

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.
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Dr. Duddy, members of the faculty, and members of the student body of this great institution of learning, ladies and gentlemen; I need not pause to say how very delighted I am to be here today and to have the privilege of being a part of your lecture series. I am happy to be here for several reasons and one of the reasons is, as Dr. Duddy said, we had a very turbulent flight from Pittsburgh. It was bumpy all the way and whenever I'm on these flights that are choppy and turbulent, I am always happy to land safely on the ground. Now, of course, I don't want to give you the impression that I don't have faith in God in the air; it is simply that I've had more experience with him on the ground.

I do want to express my sincere apologies to you for not being able to get here last November. It was a very frustrating afternoon when we discovered that it was not possible to get a flight here because all the airports in the area and surrounding areas were closed and it was even impossible, because of the bad weather, to drive here in order to be here in time for the lecture. I do appreciate your patience and your understanding and for that reason I am even happier to have the privilege of being here with you.

As President Duddy has said, I'd like to talk from the subject "The Future of Integration." And certainly that is a desperate poignant question on the lips of thousands and even millions of people all over our nation and all over the world. They are asking whether we have made any real progress in race relations. There are certainly several answers that we can give to that question. One can take a pessimistic position and conclude that we have made no progress. One can take a position of extreme optimism and conclude that the problem is just about solved now and that we can sit down comfortably by the wayside and wait on the coming of the inevitable. But as I look at the situation and analyze the problem I would prefer taking a realistic position and it seems to me that the realistic position avoids the extremes of the two opposites while reconciling the truths of both. And so with the position of extreme optimism the realists would agree that we have made significant strides; we have come a long, long way. But with the pessimist he would agree that we still have a long, long way to go. And it is the realistic position that I would like to use as a basis for our thinking together this morning as we analyze the future of integration.

We have come a long, long way but we have a long, long way to go before the problem is solved. Now let us notice first that we've come a long, long way. I might say this for him, that the Negro himself has come a long, long way to re-evaluating his own intrinsic worth. In order to illustrate this a little history is necessary.

You will remember that it was in the year 1619 when the first Negro slaves landed on the shores of this nation. They were brought here from the soils of Africa. Unlike the Pilgrim Fathers who landed in Plymouth a year later, they were brought here against their wills. Throughout slavery, the Negro was treated in a very inhuman fashion. He was a thing to be used and not a person to be respected. The famous Dred Scott decision of 1857 well illustrated the status of the Negro during slavery. For in this decision the Supreme Court of our nation said in substance that the Negro is not a citizen of the United States, he is merely property subject to the dictates of his owner. And it went on to say that the Negro has no rights that the white man is bound to respect. With the growth of slavery it became necessary to give some justification for it. It seems to be a fact of life that human beings

cannot continue to do wrong without eventually reaching out for some thin rationalization to clothe an obvious wrong in the beautiful garments of righteousness. This is exactly what happened. Even religion and the Bible were used, or I should say, misused, to crystallize the patterns of the status quo and to rationalize the system of slavery. And so it was argued from some pulpits that the Negro was inferior by nature because of Noah's curse upon the children of Ham. The Apostle Paul's dictum became a watchword, "servants be obedient to your master." And one brother who had probably read the logic of the great philosopher Aristotle decided that he would put this argument in the framework of an Aristotelian syllogism. As you know, the syllogism has a major premise, a minor premise and a conclusion, and so he decided to argue on this basis of the inferiority of the Negro. He came out with his major premise, all men are created equal; and then came his minor premise, God, as everybody knows, is not a Negro. Therefore the Negro is not a man. This was the kind of reasoning that prevailed.

Living with the system of slavery and then later rational segregation, many Negroes lost faith in themselves. Many came to feel that perhaps they were less than human. But then something happened to the Negro. Circumstances made it possible and necessary for them to travel more –the coming of the automobile, the upheavals of two world wars, the great depression. And so his rural plantation background gradually gave way to urban industrial life. Even his cultural life was gradually rising through the steady decline of crippling illiteracy. And all of these forces conjoined to cause the Negro to take a new look at himself. Negro masses all over began to re-evaluate themselves. The Negro came to feel that he was somebody. His religion revealed to him that God loves all his children and that all men are made in his image; and that the basic thing about a man is not his specificity but his fundamentum, not the texture of his hair or the color of his skin, but his eternal dignity and worth. And so the Negro could now unconsciously cry out with the eloquent poet "Fleecy locks and black complexion cannot forfeit nature's claim. Skin may differ but affection dwells in black and white the same. If I were so tall as to reach the pole or to grasp the ocean at a span, I must be measured by my soul, the mind is the standard of the man."

With this new sense of dignity, this new sense of self-respect, a new Negro came into being with the new determination to struggle, to suffer and sacrifice in order to be free. And so in a real sense we've come a long, long way since 1619. Not only has the Negro come a long, long way in re-evaluating his own intrinsic worth; but if we are to the fact, we have to admit that the whole nation has made significant strides in extending the frontiers of civil rights.

