

## "Facing the Challenge of A New Age," Address Delivered at NAACP Emancipation Day Rally

1 January 1957  
Atlanta, Ga.

*In celebration of the ninety-fourth anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, King addresses seven thousand people at a NAACP rally at Big Bethel AME Church on Auburn Avenue. Atlanta police covering the event reported that people in the church were "overpacked, standing on the sidewalks and the basement of the church and every available place." As the event was a major fundraiser for the local NAACP branch, former branch president Martin Luther King, Sr., preceded his son's address with an appeal for funds. Samuel Williams, one of King, Jr.'s mentors at Morehouse, delivered the introduction, remarking of his former pupil that there is "some talk of his being a student of Mahatma Gandhi, and he is, but long before he heard of Mahatma Gandhi, through the preaching of his grandfather, the late Dr. A. D. Williams, and the preaching of his father, the quiet, dedicated life of his mother, he heard and learned of Jesus of Nazareth, whom he now follows in all that he does."*

*King warms quickly to his hometown crowd and delivers one of his signature speeches with emotion and occasional humor. He expresses mounting frustration with the Eisenhower administration's refusal to confront southern resistance to federal court orders regarding integration, and also chastises black social organizations for spending more on "frivolities" than on civil rights. King closes the noon rally with a ringing peroration based on "My Country 'Tis of Thee," leaving shortly thereafter for Birmingham, where he delivered a similar Emancipation Day speech at Sixteenth Street Baptist Church. The following transcript is drawn from a recording of a live radio broadcast on WERD, Atlanta.*

Mr. presiding officer, platform associates, officers, and members of the Atlanta branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, ladies and gentlemen, I cannot express in words how delighted I am to be here today. You know, one of the rich experiences that comes to any life is the experience of going home. And being in Atlanta, as you know, is the experience of being home for me. And as I look out over this audience I see the faces of so many persons that have encouraged me and given me inspiration in my ministry, persons that I love so dearly, and persons that I feel love me dearly--so that this to me is a very rich experience. I'm certainly indebted to my good friend and teacher, Dr. Williams, for this gracious introduction, and I am indeed honored to share the platform this afternoon with so many distinguished clergymen and educators. I can never speak to any audience in this nation without somehow saying thank you. And when I say thank you, I'm sure you are aware of the fact that I'm thanking you for the moral support that you have given us in our struggle in Montgomery, Alabama. Although we walked and struggled there for more than twelve

months, we were aware of the fact that we were not walking alone, but that there were hundreds and thousands of people all over this nation and all over the world who were walking with us. And I can assure you that this moral support and Christian generosity gave us renewed courage and vigor to carry on. The struggle is not over. It's not over in Montgomery and it isn't over in the South. For we have come a long, long way it is true, but we have a long, long way to go. And we ask for your continued prayers. Finally in saying how happy I am to be here, I cannot forget to say how happy I am to be in the presence of my parents. That too is always one of the richest experiences of life, and I can never forget the inspiration that they have given me over the years and certainly in the last twelve months as we have struggled in Montgomery.

Now this afternoon I want to have you think with me. I started out thinking what I could best say to you in Atlanta that might be meaningful to you and at first I thought of talking about the Montgomery story and its implications of future moves in race relations. But then I got to thinking about the fact that you have heard the Montgomery story so much. You have read about it so much. I have tried to write about it in articles and I've tried to speak about it before audiences all over the nation, and many of the other ministers and civic leaders in Montgomery have done the same thing. So I'm not going to talk exactly about the Montgomery story today. But I want to try to talk about something that I hope will serve as a ray of hope to all of us as we work together for our first class citizenship. I want to use a message that I have tried to give to a few other audiences over this nation. But I feel the need of sharing it with you here in the capital city of the state of Georgia, the gateway to the South.

I want to have you think with me from the subject: "Facing the challenge of a new age." "Facing the challenge of a new age." Those of us who live in the twentieth century are privileged to live in one of the most momentous periods of human history. It is an exciting age, filled with hope. It is an age in which a new world order is being born. We stand today between two worlds: the dying old and the emerging new. Now I am aware of the fact that there are those who would contend that we stand in the most ghastly period of human history. They would argue that the rhythmic beat of the deep rumblings of discontent from Africa, the uprisings in Asia, the confusion surrounding Suez, and the racial tensions of America are all indicative of the deep and tragic midnight which encompasses our civilization. They would argue that instead of going forward we are going backwards. We are retrogressing, they would say, instead of progressing. But far from representing retrogression and tragic meaninglessness, the present tensions represent the necessary pains that accompany the birth of anything new. [Audience:] (All right) Long ago, the Greek philosopher Heraclitus argued that justice emerges from the strife of opposites. And in modern philosophy Hegel preached a doctrine of growth through struggle. (Yes) And somehow it seems to be both historically and biologically true that there can be no birth and growth without birth and growing pains. (Yes) Wherever we confront the emergence of the new, there is the recalcitrance of the old. And so what we're witnessing in our world today--the tensions which we are witnessing--are indictative of the fact that a new world is being born and that an old world is passing away.

