recognition that beneath the tumult of events that separate men from one another runs the thread of a common destiny. For we shall either move this Nation towards civil peace and towards social justice for all of its citizens, or for none.

We shall either find the means to open employment to all of our workers--to find decent housing for all of our families--to provide a good education for all of our American children--or we shall see the American promise spoiled for each of them.

Let us pursue that promise not in dreary conformity--not in mutual suspicion and fear--but in the knowledge that freedom and justice cannot be the province of one race or nation alone.

In our quest of that promise, let each man give whatever he has to give.

If it be the courage to endure the scorn of bigots, let him give that.

If it be the wisdom and the patience to teach children that are born into blight and suffering, then let him give that.

If it be the chance of a job and the training it requires, then let him give that.

If it be the willingness to change old ways and to hear the cry of those in need, let him give that.

If it be the power to pass new laws, or to enforce and execute old laws with conviction and fairness and justice, then let him give that.

But men of reason who are honest with each other know that there is so much to be done that we should have done a long, long time ago. If only then we had acted--if only then we had sought justice--we might have been spared the ordeal of conscience that has brought us to this room at this hour.

But we did not act. For reasons of ignorance or prejudice or hate, of greed or fear, of indifference, of blindness or whatever, we waited long--too long have we waited.

Now the awakening has come.

In the last 12 years it has increased in both strength and in will. Reason has insisted that it come. Courage--of the Negro, first, then of the white who joined the cause of justice--has swelled its ranks. And we are acting.

More has been done than men thought possible just a short time ago: in stripping away legal barriers--in opening political opportunity--in attacking the lack of skills and jobs, education, and housing that are the taproots of poverty.

In all of these efforts we have made mistakes. We will make others, for we know too well our own weaknesses. We will arouse hopes, as we have already done, that cannot be quickly fulfilled.

But I came here tonight at the end of a long day to tell you that we are moving. We shall not turn back.

There is evidence of hope, even beyond the legislation enacted and the program started.

Not long ago a businessman from the Middle West wrote us a letter at the White House.

He had attended our planning conference last November that many had counseled against. They had some recommendations on this one, too.

But he had returned home filled with a new awareness of the Negro's condition in America. And he seemed to be fired with a determination to improve those conditions and to improve them in his own backyard, in his home community.

He listed 17 steps that his city had taken since last November to open up new channels of communication between the races. This man had inspired many of those steps and he had taken a part in bringing all of them about.

He did not claim that he had single-handedly changed the terms of Negro life in his city for the better, because he knows that real change--visible, lasting change--will take time and money and the work of many hands, but he had made a start.

He had planted the seed--indeed, a whole row of seeds. And years from now there will be a harvest in this city in the Middle West, a harvest of hope where there might have been a howling desert of despair and bitterness.

Not everyone of us can plant as many seeds as this man did, but each of us holds one of them in his hands. And together we can make a harvest for the generations to come.

Do not expect from me, or from any man, a miracle.

I see the distinguished persons here tonight from whom the hopeless people throughout this country do sometimes expect a miracle. Do not expect us, even working shoulder-to-shoulder together, to put right in one year or four all that it took centuries to make wrong.

I came here to tell you tonight that I am prepared to give my days--and such talents as I may have--to the pursuit of justice and opportunity for those so long denied them.

I will sleep tonight in the house where Lincoln slept. It was 100 years ago that a civil war was fought in this country to free the Negro from slavery. The Negro won that war, but he lost the battle still to come.

Emancipation was a proclamation, but it was not a fact. I came here tonight to tell you that in the time allotted me, with whatever energy and ability I have, I do not intend for history to repeat itself.

True, more legislation has been signed in the last few months and few years; true, Negro opportunity has been proclaimed. But we must go on to make it a fact.

I came here to say to my friend Philip Randolph and to my friend Ben Heineman, to every man and woman at this head table, to every member of the Council, and especially to every one of the 2,500 people whose children will remember that they came and they saw and they conquered here at this conference in Washington: that your President may not agree with everything that you do, but he will consider everything you say, and that he believes that we are approaching this in the right way.

As Jefferson said, "I prefer the recommendations of the many to the judgment of the few."

A very perceptive and unusually alert reporter--and we do have some of them--in the Cabinet Room at the White House this afternoon was quick to point out to me some developments at the Conference and to ask me for comment on the "great dissension" that exists.

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I said, "First, I want to observe that is something that you people never overlook." But along with that dissension are a lot of people plowing the furrows that are going to come up with constructive ideas, with vision, and with a platform that will bring a lot of people into agreement on goals that we have yet to achieve.

I read in a newspaper coming out tonight a very fine column by a good friend of mine of many years. He went around the world with me and I called him back from a distinguished ambassadorial post to make my first appointment to the USIA to succeed Ed Murrow.

He was relating a conversation with a Philadelphia banker. We usually think of Philadelphia lawyers. But this banker was pointing out to him that they had employed a few Negro secretaries and clerks at the bank, but they had not yet gone much further.

Carl Rowan was discussing that question. I read on in the column, because I hoped that he would say, before he ended, that he could give the Philadelphia banker an example. We have a Negro, for the first time, on the Export-Import Bank that deals with all nations. We have a Negro on the Federal Reserve Board that is lending money instead of borrowing it.

Eleven percent of our population are Negroes and the Federal Government has 15 percent of its employees who are Negroes. We are proud of the work that they render.

We are not satisfied that we have attained equal and exact justice and equal employment, but I have been working at it very

diligently for 5 years. And I am tonight going to give a good example of it. I have a very unusual pleasure and pride to introduce to you a great soldier. I might say that the President of the United States does not often have the opportunity to introduce another speaker.

But I am glad that tonight I do have that opportunity. I am going to introduce to you one who 12 years ago established in the field of civil rights a beachhead from which we shall never retreat.

Since that day, he has already occupied two great offices-- as distinguished Justice of the Court of Appeals, and now as the great Solicitor General of the United States of America. When he accepted this call and left his lifetime job to take a temporary one in this administration, not knowing how long it would be but realizing that it offered an opportunity to serve his country, he had argued already 33 major cases before the Supreme Court.

But he was really just in the kindergarten class then, because before he finishes his term he will probably have argued more cases before the Supreme Court than any other American. And let no man ever say that he is not a qualified lawyer and judge.

I am very proud that he serves my administration. I am very proud that his is the voice of the people of all of the United States before the highest and greatest court of this land.

Nothing, I think, could be really more appropriate than that this man should speak to the first great national conference that has ever been called to really consider the rights and opportunities of Negro Americans.

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Now I consider it my high honor and my very great privilege to present to you the man who has been in the forefront and will continue to be in the forefront of all the battles for the things that are good for our country--Thurgood Marshall, the Solicitor General.

ADDRESS OF A. PHILIP RANDOLPH
HONORARY CHAIRMAN

Opening Session, June 1, 1966

In the spirit of the conference, "To Fulfill These Rights" I welcome you. I welcome you to share in the enriching fellowship of the great and rewarding and creating experience, and the marvelous, wondrous, moral adventure, in a social enterprise to mark and achieve a new era of acceptance of the principle of the unity of the human family, and the dignity of the human personality -- irrespective of race or color, religion or national origin or ancestry.

