

TCS - 2nd Draft
6/11/63

Good evening, my fellow Americans:

This afternoon, following a series of threats and defiant statements, the presence of Alabama National Guardsmen was required on the University of Alabama campus to carry out the final and unequivocal order of the United State District Court for the Northern District of Alabama. That order called for the admission of two clearly-qualified young Alabama residents who happened to have been born Negro.

Point to Council for students

I hope that every American, regardless of where he lives, will stop and examine his conscience about these and related events. This nation was founded by men of many nations and backgrounds. It was founded on the principle that all men are created equal -- and that the rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one are threatened. Today we are committed to a world-wide struggle to protect and promote the rights of all who wish to be free. And when Americans are sent to Vietnam or West Berlin, to risk their lives for yours and mine, we do not ask for whites only.

It wought to be possible, therefore, for American students of any color to attend any public educational institution they select without having to be backed up by troops. It ought to be possible for American consumers of any color to receive equal service in places of public accommodation -- such as hotels, restaurants, theatres and retail stores -- without having

to resort to mass demonstrations in the streets. And it ought to be possible for American citizens of any color to register and vote in a free election without interference or fear of reprisal. It ought to be possible, in short for every American to enjoy the rights and privileges of America, regardless of race or color.

But this is not the case. The Negro baby born in America today -- regardless of the section or state in which he is born -- has about one-half as much chance of completing high school as a white baby born in the same place on the same day -- one-third as much chance of completing college -- one-third as much chance of becoming a professional man -- twice as much chance of becoming unemployed -- about one-seventh as much chance of earning \$10,000 per year -- a life expectancy which is seven years less -- and the prospects of earning only half as much.

This is not a sectional issue. ^{Conclude} ~~The cesspools~~ of segregation and discrimination exist in every state of the nation, producing in many cities a rising tide of discontent that threatens the public safety.

Nor is this a partisan issue. In a time of domestic crisis, men of goodwill and generosity should be able to unite regardless of party or politics.

This is not even a legal or legislative issue alone. It is better to settle these matters in the courts than in the streets, and new laws are needed at every level. But law alone cannot make men see the right.

We are confronted primarily with a moral issue. It is as old as the Scriptures and as clear as the Constitution. The heart of the question is whether all Americans are afforded the rights and opportunities we ask for ourselves.-- whether we are to treat the children of others the way we want our children treated. If an American, because his skin is dark, cannot eat lunch in a restaurant open to the public -- if he cannot send his children to the best public school available -- if he cannot vote for the public officials who represent him -- if, in short, he cannot enjoy the free and full life that makes life in America worth living and worth dying for -- then who among us would be content to be living in his skin and standing in his place? Who among us then would be content with the counsels of patience and accept the explanations of delay?

One hundred years of delay have already passed since Lincoln set free the slaves -- yet their heirs are not yet fully free. They are not yet freed from the bonds of injustice. They are not yet freed from social and economic oppression. And this nation, for all its hopes and all its boasts, will not be fully free until all its citizens are free.

We preach freedom around the world, and we cherish our freedom here at home. But are we to say to the world -- and, more importantly, are we to say to ourselves -- that this is the land of the free, except for Negroes -- that we have no second-class citizens, except for Negroes -- that we have no class or caste system, no ghettos or master race theories, except with respect to Negroes?

Now the time has come for this nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or state or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them. The fires of frustration and discord are burning in every major city, North as well as South. Where legal remedies are not at hand, redress is sought in the streets -- in demonstrations, parades and protests which create tension and threaten violence.

We face, therefore, a moral crisis. It cannot be met by repressive police actions. It cannot be left to increased demonstrations. It cannot be quieted by token moves or idle talk. It is time to act -- in the Congress, in your state and local legislative bodies, and, above all, in your own daily lives.

It is not enough to pin the blame on others -- or to deplore the facts we face. ^{just} ^{change} A social ~~revolution~~ is at hand -- and our task, our obligation, is to make that revolution peaceful and constructive for all. Those who do nothing are inviting shame as well as violence. Those who act boldly are recognizing right as well as reality.

Next week I shall ask the Congress of the United States to act ~~boldly~~ -- to make a commitment it has not fully made in this century to the proposition that race has no place in American life or law. The Federal judiciary has upheld that proposition in a series of forthright cases. The Executive Branch has adopted that proposition in the conduct of all its affairs, including the employment of ^{Federal} personnel, the use of Federal facilities and the sale of Federally financed housing. But there are other necessary measures which only the Congress can provide -- and they must be provided at this session.

The venerable code of equity law has long commanded "for every wrong, a remedy." ~~It~~ But in too many communities, in all parts of our country, wrongs are inflicted on Negro citizens who have no remedy at law. Unless the Congress acts, their only remedy is the street, where they may run afoul of local laws or create bitter tensions and violence.

I am therefore asking the Congress to enact legislation giving all Americans the ~~enforceable~~ right to be served in facilities which are open to the public -- hotels, restaurants, theatres, retail stores and similar establishments. This is an elementary right. Its denial is an arbitrary indignity that no American should be forced to suffer -- but many do. I have recently met with scores of business leaders urging them to take voluntary action to end this discrimination. By the end of this week, 120 communities will have witnessed such action -- ~~including the desegregation of 51 theatres, 17 hotels, 26 restaurants and 45 lunch counters.~~ But many merchants are uncertain of the effects of local law and local competition.

Many are willing to act but not alone. For this reason, nationwide legislation is essential if we are to move this problem from the streets to the courts.

I am also asking Congress to authorize the Federal Government to participate more fully in law suits designed to end segregation in public education. We have succeeded in persuading many districts to desegregate without court order. Dozens ~~of~~ have admitted Negroes without violence. Today, a Negro is attending a state supported institution of higher learning in every one of the 50 states. But the pace is still shamefully slow. Too many Negro children entering segregated grade schools at the time of the Supreme Court's decision nine years ago will enter segregated high schools this fall, having suffered a loss which can never be restored. The lack of an adequate education denies the Negro a fair chance at a good job at a wage sufficient to support his family and dignity. The orderly implementation of the Supreme Court decision, therefore, cannot be left to haphazard cases brought by individuals ~~willing to brave possible reprisal.~~ *personally with honor*

Other features will also be requested, including greater protection of the right to vote in a free American election. But legislation, I repeat, cannot solve this problem alone. It must also be solved in the homes and hearts of every community in America. In this respect, I want to pay tribute to those citizens, North and South who, without headlines or fanfare are taking the initiative to improve relations with their neighbors of every color. They recognize the law of the land -- and they agree with Lincoln

that reverence for the law must be the political religion of the nation.

But they are acting, I believe, not only out of a sense of legal duty but out of a sense of human decency. Like our soldiers and sailors in all parts of the world, they are meeting freedom's challenge on the firing line; and I salute them for their honor and courage.

My fellow Americans -- we can no longer afford the luxury of bigotry and racial intolerance. This is one nation. We are one people. We have one cause -- the cause of liberty for all. Let us live up to that cause in our public action and in our private lives, in our every word and deed, in the months ahead and in all the years to come. With God's help, that cause will succeed.

John F. Kennedy