

② Mayor Joseph W.
R. Philadelphia

Dr MARTIN LUTHER KING WELCOME SPEECH

New York City
Dec. 17, 1964
Rally honoring
Martin Luther King

A little over a year ago, the Reverend Martin Luther
(Dr.) King and I had the pleasure of participating in a different
kind of gathering: the March on Washington. With the same
feeling of joyous commitment that I sense here tonight, hundreds
of thousands of Americans--white and Negro--demonstrated
their dedication to The Dream; The Dream which Dr. King
that day so movingly and eloquently described. Tonight we
meet under superficially changed circumstances: he as the
recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize and I as Vice President elect
of the United States.

But these changes are indeed superficial. The honor
that the world has paid to Dr. King's accomplishments and the
decision of the American electorate in my case have not brought
about any fundamental changes in our actions or our aspirations.
Our attachment to the Dream of a great free society built

March
on
Wash

around the principles of justice and equality, a community where men and women will be judged on their merits and not on their skin-color, or their religion, or their ethnic origins, or their economic background, remains the same as

it was when we marched together down the Mall at Washington in

this does Aug of 1963.

What has occurred, and I am convinced that it marks a fundamental change, is that in the months that have passed

since that great non-violent demonstration of democratic

solidarity, we have--at the practical level--broken the

power of racism in our society. In more ways than one, there

is an abyss between last year and December, 1964.

John Kennedy, that gallant warrior in the cause of freedom,

who initiated the first comprehensive civil rights act in modern

American history, is gone. But a new President, Southern in

~~background~~, carried on the cause and brought to final

enactment a great bill, a strong bill. Not only did he--with

infinite skill and patience--secure Congressional enactment
of this charter of freedom, but he then went before the
American people and fought--in the North and in the South--
on behalf of this measure.

And the American people overwhelmingly indicated their
approval of the President and of the program he supported.

Today those few ~~who~~ who still advocate racism have been
clearly revealed as the rearguard of a defeated past.
To be sure, there
are many difficult problems yet to be solved.

Yet there is today what we have never known before: a
will to triumph over racial discrimination and all its
manifestations.

In welcoming Martin Luther King home, I want above all
to pay tribute to his wisdom. In his address to the Oslo
students, Dr. King spoke of the role that non-violence had
played in the struggle for Negro rights in the United States.

He used a striking formulation: "We adopt the means of non-

violence because our end is a community at peace with
itself."

A "community at peace with itself." Could anyone have put the objective of a democratic society more concisely,
more ~~luminously~~? *meaningfully?*

In the fundamental sense, all of us who have worked over the years for the establishment of racial justice in the United States have been striving for a community at peace with itself! Long ago, in 1948, when I introduced the civil rights plank at the Democratic Convention, a fellow delegate said to me: "Why are you mixed up in this? You have no Negroes to speak of in Minnesota. You don't owe them anything."

I told him then, and I say to you sixteen years later, that I got mixed up in civil rights because I wanted to be able to look myself in the eyes. I wanted to be at peace with myself, with my own conscience.

In the years since, we have built a great coalition of
conscience in this country, a coalition of whites and Negroes
who know that before you can ever look anyone else in the eye,
you have to be willing to confront yourself and make peace
with your own conscience.

And Dr. King is right, profoundly right, when he advocates
non-violence as the basic instrument for a minority group trying
to alter the attitudes of a majority in a democratic nation.

Fools and fanatics always exist in any minority group that
is discriminated against who urge violence as a road to
instant liberation. The American Negroes have been far too
intelligent to adopt these counsels of ~~neglect~~ and despair.

They have never confused the United States, with all its
admitted failures in the area of race relations, with a police
state.

Instead they have adopted the position, set forth by
Dr. King in accepting the Nobel Peace Prize, that "civilization

anti-thetical

and violence are antithetical concepts. Negroes of the

United States have demonstrated that non-violence is not
sterile passivity, but a powerful moral force which makes
for social transformation.

In this spirit, and with the magnificent Christian
witness of Dr. King as the focus for their quiet courage,
the Negroes of Montgomery issued their great challenge to
the conscience of the American people. To their eternal
credit, the American people, slowly at first but with
growing force and determination, responded.

As Dr. King said "the tortuous road which has led from
Montgomery, Alabama, to Oslo bears witness" to the truth of
his convictions. "This is a road over which millions of
Negroes are traveling to find a new sense of dignity."

Those of us who have in spirit / journeyed with Dr. King
from Montgomery to Oslo, and this number includes many millions
of white Americans, are deeply in his debt, more deeply perhaps

than we can ever realize. For the truth of the matter is that
the dignity of all Americans has been, and still is, at stake
in this tumultuous pilgrimage.

 Only when our Negro citizens have achieved their rightful
standing in the American community can any of us truly feel
the exhilaration that grows from integrity, from dignity.

 Only then will the United States really be a community at
peace with itself.



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