Now we're all familiar with this old world that is passing away. We have lived with it and we have seen it in all of its tragic dimensions. We have seen it in its international aspects, in the form of colonialism and imperialism. Did you know there are approximately two billion four hundred million people in this world? And did you know that the vast majority of these people were colored? (*Yeah*) Most of them live on two continents, Asia and Africa. About a billion six hundred million of the peoples of the world are colored people. (*Yeah*) Now fifty years ago or even twenty-five years ago, most of these one billion six hundred million colored peoples of the world were exploited by some foreign power. Wherever you looked you could find it. We could turn our eyes to China and see six hundred million men and women there. We could turn to India and Pakistan and see four hundred million there. We could turn to Africa and see two hundred million black men and women there. We could turn to Indonesia and see a hundred million there or to Japan and see another eighty-six million. And all of these people for years lived under the domination of either the French, the Dutch, the Belgian, or the British. They were dominated politically, exploited economically, segregated, and humiliated.

But there comes a time when people get tired. There comes a time when people get tired of being trampled over by the iron feet of oppression. (*Yes*) There comes a time that people get tired of being plunged across the abyss of exploitation, where they experience the bleakness of nagging despair. There comes a time when people get tired of being pushed out of the glittering sunlight of life's July and left standing in the piercing chill of an Alpine November. So these people became tired, and as a result of their tiredness (*Yes, Yes*) they decided to rise up and protest. (*Yes*) And as a result of their protesting, about one billion three hundred million of the one billion six hundred million colored peoples of the world are free today. They have broken aloose from these colonial powers. (*Yeah*) They have their own governments, their own economic systems. They have broken aloose from the Egypt of colonialism. They're moving through the wilderness of adjustment toward the promised land of cultural integration. As they look back [*applause*], and as they look back they see the forces of colonialism and imperialism *dying*. The old order of colonialism is passing away, and the new order of freedom and equality is coming into being.

But not only have we seen this old order in its international dimensions. We have seen it right here in this nation in the form of segregation and discrimination. And we all know the long history of this old order in America. We know that it had its beginning back in 1619, when the first slaves landed on the shores of this nation. They were brought here from the soils of Africa and unlike the pilgrim fathers who landed at Plymouth a year later, they were brought here against their will. Throughout slavery the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was a thing to be used, not a person to be respected. He was merely a depersonalized cog in the vast plantation machine. The famous Dred Scott decision of 1857 well illustrates the status of the Negro during slavery. For it was in this decision that the Supreme Court of this nation said, in substance, that the Negro is not a citizen of this nation; he is merely property subject to the dictates of his owner. That was the attitude that prevailed. And then came 1896. And it was in that year that the Supreme Court of this nation rendered another decision.

It's come to us to be known as the *Plessy versus Ferguson* decision. And that year the Supreme Court established the doctrine of separate but equal as the law of the land. But we all know what happened as a result of the *Plessy* doctrine: there was always the strict enforcement of the separate without the slightest intention to abide by the equal. [applause] And so, as a result of the *Plessy* doctrine the Negro ended up in tragic exploitation and facing injustice on every hand. (Yes)

Living under these conditions many Negroes lost faith in themselves. (Yes) They came to feel that perhaps they were less than human. See that's the tragedy of segregation. It does something to the personality. I think the Supreme Court's decision said that. They brought in a lot of social psychologists. And all of them stated that segregation does something to the personality of the segregator as well as the segregated. That gives the segregator a false sense of superiority and it gives the segregated a false sense of inferiority. (Yes) So it's mutually destructive. (Yes) Negroes living under this lost faith in themselves. (Yes) But then something happened to the Negro. Circumstances made it necessary for him to travel more. And gradually his rural plantation background gave way to an urban industrial life. The cultural level of the Negro was gradually rising through the decline of crippling illiteracy. The economic life of the Negro was gradually rising as a result of industrialism. And all of these forces conjoined to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses all over began to reevaluate themselves. The Negro came to feel that he was somebody. His religion revealed to him that God loves all of His children (Yes), and that all men are made in His image. So the Negro came to see in his own soul that every man, from a bass black to a treble white, is significant on God's keyboard. (Yes) So he could now cry out in his own soul with the eloquent poet:

Fleecy locks and black complexion  
Cannot forfeit nature's claim (Yes)  
Skin may differ, but affection  
Dwells in black and white the same. (Yes)  
Were I so tall [applause], were I so tall as to reach the pole (Yes)  
Or to grasp the ocean at a span (Yes),  
I must be measured by my soul (Yes)  
The mind is the standard of the man. (Yes)