Let me hail and salute the President of the United States whose vision and wisdom expressed in that historic speech at Howard University, June 1964, provided the inspiration and foundation for this conference, when the President stated in that speech, with boldness and humility, "But freedom is not enough. You do not wipe away the scars of centuries by saying 'Now, you are free to go where you want, do as you desire, and choose the leaders you please.' You do not take a person who for years has been hobbled with chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race, and then say, 'You are free to compete with all others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. Your citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates."

These declarations express a profound moral commitment to the highest ideals of the brotherhood of man. And here we are, men and women of the Church, labor, business, and government, assembled in a great conference, to become more deeply involved in what we more and more recognize to be the most tremendous social challenge of conflict and change in our country today -- the Civil Rights Revolution.

It is our fervent plea for strong voices to be raised from all areas of our society, out of varying traditions and interests, to arouse the conscience of our land, in order to achieve in fact that which has already been won in law, and what always has been in the hearts of good men -- equality, justice, freedom, and human dignity for all men regardless of color or country.

To millions of people of the Old World, America represented a land of promise, a land where people were free, a land where the individual could move about and up in his opportunities, his job, his income, and his social status. America was hope, it was promises. This meant horizontal and vertical mobility. Where a man could better himself, the level he could find was largely up to him.

It was this vision of a land of promise that drew men and women from the Old World. True, practically all these people lived in ghettos. Some of them may still persist. But for most of them the nationality ghettos were only way stations, thresholds inviting the newcomer to make his adjustment and then move out into membership in the larger American community.

But the problem of the Negro is different. The ghettos we are concerned about are neither voluntary or temporary. They are, for the most part, compulsory, and permanent.

Precisely because the Negro is a substantial part of the total population, and because it presents the critical problem and extreme challenge to American democracy, this conference, "To Fulfill These Rights" seeks to awaken and cause all Americans to make a serious effort to understand and face up to their moral responsibilities.

Of all the groups who have settled in the United States and have become a part of this Nation, Negroes are one people who were brought here originally against their will. They were brought here in chains. The slave trade was a profitable business. Much of the culture of New England, and the life of Southern aristocracy were based on it. No other people were in slavery and exploited so mercilessly, even by the founding fathers of the Nation. Although slavery had existed in the ancient world and down through the centuries in many parts of the world, the American institution of slavery was the worst. Slaves had no rights in American laws, moral codes or customs. Husbands and wives became separated, and children could be taken from their parents. They were denied education and any hope of a better life.

The people had a Civil War fought over their condition,

a war which divided the Nation with a bloody and bitter conflict, kept the slaves landless, moneyless, friendless, voteless, and hopeless. To their deprivation was added the loss of the Reconstruction Revolution by the rise of the Confederate counter-revolution, which virtually nullified the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865, the Fourteenth Amendment of 1868, the Fifteenth Amendment of 1870, and the Civil Rights Act of 1875 by a United States Supreme Court decision of 1883, and the decision of Plessy vs. Ferguson in 1896, which handed down the doctrine of "separate but equal," which provided the foundation of racial segregation and discrimination in this country.

Thus, after over three hundred years of slavery, the mass of Negro people were the victims of segregation and inequality for another hundred years.

And to these human agonies of physical brutalization and mental humiliation which were suffered by no other group in the population, I must add the mark of color.

Other groups had moved out of the ghettos -- the Irish, the Germans, the Jews, the Polish, the Italians. They had moved ahead in education and employment. They enjoyed exposure to the stimuli of America's material and spiritual development. They could better themselves and become part of the mainstream of American civilization. If they suffered from the prejudices of their neighbors, they still had a fighting chance of changing,

of overcoming the barriers of discrimination. But for the Negro, discrimination and segregation and organized persecution and intimidation were a part of a conscious and determined plan to hold the Negro down.

During the First World War, masses of Negroes fled from the Southern plantations and rural and urban areas to seek jobs and a new life in the North. They were forced to settle in restricted areas in the great cities of the North. Here again they ran into the same patterns of Jim Crow -- these patterns of housing and employment, deprivation and rejection were not written in laws. But prejudice, custom, practice, made for the same thing. Indeed, many will testify that the Negro ghettos in the cities are firetraps; mice, rats and vermin multiply due to lack of adequate sanitation. The increase of the Negro population through migration from the South and the increased birth rate result in extreme density of population and overcrowding. People are hemmed in, unable to move out or escape the slums even if they have the money to move. The rents they pay are higher than those paid by their white neighbors. They get less of housing for the dollars they pay for rent. Instead of paying a fourth of their income for rent, they often have to pay as much as a third, leaving them with less money out of low wages for food, clothing, medicines, education, and recreation.

Racial ghettos suffer a double evil. They suffer from racial segregation, and also from poverty. The people have no margin of security. There are no shelves with extra food for the next meal or the next day. There are no bank savings or insurance policies, for the starvation wages require a weekly supplement of welfare. There is nothing the people can show as security for loans in times of unemployment, family sickness, accidents, or other misfortunes. There is no wonder that life expectancy is shorter than that in a white community. The incidence of disease and death due to tuberculosis and cancer is many times that of the white community. Child death in the first days of life, in the first months of life, and year of life is over twice that for other parts of the city.

To the physical illnesses we have to note the ill effects of family life. The man of the family is supposed to be the protector and support of the family. But if he is denied education and employment, if he cannot play his role as a husband or a father, the family breaks down.

Thus, men plagued with forced idleness, women have to carry the burden of providing the income, and at the same time caring for their children. Is it any wonder that alcohol and narcotics and gambling and various forms of antisocial action are found in the black ghettos? And is it any wonder that children and youth are damaged emotionally and mentally? The

destructive and devastating impact of the ghetto too is frightfully continuous and total. There are families that have been on welfare rolls for two, three, four generations. The result is a sense of hopelessness and helplessness and powerlessness.

But despite the seemingly insurmountable obstacles, most of the men and women of the black ghettos struggle to find work and maintain family life. And despite adverse conditions, most youth remain in school and strive to better their condition. They try to believe in the American promise, and they try to obey the law and look forward to participation in the political, economic and cultural life of the Nation. But the youth that are damaged are incalculable.

First are those who lose faith in their families, in themselves, and in the larger community. They reject themselves and develop a sense of self-hate and despair. They accept any evaluation of themselves. Those who suffer from self-rejection tend to withdraw from the community. They undergo an inner death. They lose an appetite for learning. Some end with mental illness, and seek escape in suicide.

Second are those who react with bitterness and rage. They are ready to strike against others. Their respect for life and law is destroyed. They fill the jails and houses of detention and the prisons. Their hatred is against authority, and especially the police, who they consider their enemy, and oppressor. They

hurt not only the white population, but also they strike against the life and property within the ghetto.

Third are those whose anger becomes a social force of mass proportions. This is the volcanic force which builds its explosive power to such a pitch that it breaks out into race riots, and in violence, such as is symbolized by events in the summer of 1965 in Watts, a ghetto in the city of Los Angeles. It took only a trivial incident involving police ineptness to light the flames of racial violence.

Those who participated in the riot were chiefly youth. They set fire to 600 buildings, destroyed 200 completely. They broke store windows and looted the shops. Thirty-six persons were killed. A thousand were injured. Four-thousand were arrested. Over 150 million dollars worth of property was destroyed or damaged. It took the National Guard to restore order.

Let me warn this conference that the Negro ghettos in every city throughout the nation are areas of tension and socio-racial dynamite, near the brink of similar racial explosions of violence.

What can be done to right the wrongs of the Negro people of this country? What can be done to bring about social and racial justice and fulfill the promises of American life for all our people, both the black working poor and the white working poor? Is there any hope we can solve a deep-rooted and

complex problem which affects the life of every American and threatens the survival of this nation? How can we abolish the racial ghettos?

Let us realize that children learn their prejudices. They are not born with them. They learn the ways of racial inequalities from their parents, from their attitudes and words and behavior patterns. And they learn from the experience of racial inequality, from the television, radio, press, church, school, playgrounds, employment, and government.

Can we re-educate our children? Can we re-educate ourselves? Americans tend to believe in education as the cure-all for all ills. We must realize that the relations of the races and the roots of racism in the American culture are deep.

Because of these daily experiences of segregation it is unrealistic to depend on appeals to the conscience and good will of the nation alone; because of the daily experience of segregation, it is unrealistic to think that education or racial equality and inter-group and inter-cultural programs can solve the problem.

If the Negro and the white Americans have to wait until their neighbors are educated out of their prejudices, they will be trapped in the ghettos of America for generations to come.

If our people have to wait until everybody loves his neighbor, we may have to wait many a moon, or liberation will never come. Most Negroes are not asking white people to love them or like

them or understand them. They want their neighbors to accept them. They insist that they be granted their rights as citizens and human beings.

Thus the purpose of this Conference is to involve all Americans in the great social enterprise of respect for the sacredness of the dignity of the personality of every human being which is reflected in recognizing the rights of every person to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Every day's delay in breaking down the barriers of segregation in housing, schools and discrimination in jobs means irreparable damage to hundreds of thousands of human beings.

The damage is not merely to the Negro; it is a liability to white people as well. For we live in a world whose population is 80 per cent colored. It is no rational kindness to permit a white child to grow up in a home which is segregated, or in a school which is segregated, and in a white community which is an isolated sector in the total world community.

In the large cities where white people, white families have moved to the suburbs, the white child has been brought up without knowledge or understanding of his colored neighbor. A white youth rarely if ever meets or communicates with a Negro youth, though both are fellow citizens of this nation and fellow human beings.

How can persons or property be secure in a community

where invisible racial walls keep children and youth and adults apart? Tension, fear and hate are likely to plague personal lives in communities for generations unless we equalize conditions and plan for the transformation of urban life so that the great metropolitan complexes are more truly democratic places of human habitation.

Finally, this is a difficult age, made so by the revolution of science, technology, and industrialism, and the revolution of the colored world for freedom and status, peace and plenty.

Insecurity and conflict throughout the world have made it an age of anxieties. Yet for each of us there are compensations. This is an exciting time, a time of changes and new possibilities. If there is insecurity, anxiety, and fear, there is also a tremendous sense of possibilities beyond what men dared to hope for in the past.

This Conference to "Fulfill These Rights" will broaden the horizon for the Negro and white American, and the entire world of color now in the revolutionary flames of discontent.

All honor to the President for his imagination and sense of innovation which made this conference possible. He will be remembered in history as the President of Human Rights, Education, and Anti-Poverty. And the civil rights revolution gave him inspiration and motivation.

The implementation of the Report of the Conference "To Fulfill These Rights" will constitute a major and powerful thrust giving Negroes the ability to walk through the gate of opportunity and achieve first class citizenship in America. To the men and women, black and white, Catholic, Jew and Protestant, participating in this Conference: "Quit ye like men! Be strong! We shall overcome!"

ADDRESS OF HUBERT H. HUMPHREY
VICE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES

Opening Session, June 1, 1966

Chairman Heineman, Members of the Council, our dear and respected friend, A. Philip Randolph, whose hallmark of character is his great sense of integrity--Philip, I feel as if I am privileged today to deliver a rather extended benediction to an inspiring invocation by you, sir.

The first line of my remarks to this historic conference is: we know why we are here, and indeed we have heard the call. And, we have heard the call to action sounded by President Johnson at Howard University, a call challenging America to move from "opportunity to achievement"--to realize "not just equality as a right and a theory, but equality as a fact, and equality as a result."

Now, we know the intensive work which hundreds of persons have expended in preparing for this conference -- the spirited deliberations of the Planning Session in November, the reports of task forces and panels, and the challenging report and recommendations prepared by the Council to this conference.

I trust that each and every one of us has studied that report and the recommendations included therein carefully.

But we are here to go to work, and there is much work to be done.

In a few short years we have traveled down a road studded with landmarks: historic court decisions, legislative victories, and executive actions. And as we have traveled that road, we have seen a thousand acts of heroism, large and small, by the brave and determined Americans who have made that journey with us -- men and women of both races struggling to secure the reality of freedom, the reality of equality and human dignity.

And of course we rejoice in these victories, as we rejoice in the knowledge that the troop of travelers, but a handful of courageous marchers a few years ago, has swelled to a mighty tide of humanity.

But our task at this conference -- as it will be America's urgent domestic task for many years to come, is not to recount the progress of the past, but to fulfill the promise of the future.

Now, this will be a hard, sometimes unglamorous, frequently frustrating responsibility.

We can rejoice that the time has arrived when millions of Negro Americans can step out of the shadows and walk forthrightly into the bright sunshine of human rights. But a man too long walled off from society cannot easily adjust his senses and his capacities to the light -- yes, and the heat -- of equality.

This generation of Americans has the task, and I may add, the priceless opportunity, of walking side by side with the Negro American as he strides into that bright sunshine and stands erect, equipped, trained for his opportunity.

Now, as we see the work before us, we cannot avoid the realization that many times our deeds have not matched our words, that there still exists a tragic gap separating promise from performance in the many crucial areas of civil rights policy.

What more explicit documentation of this do we need than was given to us this morning by A. Philip Randolph. And that performance gap that I have referred to must be closed.

The blame for that gap cannot be laid at the feet of any single person or institution. Every major segment of our society has contributed to maintaining this gap between promise and performance. So we ask the question -- how are we to close it?

Well, the first requirement is to concede that it exists. Unflinching, unblinking candor is an absolute necessity if we are to prevail, as prevail we must, in the new stage, this the new stage of the civil rights battle.

Now, as I see it here are the major areas where we must do much better.

First, the Federal Government has the job of meeting its growing responsibilities. And I have no doubt that this topic will receive more than its share of attention in the next two days.

But permit me this observation -- as a member of the federal establishment. Despite the Federal Government's absolute commitment to achieving equality for all Americans, and its accomplishments of the past, and those which will be evident in the

future, we welcome constructive evaluation and criticism of our efforts to implement all civil rights statutes and policies and to carry forward our struggle against deprivation and discrimination.

And on behalf of President Johnson, I give you this pledge. The Federal Government will improve its performance wherever that is necessary. We will not shirk our responsibilities.

Secondly, states and localities -- states and local governments -- have often failed to exercise meaningful initiative in a wide spectrum of civil rights issues. Now, this deficiency is especially acute because it is in the state houses, the city halls and the towns, local town meetings -- not just the halls of Congress or the federal courtrooms -- where the major battles of the next phase of the civil rights struggle will be waged.

It is in our states and local communities where we must gear ourself for action and wage war against what I prefer to call America's shame, "slumism."

Let me describe for you this ugly term "slumism", related of course to the ghettos that have been spoken of this morning, in our cities.

Slumism encompasses poverty, illiteracy, and disease. Slumism is discrimination and frustration and bitterness. Slumism is the ungathered garbage, if you please, and the dilapidated buildings. Slumism is a family of eight or ten in an unheated room.