But with this new sense of dignity and this new self-respect, a new Negro came into being. (Yes) And that's what's wrong in Alabama and Mississippi and Georgia and Louisiana. (Yes) The tension which we witness in the Southland today can be explained in part by the revolutionary change in the Negro's evaluation of his nature and destiny (Yes), and his determination to struggle, suffer, and sacrifice (Yes) until the walls of segregation have finally fallen. [applause] Now that's what's wrong in Alabama, down in Montgomery--a group of people got tired (Yes), they came to feel that they had some worth and that they belonged, and that they were somebody. (*Make it plain*) And they realized that it is ultimately more honorable to walk in dignity than ride in humiliation. [applause]

And then along with all of this came May 17th, 1954. It was in this year and on this date that the Supreme Court of this nation handed down a unanimous decision. (*Make it plain*) They said in substance that the old *Plessy* doctrine must go. The old *Plessy* doctrine is no longer the law of this land, that separate facilities are inherently unequal. (*Yeah*) That to segregate an individual on the basis of his race is to deny him of equal protection of the law. So as a result of this decision we could gradually see the old order of segregation and discrimination passing away and the new order of justice and freedom coming into being. And it's coming. (*All right*)

You know I was saying to my wife and sister, yesterday afternoon I was getting a plane out to Montgomery, and we were out at the Atlanta airport. I don't know if you've seen what I'm about to talk about. But I have to face that all the time. And I used to get mad about it coming through the Atlanta airport so often and changing, coming through. There is a man who sits at the door going into Dobbs House, the restaurant there, and there is a big bale of cotton. And he sits there in long beards and he has nothing to do but open that door and ring a bell and remind the white man that this is the way things are, you know. But I, you know, as I was saying to my wife and sister, I developed, you know you have to get kind of, you have to put some comedy into tragedy sometimes or this race problem will run you crazy. [*laughter*] You got to get some kind of [*thing?*][*laughter*]. So I can look at that man with new meaning now, and I don't get angry anymore. He symbolizes something to me. Now here's a old man, and I'm not talking about him, understand that I'm talking about what has to happen. He's very old, he's got to die pretty soon (*Yeah*), there is no doubt about that. He symbolizes something in his very age, all these whiskers and everything else. He's the symbol of a *dying off* (*That's right*), an order which is passing away, and every time I look at him I see that: that here is the symbol of something that's dying. (*Yes*) My friends, let nobody fool you. All of the loud noises that we hear today from the legislative halls of the South (*Yes*), in terms of nullification and interposition and outlawing the NAACP, are nothing but the death groans from a dying system. (*Yes*) [*extended applause*] The old order is passing away (*Passing away*), and the new order is coming into being. (*Amen*)

But, with the coming of anything new there are new responsibilities, new challenges. The new order brings with it new responsibilities. What are some of these challenges that stand before us as we confront this new order, which is inevitably coming? I would say that the first real challenge: to rise above the narrow confines of our individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity. You see this new age is an age of geographical togetherness. No nation can live alone now; no individual can live alone. And we must all learn to live together or we'll all die together. (*Yes*) [*applause*] Now certainly all of this has been brought about a great deal by man's scientific ingenuity. Man through his scientific genius has been able to dwarf distance and place time in chains. Yes, we've been able to carve highways through the stratosphere, so that today it's possible to eat breakfast in New York City and supper in Paris, France. (*That's right*) Bob Hope has described this new jet-age that we live in as an age in which you'll be able to take a non-stop flight from Los Angeles, California, to New York City and if you happen to develop hic-cups on taking off in Los Angeles you will hic in Los Angeles and cup in New York City. [*laughter*] This is the new age.

But with that bit of humor my friends I'm trying to get something very basic over to you. The world in which we live is geographically one. And now we must make it spiritually one. (Yes) Through our scientific genius we have made of the world our neighborhood. Now through our moral and spiritual genius we must make of it a brotherhood. (Yeah) We must live together as brothers and come to see that we are all involved in a single process. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. (Yes) John Donne called it years ago, and he could cry out to the generations: "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a part of the continent, a piece of the main." And then he comes toward the end and says, "Any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind; (That's right) therefore send not to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee." We must come to see this in 1956 and 1957, if we are going to live in this new age. (Here, Here)

There is another basic challenge which stands before us as we face this emerging new world. We are challenged to achieve excellency in our various fields of endeavor. You see, in this new age, doors will be opening that were not opened in the past. The young people of this generation will have opportunities that foreparents didn't have. And the greatest challenge before us is to be ready to enter these doors as they open. (Yes) Ralph Waldo Emerson said in a lecture back in 1871 that if a man can write a better book, or preach a better sermon, or make a better mouse trap than his neighbor, even if he builds his house in the woods, the world will make a beaten path to his door. [applause] That would become increasingly true. That would be true even in this age and we must be ready and prepared in all areas.