Slumism is danger on the stairs, and violence in the street. Slumism is rent so high that a desperate man is either moved to tears or to crime. Slumism is segregated, inferior schooling for those who so urgently need the best.

Slumism is inflicting upon our less fortunate citizens the burden of dependency and despair, rather than stimulating their capacity for self-support and self-respect.

Slumism is the pent-up anger of people living on the outside of affluence. Slumism is the decay of structure and the deterioration of the human spirit. Slumism is the other America -- the other America that so few of us seem to know, the America of the poor, the America of the deprived, of the unwanted.

But we can defeat slumism, and we can defeat it only if state and local leadership, working hand in hand with the federal government and the private groups, reasserts itself in bold and relentless fashion.

Thirdly, business and labor unions must move more effectively towards the goal of equal employment opportunity and achievement.

I know, and I applaud, the progress which has been made in the past years. Of course there are countless stories of individual success which would have been impossible a decade ago. How well some of us realize this that have been in this battle so long. And I have seen the statistics, and the charts, which demonstrate the rate of progress for Negro Americans in certain

job categories, and prove, at least to the man that draws the chart and recites the statistics, that everything is getting better.

But to the unemployed -- and often the unemployable -- man in Harlem or Woodlawn or Watts, these individual stories of success, and the encouraging statistics, are largely meaningless and sometimes insulting. When the statistical base, that base line, is sufficiently low, any improvement, any increase tends to look better than it actually is. The good news that a Negro has been appointed general counsel of a major corporation brings little hope into the life of a man who failed to complete fifth grade in a second-rate school.

So in all candor, I will speak within my own criteria, the criteria that I ask you to apply to this conference. We must face honestly the mammoth employment problem which still exists for most Negroes.

Outmoded training programs, tests, recruitment and personnel procedures, apprenticeship requirements, and promotion patterns often deny equal employment achievement as effectively as the old-fashioned "White only -- Negroes need not apply" sign that used to hang outside the factory gates.

Now, your Council has recommended a number of steps dealing with economic security, job opportunity and welfare. And these proposals merit careful attention and detailed discussion in the next two days.

Finally, among the most potentially effective agents in our struggle to fulfill the rights of all Americans are our churches and our synagogues, service and professional organizations, and other community groups.

The heroism of James Reeb or a Jonathan Daniels has stirred the conscience and the soul of our America.

Many religious denominations and local congregations have given heartening evidence of their determination to infuse the concepts of brotherhood, yes, of love and justice, with real meaning and substance. As the floor leader of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, I can tell you that without the help of our churches, without the help of our spiritual leaders, I doubt that we could have achieved victory.

But let us say honestly what we also know to be true.

Some local churches still erect racial barriers at their doors, and many more do not speak out affirmatively on the urgent questions of racial justice which arise in our communities. Many service, professional and community organizations likewise remain silent in times of crisis. And the civil rights crisis is not political or even economic -- it is moral.

Dante said that the hottest places in hell are reserved for those who in a period of moral crisis maintain their neutrality.

I am sure that you will agree with me that in this struggle for equality, there can be no neutrality, nor can there be any so-called conscientious objectors.

Now, imagine the cumulative impact of these organizations of which I have spoken, uniting in behalf of racial justice and equality. The report of your Council describes Project Equality, a national program in which religious organizations use their hiring and purchasing power to promote equal employment opportunity. Consider the effect if every major religious denomination and local congregation actively participated in this program.

We have at our disposal vast reservoirs of untapped economic and social power to unleash against the accumulated discriminations and disabilities which afflict so many Negro Americans. This conference could make no finer contribution to the general welfare of America than mobilizing these resources without further delay.

We must, however, appreciate the difficulty of the remaining problems, and the dangers inherent in a period necessarily marked by frustration and disappointment. Events and trends of this period, my fellow Americans, will often strain the patience and the forbearance of many well-meaning people, black and white. The days ahead will be turbulent, and at times very frustrating. Indeed, we will require a depth of maturity and understanding seldom achieved on such controversial social and economic issues.

Today there are some Americans who see racial separation and exclusion as the remedy for racial injustice and the evils of the past. Now, segregation was a major factor in producing the hate and the injustices that we are seeking to overcome. Do we really believe that more segregation or more separation will still this hate and overcome this injustice?

I think not. No -- our entire American experience cries out against this approach, and our history books are filled with the failures of prior separatist movements.

One fact seems patently clear. The goal of freedom now will be attained precisely to the degree that we are successful in enlisting additional sources of strength in our march towards equality and justice.

Then, too, today there are some Americans who wonder whether the struggle for civil rights will ever be over. They ask in a pleading voice, "What else can we possibly do -- after all the laws that we have passed?"

Well, we should have learned by now that laws and court decisions can only point the way, set the standards, they can establish criteria of right or wrong, and they can provide a basis for rooting out the evils of bigotry and racism. But the laws themselves cannot wipe away centuries of oppression and injustice. It is people, we the people, that must wipe out that oppression and injustice.

We should have learned also that social revolutions -- and that is what we have -- that social revolutions do not necessarily proceed on the basis of some predetermined comfortable timetable.

I am quite sure that George III thought our founding fathers quite unreasonable. I can imagine what he thought of Patrick Henry and Samuel Adams and John Hancock and a few others. I suppose he thought them even blatantly irresponsible as they pressed their demands to their necessary conclusion far beyond what the English must surely have felt were the bounds of good taste and the dictates of knowing one's place in life.

Well, today, my friends, there are Americans, many of them law enforcement officials, who quite properly see a danger to law and order in the flaring of anger and the release of tightly coiled tensions by the Americans who live in our squalid ghettos.

But these Americans would compound the danger by responding, not with even-handed justice to the few, but to the heavy-handed indiscriminate retaliation against the many.

And today there are other Americans who see in the struggle for freedom and equality a license for irresponsibility and violence.

They are both wrong -- tragically, explosively wrong. And they must realize they are wrong and realize it now, while there is still time to seek racial harmony and justice in America.

There is, in short, an urgent need to build a new climate of mutual respect among all elements of society, for it is this

absence of respect -- yes, Philip, this absence of acceptance of a fellow human being, and a sense of responsibility which lies at the roots of the hostility and the suspicion which today threatens the tranquility and the progress of some of our cities -- yes, of all America.

Today there are Americans, some of them on human rights commissions, who appear more concerned about preserving the status quo than rooting out the long-standing injustices to residents of their communities.

I do not wish to be misunderstood at this point. Most human relations groups serve their communities with justice, wisdom and courage, facing issues honestly and seeking equitable solutions to complex and difficult matters. But in some cities the fact is that this is not the case, and where those instances are revealed and exist, they must be corrected now.

And I can say with considerable regret that there are even some Negro Americans who appear more concerned about their own positions than about the plight of the less fortunate, less articulate members of their race. And I hold up as a standard for all Americans the man who spoke to us this morning, A. Philip Randolph.

Consciously or unconsciously, their interest seems not in securing the fruits of equality for their brothers, but, regrettably, preserving their own personal good fortune and accomplishments.

Now, to both groups -- and I can see that I am making very few friends with this candid evaluation -- but I am not here in a popularity contest, I am here as an act of conscience. To both groups the lesson of the revolution of rising expectations, which is not only in the foreign countries, but is here at home in America, must be writ large. That lesson: 20 million Americans will no longer be pacified by slogans or tokens.

They will not be satisfied. They shall not be moved, nor should they be by such slogans or tokens. For freedom now is not a catch-word for a minority of Americans -- it is a moral imperative for all Americans.

And we can strive towards it to the credit of each of us. We can defer it or distort it, or deceive those who seek it. But we do so at our peril.

We can achieve it only through specific deeds, hard, visible evidence that performance is linked with promise, and fulfillment is an element of faith.

This conference, ladies and gentlemen, is America's opportunity to begin.

Now, to some persons certain recommendations found in the Council's report will appear to be radical, and outside traditional American procedures and practices. I am not unaccustomed to having that sort of thing said. But in evaluating these proposals, it is

essential to pose this question to those who think the Council may have gone too far. What are the alternatives?

My fellow Americans, if nothing is done to reduce the unemployment among Negroes, still about twice the rate for whites -- and what can we expect if the 20 percent unemployment rate for Negro youth is not reduced? What are the alternatives if we fail to eliminate segregated schools in both North and South, and bring into balance the disparities in the equality of education. And you and I know there is a disparity, an intolerable one.

What are the alternatives if we are unable to banish housing discrimination and do not expand substantially the amount of decent, low-priced housing available to all? What is the alternative?

These are the questions which this conference and the entire nation must raise as these crucial problems are discussed and then attacked. These are the alternatives which must be weighed. We must find the answers.

Now I know I speak for President Johnson when I urge upon you absolute frankness and honesty in these deliberations. I can assure you that your words, your deliberations, will command the attention and the action of your government.

This government is not afraid to seek freedom now for all Americans.

But I trust that each of you will be searching for those areas of action which can be implemented by the states and the

localities, by businesses and the labor unions, by private organizations and the churches and the synagogues and the people. For only as we mobilize all the resources and seek the commitment of all Americans can we achieve the momentum, the enduring persevering momentum necessary to banish discrimination and denial from this land.

So finally I urge you, as I have done so across this country time after time, I urge all Americans to view the civil rights movement not in the harsh glare, the distorted reflection of today's headlines, but rather in the more balanced perspective of history.

Do not allow your convictions to be uprooted, your steadfast course altered by the occasional excesses, the temporary aberrations, which history tells us must be experienced in any great movement towards social justice. History has a way of shrinking to proper size the episodes which capture the public's attention for a fleeting moment, and it has a way of raising to proper size acts of wisdom, of vision, and of courage.

Today, as few generations in our history, ours has such an opportunity, an opportunity to transform a great nation into a great society.

We ask no monuments, we ask only the judgment of history. Let the history books show that a great nation did not set its face against the tide of history, did not say "Thus far you shall come, but no further."

Instead, let the history books show that this great nation of America said; "There is no more room in America for a 'them' and an 'us.'"

There is but one America, one citizenship, and one destiny for all. And then we shall crown our good with brotherhood from sea to shining sea.

Thank you.

ADDRESS OF
SOLICITOR GENERAL THURGOOD MARSHALL

Banquet Session, June 1, 1966

My immediate task in this conference "To Fulfill These Rights" is to place the present in proper perspective. In order to do this I have been requested to review the historical background of the struggle for racial equality in this country. I am indebted to our well-known historian John Hope Franklin for the materials covering the period up to 1900.

If we are to fulfill these rights, if we are promptly and effectively to bridge the gap between theory and practice, we must first realize fully the depth of the problem of racial prejudice and discrimination in this country. There are today two groups of Americans sincerely interested in the problems. One group believes we have made tremendous progress in the last two decades and thinks little more is needed-- that, given time, the problem will solve itself. The other group recognizes the progress that has been made, yet views the present achievement as no more than a firm base from which to launch the final attack on the causes of racial and religious prejudice. Both groups need to pause for a consideration of the background history of this problem.

Recalling the dark past and contrasting it with the dramatic accomplishments of the last decade might comfort those

who believe the struggle is now over. To that group I say, try to sell that to a Negro in Watts or Mississippi. But to those of us who know the struggle is far from over history has another lesson: it tells us how deeply rooted habits of prejudice are, dominating the minds of men and all our institutions for three centuries; and it cautions us to continue to move forward lest we fall back.

Long before Thomas Jefferson talked about certain inalienable rights in the Declaration of Independence, Americans faced experiences that assisted them in defining for themselves what those rights were. At one time it was the right to worship God as they saw fit. At another time it was the right to protection of their government—the government of the Mother Country or the government of the colonies. At still another time it was the right to a fair administration of justice. The tenuous status of the Negro, even in the seventeenth century, helped Americans think through one of the most important rights of all, the right to liberty.

The existence of slavery in the colonies at the time that they were fighting for their political independence proved to be a serious embarrassment. It was scarcely possible to limit the great principles of freedom, stated so eloquently by Jefferson, to the white people of the emerging United States.

It was an iniquitous scheme, Mrs. John Adams said, to fight for what they were daily robbing and plundering from those who had as good a right to freedom as the patriots had. Negroes heartily agreed. In Massachusetts Negroes insisted that they had "in common with all other men a natural and inalienable right to that freedom which the great parent of the universe hath bestowed equally on all mankind and which they have never forfeited by any compact or agreement whatever." Thus, Negroes early saw the intellectual inconsistency of a country's seeking for some of its citizens what it would deny to others. For the next two centuries, Negroes would continue to strive to eliminate this patent inconsistency. Once the colonies gained their independence and became the United States of America, hardly a year passed that did not witness some new abuses of Negro slaves and some new denials of the rights even of those who had gained their freedom.

As early as 1782 Thomas Jefferson, in his Notes on Virginia, took cognizance of the unfortunate influences of slavery on the master as well as the bondsman. It did not create a condition, he argued, in which the rights of human beings could be effectively protected. But when he was Secretary of State a decade later, Jefferson received a letter from the Negro astronomer and mathematician, Benjamin Banneker, that stated much more cogently than Jefferson had expressed the importance of extending to all persons, regardless of race,

the rights to which they were entitled. "I hope you cannot but acknowledge," Banneker told Jefferson, "that it is the indispensable duty of those, who maintain for themselves the rights of human nature, and who possess the obligations of Christianity, to extend their power and influence to the relief of every part of the human race, from whatever burden or oppression they may unjustly labor under; and this, I apprehend, a full conviction of the truth and obligation of these principles should lead all to."

As slavery became more deeply entrenched and as the prospect for relief appeared more and more remote, Negroes--and a few white friends--stepped up their campaign for the extension to all peoples the rights enjoyed by whites. In 1829 Robert Young, a New York free Negro, published his Ethiopian Manifesto, issued in Defense of the Blackman's Rights, in the Scale of Universal Freedom. Later in the same year David Walker, a Boston free Negro, published his Appeal in Four Articles in which he demanded that Negroes be given the same rights as whites. Both Young and Walker wrote before William Lloyd Garrison began to publish his abolitionist newspaper, The Liberator. And it is not without significance that Negroes supported Garrison long before he was able to secure the support of a sufficient number of whites to keep his enterprise going.