There are so many areas, I could name so many areas that we've got to go out in and be prepared for. And then we've got to get ready in this new age to compete with people. And when you get ready for that you don't worry about losing your job in the new age, you see. You see, teachers don't worry about the emerging new age when they are prepared for the emerging new age. If you are prepared you will come to see that you are going to be a good teacher, not a good Negro teacher. Don't go out in this new age to be a good Negro doctor, a good Negro lawyer, a good Negro minister or preacher, a good Negro skilled laborer. But go out to do a good job irregardless of race, (Yeah) for we will be forced now to compete with people. And then decide to do your job well, whatever it is. As I used to hear Dr. [Benjamin] Mays say at Morehouse College, "Do your job so well that the living, the dead, or the unborn could do it no better. [laughter] Do it well. If it falls your lot to sweep streets in life, sweep streets like Michelangelo painted pictures. Sweep streets like Beethoven composed music. Sweep streets like Shakespeare wrote poetry. Sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will have to pause and say, 'Here lived a great street sweeper, who swept his job well.'" [applause]

If you can't be a pine on the top of the hill  
Be a shrub in the valley, but be  
the best shrub on the side of the hill.  
Be a bush if you can't be a tree.

If you can't be a highway, just be a trail.  
If you can't be the sun be a star;  
It isn't by size that you win or you fail.  
Be the best of whatever you are. (*Amen*)

And when you do that [*applause*], when you do that, you're ready for the new age. (*Yes*) There is another basic challenge. To my mind it is even more basic than the other two. We are challenged to enter the new age with understanding good will in our hearts. In other words, we are challenged to place at the forefront of our lives the Christian virtues of love, mercy, and forgiveness. There is a danger that those of us who have lived so long amid the evils of the old age--those of us who have been exploited, those of us who have been trampled over, those of us who have been forced to stand amid the tragic midnight of injustice--there is the danger that we will enter the new age with hate and bitterness. But my friends if we enter the new age with hate and bitterness, the new age will be nothing but a duplication of the old age. We must blot out the hate and injustice of the old age with the love and justice of the new age. (*Yes*) [*applause*] Oh, my friends, this is basic. And I think this is a profound challenge that stands before the Negro now as he struggles all over the South and all over America. This is why I believe so firmly in nonviolence. For it is my firm belief that if the Negro succumbs to the temptation of using violence in this struggle, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos. (*Yes*)

Somehow we've got to inject a new meaning into the veins of our civilization. (*That's true*) Arnold Toynbee says somewhere in his volumes on the history of the world that it might be that the Negro will give a new spiritual dynamic to this civilization which will make for its survival. God granted, we will do that. (*Yes*) One of the ways that we will be able to do it is through a refusal to hate, a refusal to be bitter, but the determination to stand up with love in our hearts. For there is still a voice crying through the vista of time saying to every potential Peter, "Put up your sword." (*Yeah*) And history is replete with the bleached bones of nations and communities that failed to listen to the call of Jesus at that point. (*Yes*) There is still another voice saying to every generation, "Love your enemies (*Yes*), bless them that curse you (*Yes*), pray for them that despitefully use you. (*Yes*) And then you matriculate into the kingdom of God, where you become the children then of your Father which is in heaven." (*Yeah*) And it's still crying to Atlanta, it's crying to Montgomery, it's crying to Jackson, Mississippi, it's crying to Birmingham: *Love your enemies. (*Yes*) Bless them that curse you. (*Yes*)* This is the challenge which comes before our generation at this time. Our aim must not be to defeat the white man. We have that as our aim, we are already defeated. We are out to defeat injustice. We are out to defeat evil. We are out to defeat the forces of darkness. And we must let this white man know, as I try to say to him in Alabama every day, "No matter what you do to me, I'm going to keep fighting this problem, because it hurts you as well as it hurts me." [*applause*] [*recording interrupted*] [. . .] We've got to let him know that we are helping him as well as ourselves when we fight this issue, and this great problem of injustice. This is what we must continue to do, keep it within the realm of struggling against an evil system and not against persons who might be caught up in the system.

Now I know somebody's saying to me, "All this talk about love can be meaningless. It can be just empty words. And what do you mean when you say love your enemies and love those who oppress you, and those who seek to misuse you? What are you talking about?" Now, I will agree with you that I'm not talking about love your opposers as you love your wife, or as you love your personal friends. That would be nonsense. I'm not talking about a sort of sentimental thing now, I'm not talking about that or an affectionate type of love. I'm talking about something more. You know the Greek comes to our aid at this point. The Greek language talks about love in several senses. It talks about *eros*. And *Eros* is a sort of aesthetic love. Plato talks about it a great deal in his dialogues. It's a sort of romantic love--that's what it has come to mean to us and that's a meaningful type of love. That's one type of love that we have for our wives and husbands, and those people that we love in a romantic sense. I guess that's what Shakespeare was talking about when he said,

Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds,  
Or bends with the remover to remove:  
It is an ever-fixed mark  
That looks on tempest and is never shaken;  
It is a star to every wandering (Yes) bark.