If slavery persisted in the Southern states, it was the Northern states that did much to deny free Negroes their rights in the dark days before the Civil War. In 1830 a mob drove eight Negroes out of Portsmouth, Ohio. For three days, in 1829, bands of whites in Cincinnati took the law in their own hands and ran out of the city those Negroes who did not have the bonds required by law. In New York state, there were riots in Utica, Palmyra, and New York City in 1834 and 1839. In 1834 a mob of whites marched down into the Negro section of Philadelphia and committed numerous acts of violence. They wrecked the African Presbyterian Church, burned homes, and mercilessly beat up several Negroes. Similar uprisings occurred in subsequent years. American antislavery organizations and Negro conventions were unable to generate sufficient public opinion to put down the wholesale denial of the rights of the darker peoples of the United States. It was this state of affairs that caused the Negro minister, Henry Highland Garnett, to say to his Negro brethren, "The diabolical injustices by which your liberties are cloven down, neither God nor angels, or just men, command you to suffer for a single moment. Therefore, it is your solemn and imperative duty to use every means, both moral, intellectual, and physical that promises success."

One might have thought that the Civil War, in which scores of thousands of white Americans gave their lives and in which 186,000 Negroes fought, would have settled once and for

all the question of equal rights for Americans. But this was not the case. Even the most elementary rights were denied the freed men at the end of the Civil War. It mattered not how many sacrifices Negroes had made to save the Union, how many were men of education and property, how loyal they were to the finest traditions of American democracy, they had few rights that anyone was bound to respect. In no Southern state, for example, were they given the vote until more than two years following the war.

In 1867 some Negroes got the vote, but not all. Some got a few other rights, but not all. And whenever and wherever they secured some of their rights, it took extraordinary courage--even gallantry--to exercise them. For they had little or no protection, either at the local level or from the federal government. Schools were segregated, even where Negroes had some political power. (They never had much.) People laughed when Negroes sat down in a restaurant to have a cup of coffee or when they tried to get accommodations in a hotel. The Civil Rights Act of 1875, before the Congress for five years before it was finally passed, was not effectively enforced anywhere. When the Supreme Court declared it unconstitutional in 1883, few Americans took notice of it; for the Act was already a dead letter in Atlanta, San Francisco, Chicago, Washington, and New York. Responsible citizens boasted of this fact.

The Fourteenth Amendment, never an effective shield for human rights, became the mechanism by which corporate businesses took on human traits and enjoyed protection that few black human beings ever enjoyed. One Southern state after another amended its constitution to disfranchise as many Negroes as possible without disfranchising, as one leader put it, a single white man. And no strong voice was raised against this blasphemy of American democratic practices. In these years, when white America was anxious to settle down to the relatively quiet task of exploiting the nation's human and physical resources, there was no time to consider basic human rights, no interest in securing to all Americans the rights that were celebrated in the centennial of the nation's birth.

When the 145 Negroes assembled in Chicago in 1890 to organize the Afro-American League of the United States, they knew that they had few if any friends in high places, few if any white Americans who would stand with them in the fight for their rights. One thing they knew, however, and it was that they had become the custodians of America's ideals, the conservators of America's professions of equal rights. They could well have been proud of their own role as they pledged themselves "to protect against taxation; to secure a more equitable distribution of school funds; to insist upon a fair and impartial trial by a judge and jury; to resist by all legal

and reasonable means mob and lynch law; and to insist upon the arrest and punishment of all such offenders against our legal rights."

Their protests did not prevent the effective disfranchisement of Negroes in every Southern state. They did not prevent the enactment of highly imaginative segregation statutes that would reveal a remarkable resourcefulness of Americans in their efforts to degrade an entire race of people. They did not prevent the increase of lynchings or the emergence of the new urban phenomenon, the race riot. These Negroes were consoled, however, by their sure knowledge that their footing was firm and their case was sound. But they knew that W.E.B. DuBois was also correct when he said that "the problem of the twentieth century would be the problem of the color line."

1900 - 1929

The dawn of the Twentieth Century, whatever other promises it held out, offered no basis for hope to the Negro. He was disfranchised throughout the South, increasingly segregated, relegated to menial jobs, and forgotten by all. In 1894, to "close the wounds" between North and South Congress had repealed much of the Reconstruction legislation--effectively withdrawing the Negro from the protection of law. The courts, too, had abandoned him. Even the Supreme Court of the United States wanted to hear no more of Negro rights. It had just invalidated most of

the Civil Rights Acts of 1870, 1871 and 1875, legitimized compulsory segregation, blocked transfer to the federal court of discriminatory State prosecutions against the Negro, and closed its own doors to claims of jury discrimination and political disfranchisement. In short, white supremacy was now the law of the land.

Perhaps there were some who philosophized that, since things could not get worse, they would get better. But they were wrong. This was a dark hour, indeed; yet, a blacker night would come, and the sun would not come out for a very long time.

The first three decades of the Twentieth Century brought no concrete relief to the Negro. To be sure, there was an occasional pious declaration by the President or another high federal official. But nothing was done by any government, federal, State or local, to improve prevailing conditions. On the contrary, during this period disenfranchising laws were multiplied, enforced segregation--once confined to a few activities and a few States--now reached farther and deeper, literally separating the races from cradle to grave. And the federal government, under President Wilson--otherwise a liberal--officially adopted the policy, segregating government offices and the military services.

There were, it is true, a few majestic declarations by the Supreme Court in support of Negro rights. In 1915 the "grandfather clause" was struck down. Two years later racial zoning ordinances were held unconstitutional. In one case, the Court voided the

conviction of Negroes whose mock trial was dominated by a hostile mob. And, at the end of the period, State rules barring Negroes from Democratic primaries were invalidated. But these decisions were a long time bearing fruit. They were easily circumvented. Substitutes for the grandfather clause were quickly found in the familiar "constitutional interpretation" test and comparable devices, which would not be struck until 40 years later. "Voluntary" exclusions of Negroes from primaries was soon approved, and only fell in 1944. The private restrictive covenant replaced the racial zoning ordinances and it was held legal; the Supreme Court did not ban State enforcement of these arrangements until 1948. And, by only slightly less flagrant methods, Negroes continued to be denied judicial due process. In short, however, praiseworthy its decisions (and since these were the NAACP's first victories, I would be the last to understate them), the Supreme Court had not significantly changed the Negro's condition. He had still not obtained the right to vote; nor was he freed from residential segregation or assured a fair trial. And, even more important, the Negro and a few white friends were fighting alone.

Nor were the advocates of white supremacy content to have all the wealth and all the votes and all the law on their side. The Klan was revived, lynchings increased to extraordinary numbers, and race riots erupted.

These were, indeed, the darkest days. But, at least, in a

small way, the Negro began to protest and to organize. The NAACP and the Urban League were formed. DuBois and others rejected the acquiescent philosophy of Booker T. Washington. They found a very few friends in the white community. It would be a long time before their call would be heard, even among Negroes. Yet, they kindled a flame that, much later, would finally awaken the Nation.

1929 - 1948

There was to be very little concrete change in the next two decades, between 1929 and 1948. The Depression hit most people hard, but the poor hardest of all. And of course Negroes were poor. Nor did the New Deal bring dramatic relief to the Negro. Indeed, the Negro could not easily appreciate that he was being dealt a new hand in the supposed reapportionment of the Nation's riches. Again, he seemed to have been left out of the deal.

Segregation by law persisted and intensified. The new federal agencies adopted the policy; the old ones, like the military establishments, continued their own exclusionary practices. In the Thirties and early Forties the FHA gave an important push to residential segregation by restricting their insurance on loans to racially "homogeneous" neighborhoods. Though in decreasing numbers, lynchings persisted, as did race riots.