Now you see I remember that. I remember that. [applause] Now my wife can tell you that I know that because I used to quote it to her when we were courting. [laughter] That's *eros*. That's *eros*. *Eros* is significant.

But then the Greek comes and talks about *philia*. (*Philia*) *Philia* is a love between personal friends. It's a sort of reciprocal love. It loves because it's loved. (Yes) That's the kind of love you have for the people that you visit, and they're your friends you call up, your roommates in school, and that type of thing. That's *philia*. Now when we talk about loving those who oppose you, we're not talking about *eros* or *philia*. But the Greek comes out with another word. It comes out talking about *agape*. *Agape* is more than *eros*. *Agape* is more than *philia*. *Agape* is the love of God working in the lives of men. (*All right*) *Agape* is creative, understanding goodwill for all men. (*Yeah*) It's a love that seeks nothing in return. It's a love that just begins to love everybody because *God* loves them, not because they're so likable. (Yes) It's because *God* loves them. [applause] It's the type of love that causes you to love the person who does the evil deed while hating the deed that the person does. That's *agape*. And I think that's what Jesus meant when he said, "Love your enemies." And I'm very happy he didn't say, "Like your enemies," because there's some folk I don't like and I never will like them. Like is an affectionate something. Like is a sentimental something. I will *never* like Eastland until he changes his ways. I don't like what he says. I don't like his attitude toward Negroes. I don't like what he's doing in Washington. But Jesus said, "Love him" (*Yeah*), and love is greater than like. Not a sentimental thing. [applause] So when we talk about loving your enemies, we are talking about something of a creative, redemptive sort of love. It is greater than *eros* and *philia*. I will never love some people like I love my wife or like I love my personal friends. It is *agape* that we are talking about now and it is this type of

love, my friends, which I think is the solution to all of the problems that we confront in the South and all over the world. It is this love of God, which we find expressed throughout our Christian faith, this love of God working in the lives of men. (*Amen*) This is the love I'm talking about, that we're talking about when we say love those who oppose you. And it is this love that will bring in this new age, too.

Now all I've said about the challenges and the new age reveals something to me. You know all of this reveals something basic about the universe. It reveals something to me basic about the whole movement of history. It says something to us about the heartbeat of the moral cosmos. It reminds us of something that we must never forget. The fact that this new age is coming and that justice will triumph reveals to us that the universe is on the side of justice. Somehow the universe is on the side of all that's moving toward justice and dignity and goodwill and respect. That is what it says to us. There is something in the long tradition of our Christian faith that forever reminds us of this, reminds us at every moment when we would give up in despair and we would think that we're struggling alone, it says to us that God is struggling with us. (*Yeah, Amen*) There is something at the center of our faith, isn't it, that reminds us of that. It says to us somehow that Good Friday may occupy the throne for a day, but ultimately it must give way to the triumphant beat of the drums of Easter. (*Alright*) It says to us somehow that evil may so shape events that Caesar will occupy the palace and Christ the cross, but one day that same Christ will rise up and split history into A.D. and B.C., so that even the life of Caesar must be dated by his name. [*applause*] There is something about it. There is something in this universe that justifies Carlyle in saying, "No lie can live forever." (*Amen*) There is something in this universe which justifies William Cullen Bryant in saying, "Truth crushed to earth will rise again." (*Yes*) There is something in this universe which justifies James Russell Lowell in saying:

Truth forever on the scaffold  
Wrong forever on the throne (*Yes*)  
Yet that scaffold sways the future  
And behind the dim unknown stands God  
Within the shadow (*Yes*) keeping watch above His own. (*That's right*)

And that is why down in Montgomery we could walk twelve months and never get weary (*Yeah*), because we know there is a great camp meeting in the promised land of freedom and justice. [*applause*]

Now my friends, I'm about ready to close, I must close. The time is passing on. I've spoken now about forty minutes. [*shouts from audience member*] I must close. (*Stop the violence*) I must close. (*Stop the violence, let's talk about it*) [*laughter*] But I want to say this. Don't bother him, don't bother him. That's alright. He's expressing something that's deep within all of us. Some of us don't (*Amen*) express it like that. (*Yeah, Amen*) I can't close now because I know, I look at you and I look into your faces and you have misunderstood everything I've said. I would close if I didn't feel that. I think it's time to close. I don't like to speak too long. But you misunderstand me. I know that. You're going away from here, if I stop now, with a great error and you would have

misinterpreted my whole message. You see I have been talking about a new age that is coming and I have hinted that it is inevitably coming. And then I said that God is on the side of justice, and He is bringing this new age in. (*That's right*) And I'm afraid if I stop now you will go away from here feeling that you can sit down and do nothing and wait on the coming of that era. [*sustained applause*] Now (*Order*), if you go away with that impression (*Yes Lord*), you will be the victims of a dangerous optimism. You will be victimized with an illusion wrapped in superficiality. And I must go on to say just a few other words before I take my seat.