Yet, there were signs of change. Nothing actually changed for the average Negro during the period, but, at least, it now seemed clear that a new direction was beginning and that, eventually,

things would improve. However ineffective they then were, it is significant that a Civil Rights Section in the Department of Justice and an FEPC Committee were created. Indicative, also, was the appointment of Negroes--including William Hastie and Robert Weaver--to relatively high government positions. Most important, perhaps, was the growing national concern with the problem of equality--evidenced in the organizational efforts to promote the cause of civil rights and the outspoken statements of prominent figures, both in and out of government. But, again, there would be a while to wait before practical benefits would come.

1948 to the present

The real march forward for the American Negro begins in 1948, first by very small steps, later by much bigger ones.

In that year, the Executive Branch of the federal government officially revoked its discriminatory policies and began a slow effort to undo what it had done. The desegregation of the armed forces was undertaken. Discrimination in government hiring was ordered stopped. And FHA reversed its stand on the insurability of homes in mixed neighborhoods. So, also, in 1948--urged to do so by the first amicus curiae brief ever filed by the United States in private civil rights litigation--the Supreme Court held

unconstitutional judicial enforcement of racially restrictive covenants.

Now, at last, the movement toward equality was under way. Two years later--again at the urging of the Solicitor General, who took issue with the I.C.C.--the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in railroad dining cars. And, at the same Term, the Court in effect barred segregation in State graduate schools. By 1953 the Court had declared illegal discrimination by places of public accommodation in the Nation's Capitol--the Department of Justice having once more intervened on the side of Negro rights against the local authorities, as it would do henceforth with increasing frequency. And, the next year, the landmark School Segregation Cases would be decided.

These decisions and those which were to follow were not always self-executing. The District of Columbia promptly implemented the rule against discrimination in places of public accommodation and the ban on school segregation. A few border States accepted the Brown decision with good faith. But, in much of the South, there was to be "massive resistance" for a decade and more. Nevertheless, the tide had turned irrevocably and the tactics of delay and evasion could only postpone, not defeat, the victory won.

Equally important is the role of the legislative branch of the federal government. For the first time, the Court was not to remain alone in translating the constitutional promise of

equality. At last, the Congress intervened with positive civil rights legislation--the first since 1875. I need not elaborate here the familiar Civil Rights Acts of 1957, 1960 and 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Nor can we underestimate the significance of the changed role of the Executive Branch in this new era. I have already noted that my predecessors intervened in most of these cases on the side of Negro rights. Also, the civil rights legislation enacted is largely the product of Administration proposals. Perhaps most important, the Executive Branch has undertaken as never before to enforce and implement the court decisions and the new laws. Little Rock and Oxford, Mississippi, are the most dramatic examples. But, there are countless other daily occasions when the President, the Attorney General, and the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice act to "execute" the law of the land.

Conclusion

I will attempt no assessment of how far we have come and what is left to be done. Clearly, there remains a great deal of work in translating into concrete reality the rights already won, and new tools must still be forged. That is the goal of the proposed Civil Rights Act of 1966. There are, however, some lessons for the future in the history of the struggle for Negro rights.

What is striking to me is the importance of law in determining the condition of the Negro. He was effectively

enslaved, not by brute force, but by a law which declared him a chattel of his master, who was given a legal right to recapture him, even in free territory. He was emancipated by law, and then disfranchised and segregated by law. And, finally, he is winning equality by law.

Of course, law--whether embodied in acts of Congress or judicial decisions--is, in some measure, a response to national opinion, and, of course, non-legal, even illegal events, can significantly affect the development of the law. But I submit that the history of the Negro demonstrates the importance of getting rid of hostile laws and seeking the security of new friendly laws. Provided there is a determination to enforce it, law can change things for the better. There is very little truth in the old refrain that one cannot legislate equality. Laws not only provide concrete benefits; they can even change the hearts of men--some men, anyway--for good or evil. Certainly, I think the history I have just traced makes it clear that the hearts of men do not change of themselves.

Of course, I don't mean to exaggerate the force of law. Evasion, intimidation, violence, may sometimes defeat the best of laws. But, to an important degree, they, too, can effectively be legislated against. The simple fact is that most people will obey the law. And some at least will be converted by it. What is more, the Negro himself will more readily acquiesce in his lot unless he has a legally recognized claim to a better life. I think the

Segregation decision of 1954 probably did more than anything else to awaken the Negro from his apathy to demanding his right to equality.

It seems to me that the experience under the recent public accommodations law and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prove the point. Of course there have been resistance and evasion and intimidation in both cases. But it must have surprised the cynics that so many restaurants in fact desegregated in obedience to the law and, more so, that so many Negroes in Alabama and elsewhere are actually voting less than a year after the Voting Act was passed.

I do not suggest a complacent reliance on the self-executing force of existing laws. On the contrary, I advocate more laws and stronger laws. And the passage of such laws requires untiring efforts.

Just as Supreme Court decisions on the "White Primary," "Restrictive Covenants," and school segregation provided the impetus for the stepped-up protests of Negroes, we must use the present tools--not as an end, but, rather as additional incentive to restudy and renew our drive toward ending the gap between theory and practice.

Moreover, laws have only limited effect if they are not

vigorously enforced. What I do say is that I have faith in the efficacy of law. Perhaps that is because I am a lawyer and not a missionary. But I think history--which proves so many things--proves me right.

ADDRESS OF MR. ROY WILKINS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NAACP

Closing Session, June 2, 1966

Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the Council, guests on the dais, and all the distinguished invitees who have participated in this Conference:

I wish to say that I regard it as a privilege and a great honor to say this word at the concluding meeting of our sessions here in Washington.

This Conference which we are concluding tonight, is properly but an expression of the revolution of rising expectations which has been in being among Negro citizens and their allies since the date of the Second Emancipation, May 17, 1954.

On that date, the legal blessing which had been bestowed for 58 years upon the doctrine of separate-but-equal constitutional citizenship was withdrawn in the historic Brown decision of the United States Supreme Court.

These past two days have brought the first-in-history White House Conference "To Fulfill These Rights."

There have been White House Conferences on health, children, foreign policy, education and other issues vital to our national welfare. Now, for the first time, the issue which has plagued both the national policy and the American conscience from Jamestown in 1619 to Watts in 1965, has moved to the center of the national stage.

Through most of our history it has been a matter for the states and for private organizations. We have cried out our anguish, voiced our protests and worked feverishly in patchwork efforts within the States, but we lacked the national recognition, of, and attention to, what we knew to be a national concern.

The handicap of the state perspective has been underscored no more effectively than by the correspondence in 1809 of Thomas Jefferson.

He wrote then to a friend:

"My doubts", he said, that is to the inherent abilities of Negroes, "were the result of personal observation in the limited sphere of my own state, where the opportunities..." -- this is certainly the understatement of the century!"...for the development of their genius were not favorable and those of exercising it still less so...but whatever be their degree of talent, it is no measure of their rights."

The present civil rights struggle is essentially an effort by the Negro American minority, handicapped above other minorities by skin color and a slave background, to find, in Jefferson's words, "favorable opportunities for the development and exercise of their genius."

Our conference today, called with uncommon courage by our President, has substituted for Jefferson's personal observation

a White Paper of formidable facts, of fearless analysis and arraignment and of bold chartings of action reaching to the heart of the democratic ideal.