Now it is true that the old order is passing away, but we must speed up the coming of the inevitable. We must speed up the coming of this new order. There is a bitter urgency about it. (*Yes*) We must hurry and do it. It is true that, if I may speak figuratively, old man segregation is on his death bed. (*Yeah, you've got that right*) But history has proven that social systems have a great last minute breathing power, and the guardians of the status quo are always on hand with their oxygen tents to keep the old order alive. [*laughter*] So that, there is still something to do (*Oh Yeah*), still something basic to do. Segregation is still a fact in America. We still confront it in the South in its glaring and conspicuous forms. (*Yeah*) And we still confront it in the North in its hidden and subtle forms. (*Yeah*) We know that if democracy is to live, segregation must die. (*That's right*) Segregation is utterly evil. It is against everything that the Christian religion stands for. The underlying philosophy of segregation is diametrically opposed to the underlying philosophy of democracy and Christianity. And all the dialectics of the logicians cannot make them lie down together. Segregation is an evil. (*Yeah*) Segregation is a cancer in the body politic (*That's right*), which must be removed before our democratic health can be realized. (*Yes*) We must come to see that in America we must speed up the coming of the inevitable.

And there are four, three or four things that I want to urge you to do, that we must do all over, if we are to continue speeding up the coming of the inevitable. Number one, we've got to continue to demand that the federal government will use all of its constitutional power to enforce the laws of the land. [*applause*] We've got to insist on that. And I think this is one of the great problems confronting us. It looks sometimes here in the South that the judicial branch of the government is fighting the battle alone. We open the papers, we see what the justices of the Supreme Court say, we see what a federal judge in Florida says, that "Segregation is dead as a door nail." (*Yes*) But we can't ever hear too much from the legislative and executive branches of the government. (*No*) And that is quite tragic, and we've got to say to Mr. Eisenhower (*Tell him*), "Many Negroes voted to put you in that office, and we want to see something done about civil rights." [*applause*] It is high time now that a man as popular in the world as Eisenhower--a man with the moral influence that he has, a man with all that the nation could offer--it is high time that he will speak out now and take a stand against what's happening all over the South. It is still strange to me (*He ain't said a word*), that the federal government is more concerned about what happens in Budapest than what happens in Birmingham. [*applause*] I say until we come to the point, we must be concerned about Hungary. And our minds today leap the mighty Atlantic. And we are concerned about the aggressive acts of the Communists in Hungary. But my friends, I tell you that it is not enough to be

concerned about Hungary. (*No*) The federal government must be concerned about what's happening in Mississippi, what's happening in Alabama, what's happening in Georgia. [*applause*]

Actually, the Negro has been betrayed by both the Democratic and the Republican parties. (*Yes*) [*applause*] The Democrats have betrayed us by capitulating to the whims and caprices of the southern Dixiecrats. The Republicans have betrayed us by capitulating to the blatant hypocrisy of right-wing reactionary northern Republicans. And this coalition of southern Dixiecrats (*Yes*) and northern right-wing Republicans defeats every liberal move that goes before Congress. (*Make it plain*) And it's going to be defeated tomorrow and the next day on this filibuster, if something isn't done and done in a hurry. (*Yes*) We've got to stress this and keep it before the nation: that this is time now for the federal government to take a stand.

And we can do a lot about this ourselves by getting the ballot in our hands. I have come to see more and more that one of the most decisive steps that the Negro can take is that little walk to the voting booth. (*Yes*) That is an important step. We've got to gain the ballot, and through that gain, political power. And urge the legislative and executive branches of the government to follow the examples so courageously set by the judicial branch.

Along with that we've got to continue through legislation and legalism. I know there are those who say that this can't be done through the courts, it can't be done through laws, you can't legislate morals. They would say that integration must come by education not legislation. Well I choose to be dialectical at that point. It's not either legislation or education. It's both legislation and education. We've got to use both. Now it's true that you can't legislate morals in a sense, and that isn't what we try to do through the law. You see, through the law we don't seek to change one's internal feelings, we seek to control the external effects of those internal feelings. [*applause*] That's all we try to do through the law. Now it's true that the law can't make a man love me; that's, religion and education will have to do that. But the law can control his desire to lynch me. See that's what we call on the law for, and we must continue to struggle through legislation and legalism.

My friends, above all we must continue to support the organization that has achieved excellency in this area (*Amen*), namely the NAACP. [*applause*] They may outlaw it in Alabama, they may outlaw it in Texas and Louisiana, and they might lock up my good friend John Calhoun in Georgia and Ruby Hurley and others. But the fact still remains that the NAACP has done more to achieve the civil rights of Negroes than any organization in America. [*applause*] And we cannot desert the NAACP at this hour. (*Make it plain*) And wherever it's outlawed we're going to have to continue through our churches and other areas to carry on the philosophy of this organization and to support it. And I don't believe that any government in the South will be ambitious enough to outlaw a Negro Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian, or Episcopal church. I don't believe it. [*applause*] But we've got to continue.

And along with that my friends we've got to continue to go down in our pockets and give big money for the cause of freedom. (*Hello*) I'm not talking about nickels now and dimes. I'm talking about big money. (*That's right*) And this is important, I want you to hear this. We can't say any longer that we don't have the money. (*Hello*) We can't use that as an excuse any longer. The economic level of the Negro is rising every day and whether you know it or not, the annual income of the Negro is about fifteen or sixteen billion dollars a year more than the national income of Canada. And we are riding around in the biggest cars that have ever been let loose in the history. We have everything else that we want. And my God, use some of it for civil rights and for freedom. [*applause*]

I said to my fraternity some weeks ago, and I said the same to the Deltas in Detroit the other day, and to the Omegas in Baltimore Saturday. And I said, I said to all of the Masonic orders, the Elks, and all savings clubs, and everything--the same thing applies. And this comes in no way of criticism, because I know the great work that has been done in this area by fraternities and sororities and all of that. [*Recording interrupted*] [. . .] spend too much money for frivolities. I remember one year we had a convention in Cleveland, and some of the other sororities met with us and fraternities. Had a great meeting, a great meeting that week. The week ended and I never will forget, I read in the paper that that week we spent five hundred thousand dollars for whiskey in one week. One week, five hundred thousand dollars for whiskey. Now here's the tragedy. Here's the tragedy, and I'm not saying we don't need recreation and social life, don't get me wrong, but here is what I'm talking about. Do you know a handful of Negroes spend more money in one week for whiskey [*laughter*] than the *whole* Negro race spent, sixteen million folks spent that *whole year* for the NAACP and the United Negro College Fund and civil rights and all that? They spend more for whiskey, a handful in one week, than the whole Negro race spent the whole year (*It's true*) for the whole cause of civil rights. Now isn't that tragic? (*Yes*) It will be an indictment on both the practical wisdom and the integrity of the Negro that at the end of this century historians will look back and as they write the history of this century they will have to say the Negro spent more for frivolities than for the cause of freedom and civil rights. Let's go down in our pockets (*Amen*) and give big money for the cause of freedom.

Then my friends, we must continue to produce courageous, intelligent, and dedicated leadership. (*Amen*) In this tense period of transition, in this period of social change, we need, one of the great needs of the hour is for leaders who are both calm and positive (*Yes*), leaders who avoid the extremes of hot-headedness and Uncle Tomism. Leaders who somehow analyze the issues and press on with a vision determined not to stop but with wise restraint. (*Yes*) Leaders not in love with publicity, but in love with humanity (*That's right*), leaders not in love with money but in love with justice (*That's right*), leaders who can subject their particular egos to the greatness of the cause.

God give us leaders. (*Yes*)  
A time like this demands great leaders. (*Yes*)  
Leaders whom the lust of office cannot kill;  
Leaders whom the spoils of life cannot buy;

Leaders who have honor; leaders who will not lie (Yes);  
Leaders who can stand before demagogue and damn his  
treacherous flatteries without winking.  
Tall leaders, sun-crowned, who live above the fog  
in public duty and in private thinking.

My friends, this is one of the great needs of the hour. I call upon you in this great city of Atlanta to continue to produce those leaders. We need them all over the nation and God has richly blessed you. He has blessed you in so many areas. He has blessed you in the area of academic achievement. Blessed you in the area of economic attainment. (Yeah) I think of the fact that as I speak you this afternoon, I stand here speaking on the richest street in Negro America. I stand here speaking on the street with an insurance company of forty million dollars in assets. (You know that's right) I stand here speaking on a street with a bank of seven million dollars in assets. I stand here speaking on a street with a savings and loan association of eleven million dollars in assets. I stand here speaking in a city that has probably built more homes than any city in America in the last four years. And I say to you that you would deceive God and all of your brothers and sisters if in the midst of all of this you refuse to pour back into the world and into the community and make a lead in the area of civil rights. This is the challenge before us. [applause] We call on you, Atlanta, to be the leader in the area of civil rights. (Yes) Because you have all of the (Yes) resources and everything that it takes. [applause] I say that to the business men. I say it to the professors. I say it to the ministers of the gospel. I say it to everybody in this community. Work courageously for it. People today are standing in the wilderness. The masses of people, waiting to go over, go into the Promised Land. (Yeah) They've gained a vision of it, they've tasted freedom. (Yes) Sometimes they can't speak for themselves, don't know the exact techniques (Yes), but they are ready to go. (Yeah) And any minister of the gospel who refuses at this point to lead his people is not worth having the name of "reverend" in the name of God. [applause]