Since a survey of the vast variety of disabilities stemming from racial exploitation would require a month long conference and several volumes of reports and recommendations, four critical areas of living and citizenship were selected. No mere history of hardship, this, but a frank 1966 look at the present and into the future.

For example, on the section on Economic Security and Welfare, this sentence: "No more ugly and urgent crisis faces this nation today than the economic insecurity of Negro Americans. Employment and income problems are complex, long standing and rooted deeply...Negro unemployment is of disaster proportions... creative and large scale action must be taken to achieve full and fair employment for the Negro working-age population."

And this from the section on Education:

"American schools today are failing to fulfill their purpose of preparing children to be independent persons in an open society. It is incontestable that we have different qualities of education and therefore widely varying levels of opportunity through schooling for the Negro child and the white child...more than 90 per cent of school children are educated in racially segregated schools which provide inferior education through their

failure..." and I quote direct "...to prepare their pupils for life in our pluralistic society and ever-shrinking world; defacto segregation continues as the prevailing pattern in the north and west, and if anything, has become more, rather than less, rigid."

On housing: "The consequences of the slums and the ghettos and the barriers to freedom of choice in housing loom large. The dimensions of this program" -- that is, of massive building and rehabilitation programs -- "are staggering--but they are no larger than American's space ventures."

The important Rent Supplement and Demonstration Cities programs we urgently recommend.

On administration of justice three categories were set forth, embracing protection of Negroes and civil rights workers in connection with the exercise of their rights; equal justice in the operation of the machinery of the law, that is, juries, courts, court officials and law enforcement agents; and police minority group community relations.

The material in the Council report, including the recommendations for action, has received critical scrutiny and has benefited from broadening and strengthening corrections and amendments, including home rule for D.C. by the conferees in the twelve committees.

Each of these are urgent suggestions--and obviously, there isn't time here to list all of them. One of the participants came to me triumphantly and said, "You know, we passed fifteen resolutions in the last 32 minutes!"

And, I submit to you that resolutions passed in that speedy fashion certainly ought not to be recounted here by me and I don't know how much time you would take reading them if you had the opportunity to read them.

It might be, Walter Reuther, that we will have to reverse our attitude on filibustering and stop that kind of speedy legislation.

The urgent, recurringly stated duty upon every conferee is to multiply his experience here in the communication he will effect among his fellow citizens back home.

He must take back home this record, not only of what the Council report contains, but of the amendments, the additions, the broadening and strengthening which will become a part of the report to the President as well as specific resolutions adopted by the committees this afternoon.

Each conferee must carry the message back home, the call to community action on the local level, the stirring of inter-related and purposeful state and regional action and the wide use of the newly acquired tools and channels provided by federal policy and legislation.

The new four part civil rights bill of 1966, now at or near the committee hearing stage in both the House and the Senate, offers a chance for immediate action this summer, not next winter, on aspects of at least three topics of this Conference.

A section of the bill, known as H.R. 14765, broadens the authority of the Attorney General to initiate school desegregation actions without waiting for the filing of complaints by parents.

Those of you who come from affected areas know that this places the burden of enforcing United States law upon the parents who are vulnerable to the pressures that can be generated to their own community, political social and even fiscal.

So, this bill of 1966 would remove that burden from the parents and place responsibility for enforcing United States law upon the United States government.

Another section would close some of the loopholes in the jury selection process in both state and federal courts which now permit racial discrimination, or exclusion, in that process.

A third section is in line with our Conference's recommendation on the administration of justice in providing for the handling in federal courts of the assailants of the civil rights workers and their friends who seek the free exercise of constitutional rights.

Finally, the new legislation would ban discrimination in the sale or rental of housing, a prime target of the participants in this Conference.

Each Congressman and Senator should be impressed, in this election year, with the need for enactment of this legislation.

After every such gigantic and seemingly impersonal gathering such as this, people tend to ask "What can one person do?"

Each section of the Council report, the White Paper of this Conference, contains specific enumeration of what can be done.

But, here, in this pending legislation, now before the Congress, is a task that can be undertaken in the next twenty-four hours.

In fact, urgency is the key word not only with respect to this Conference, but with respect to the whole deadly infection of racism in our national life.

In either intellectually patronizing or in stridently sneering tones it has been held in some quarters that conferences such as this are but "talk."

Now, the answer is that in an honest and accurate sense, they are talk, but so, too, was the Sermon on the Mount.

So was Patrick Henry's deathless oration in the Virginia Assembly.

So were the debates of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas.

What were the lamentations of the ancient Hebrews but talk to revive their people and to restore their relationship to God and to hope?

What, indeed, were the spirituals of the slaves of our own south but talk set to the chants for a new day of freedom and dignity?

There is room always for dissent on emphasis and tactics, but none on goals.

The destiny of twenty millions of Americans and of the nation to whose welfare that destiny is bound, cannot be left solely to the doctrinaire conformists who brook no dissent and who, lately, have begun to classify believers by the color of their skins.

In this long climb, Negroes have had white allies since the first white southerner violated the law by teaching slaves to read and write.

The devils have been overbalanced, by far, by the quiet unafraid friends--the students of recent years who went into the southern hinterlands and the dedicated men and women of all three great religious faiths who have brought a new fervor and a fresh courage to the whole freedom movement.

By the friends in organized labor who were a tower of financial strength and of legislative skills in the drive for the enactment of the Civil Rights Bill of 1964.

Now, students and observers have recognized that the bravery and resourcefulness and ever-lasting energy of the Negro American have marked the climb of all our people, white and black, to an awareness of the enormous task before our country.

As the President remarked in an aside last night, the Negro has ploughed a steady furrow. There has been this unremitting drive ahead by the black millions who, when darkness was all around and hope but a distant glimmer in the pervasive night, fought their way upward.

The mood today is not one of despair, but one of escalating expectation. The need is for urgency because our nation's neglect of the past is about to rendezvous with a worldwide technological expansion. The repercussions are felt from Biloxi to Bombay, to Nairobi, to London and back to Washington.

Urgency is the word.

After the Watts riot last August, the McCone report declared, and I quote:

"Our Commission has made many costly and extreme recommendations." But in addition, it called for a revolutionary attitude toward the problems of the city.

Revolutionary attitude means a discarding of the past routines, a welcome to daring, to innovation, to unorthodoxy. It means a looking forward, not a looking back.

Undergirding all, it means a commitment to more than structure and method and even to precise objectives. It means a commitment to a morality broader and higher than that concerned with self and group.

We must truly see others as ourselves and all as our nation -- our common and glorious heritage built upon man and his freedom. For that is what our country is about. If at times some of us become irritable or uneasy over the expectations of our largest minority population, let him read again the eloquent and perceptive words from President Johnson's Howard University speech. He said:

"The Negro like these others [that is, the other white minorities] will have to rely mostly on his own efforts. But he just cannot do it alone. For they did not have the heritage of centuries to overcome. They did not have a cultural tradition which had been twisted and battered by endless years of hatred and hopelessness. Nor were they excluded because of race or color, a feeling whose dark intensity is matched by no other prejudice in our society."

And, the President concluded as we here tonight might well conclude. He said:

"For what is justice?

It is to fulfill the fair expectations of man.

American justice is a very special thing. We have pursued it faithfully to the edge of our expectations. And, we have failed to find it for the American Negro.

It is the glorious opportunity of this generation to end the one huge wrong of the American nation and, in so doing, to find America for ourselves, a home for freedom."

Thank you.