I must rush on (Yeah, that's what your daddy say when he's preaching) [laughter] and say one thing. I must rush on and say this final thing. My friends, more than anything else, if we are to speed up the coming of the inevitable [scream from audience member], we must somehow stand up and courageously oppose segregation wherever we find it. (Yeah, Amen) We must passively resist it, if I can use a phrase that has been used so often in recent months. Yes resist it, but not with violence. Resist at every point with all of your soul and with all of the courage you can muster up, but not with violence. And stand there and oppose (Yes) and resist segregation wherever you find it. (Yeah) Now I realize that this will mean suffering and sacrifice. My friends, it might even mean going to jail, but if such is the case, we must fill up the jail houses of the South. [applause] It might even mean physical death for some. But if physical death is the price that some must pay to free their children from a permanent life of psychological death then nothing could be more honorable. We must press on. [applause] We must press on. Now somebody is saying, "How will we confront the cruelty and violence that might, or will probably come as result of our standing up for justice? What will we do?" Certainly I wouldn't advocate retaliatory violence. What, then, what must we do? We

must as a people face every act of violence against an individual Negro with the fact that there are thousands and thousands of more who will present themselves as potential victims. Every time one Negro teacher is fired because of a stand for justice, that must be faced by the fact that five or ten thousand more must be fired. (Yes) Every time one Negro's home is bombed because he decided to take a courageous stand, they must face the oppressor with the fact that he must bomb the homes of fifty or hundred thousand more. (Yes) We must get him to see that he defeats himself with his own methods. (Yeah) This amazing unity, this profound self-respect, this refusal to hit back, this willingness to suffer will soon cause the oppressor to become ashamed of his own methods. (Yeah) He will be forced to stand before God and the world splattered with the blood and reeking with the stench of his Negro brother. (Yes) That is the method. That is the way to defeat him. We are defeated if we start with violence. But defeat him with his own method and eventually he will become ashamed of his own method.

I close by saying there is nothing greater in all the world than freedom. (Yeah) It's worth going to jail for. (Yes) It's worth losing a job for. (Yeah) It's worth dying for. (Yeah) My friends, go out this evening *determined* to achieve this freedom which God wants for all of His children. No matter how much money you're making, stand up for freedom. (That's right) I tell you this afternoon, I would rather be a rich pauper--rather, I would rather be a free pauper--than a rich slave. (Yeah) I would rather die in abject poverty with my convictions than live in inordinate wealth a mental slave. (Yeah) Once more the Negro must come to the point that he can cry out with his forefathers of old: "Before I'll be a slave (That's correct), I'll be buried in my grave [applause] and go home to my Father and be saved." [applause] This is it. We're doing all of this, I believe we will be able to speed up the coming of the inevitable. (Yes) We will be able, by the help of God, to bring in this new world. A world in which men will be able live together as brothers. (Amen) A world in which men will beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. A world in which we will no longer take necessities from the masses to give luxuries to the classes. A world in which everybody will respect the dignity and worth of all human personality. (Yeah) That will be the day when God's kingdom will be here. (Yeah) Then we will be able to sing in the great tradition of our nation:

My country 'tis of thee (Yeah),  
Sweet land of liberty,  
Of thee I sing. (All right)  
Land where my fathers died (Yes sir),  
Land of the Pilgrim's pride (Yes),  
From every mountain side,  
Let freedom ring. (Yeah) [James Weldon Johnson's "Lift Every Voice and Sing" plays in the background until end]

As I heard a great orator say some time ago, that must become literally true. Freedom must ring from every mountain side. (Yeah) Yes, go out determined this afternoon, that it will ring from the snow-capped Rockies of Colorado. (Yes sir) Let it ring from the prodigious hill tops of New Hampshire. (Yes) Let it ring from the mighty Alleghenies of

Pennsylvania. (*Yes sir*) Let it ring from the curvaceous slopes of California. (*Yes sir*) But not only that. From every mountain side, (*Yeah*) let freedom ring. (*Yes sir*) Yes, let it ring from every mountain and hill of Alabama. (*Yeah*) Let it ring from every mole hill in Mississippi. (*Yeah*) Let it ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee. (*Yeah*) Let it ring from Stone Mountain of Georgia. (*Yeah*) From every mountain side, let freedom ring.

[*applause*]

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[Back to Top](#)

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