There are several things that we can point to in illustrating this and I will just mention a few. We could certainly mention the fact that thirty years ago, fifty years ago even more so, a year hardly passed when numerous Negroes were not brutally lynched by some vicious mob. But lynchings in that sense have about ceased today. At the turn of the century there were very few Negro registered voters in the South. By 1948 that number had leaped to about 750,000 by 1956 it had gone to about 1,300,000. And today it has gone to more than two and a half million, as a result of the new voting rights bill of 1965 after the movement, which took place in Selma, Ala. This does point to some strides in that area.

Then we can think of the fact that in the economic realm we have seen some changes so that the average employed Negro worker today earns ten times more than the employed Negro worker of twelve years ago. And the collective annual income of the Negro today is now at about thirty billion dollars, which is more than the national budget of Canada, and all of the exports of the United States. This reveals that some strides have been made.

But probably more than anything else in our day and in our age, we have seen a decline and in a sense a crumbling of the system of legal segregation. We all know the long history of legal segregation in our country. It had its legal beginning in 1896 when the Supreme Court rendered a decision known as the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision, which established the doctrine of separate but equal as the law of the land. Now we all know what happened as a result of the Plessy doctrine. There was always a strict enforcement of the separate, without the slightest intention to abide by the equal; and the Negro ended up by being plunged into the abyss of exploitation where he experienced the bleakness of nagging injustice,

But fortunately something else happened on May 17, 1954. After examining the legal body of segregation in that particular year the Supreme Court of our nation pronounced it constitutionally dead. I said in substance that the old Plessy doctrine must go, that separate facilities are not inherently unequal, and that to segregate a child on the basis of his race is to deny that child equal protection of the law. We have seen several of the developments since that decision was rendered in 1954.

In 1964 the Congress passed a comprehensive Civil Rights Bill after the Birmingham movement which you will remember as the movement that in a sense literally subpoenaed the conscience of a large segment of the nation to appear before the judgment seat of the morality on the whole question of civil rights. That particular civil rights bill, which was recommended by President Kennedy before his assassination, was passed in 1964 with ten titles. It had a public accommodation section, which ended segregation in public accommodations and then several other sections and titles, which made it a very comprehensive bill. And so all of these things tell us that we have made significant strides in the area of race relations. To slavery and we have moved through the wilderness of legal segregation. Now we stand on the border of the promised land of integration and there can be no gain saying of the fact that the system of legal segregation is on its deathbed and the only thing uncertain about it is how costly the segregationists will make the funeral. We've come a long, long way since 1896.

Now this would be a wonderful place for me to end my talk this morning. First it would mean me making a relatively short speech, and that would be a magnificent accomplishment for a Baptist preacher. But secondly it would mean that the problem is about solved and it would be a wonderful thing if speakers all over the country could talk about the problem of racial injustice as a problem that once existed but no longer has existence.

But you see if I stopped at this point I will merely be stating a fact and not telling the truth. You see a fact is merely the absence of contradiction, but the truth is a presence of coherence. Truth is relatedness of facts. Now it is a fact that we've come a long, long way, but it isn't the whole truth. And I'm afraid if I stop here I will leave you the victims of a dangerous optimism. I'm afraid if I stop here we will end up with an illusion wrapped in superficiality. So in order to tell the truth it is necessary to move on; not only to talk in terms of the progress that has been made but we must also say in no uncertain terms that we still have a long, long way to go before the problem of racial injustice is solved in our country.

Now I don't have to labor on this point, I don't have to stay on it too long because we need only open our newspapers, turn on our televisions, or look around in our communities, and we see every day that the problem is still with us.

I talked about the fact that lynchings have about ceased but other things are happening just as bad in many sections of our country. The murder of civil rights workers is still a popular pastime. Just the

other day we read of one more tragic murder in the state of Mississippi. And in the same community, last year Mr. Metcalf, the Negro president of the local branch of NAACP, faced a similar experience which almost led to his death. A bomb was placed in his automobile. In that tragic state of Mississippi alone in the last four years more than forty Negro and white civil rights workers have been brutally murdered and not a single person has been convicted. In the state of Mississippi alone over the last eighteen months more than fifty-six Negro churches have been burned to the ground. It seems they have a new motto in that state – not attend the church of your choice, but burn the church of your choice. And oh, how tragic this is. It all reminds us that we still have a long, long way to go.

Since 1951 over the southland more than eighty-six deaths have occurred of Negroes and whites who have been involved in civil rights. In very few instances have we seen convictions. This tells us that we have a long, long way to go before democracy is a reality, before justice emerges full grown in our land.

But not only do we see physical murder taking place, we see another kind of murder that can be just as debilitating, just as tragic, and that is the murdering of spirit – the psychological lynching that millions of Negroes face all over our country. As a result of economic deprivation, the Negro finds himself fifty per cent of a citizen in our country. Of all of the bad things in life he has fifty per cent more than whites. Of all of the good things of life he has half that of whites. We can look at the good things of life and we find the Negro having twice as much of the evil things of life, so he has twice the unemployment, twice the infant mortality rate, twice as many Negroes are dying in Vietnam in combat as their size in the population as whites. All of this reveals to us that we still have a nagging problem. Fifty per cent of the Negro families of our country live in substandard, dilapidated, deteriorating housing situations. More than fifty-five per cent of the Negro families of our country are poverty stricken. There is this glaring gulf that we see everywhere all over our nation.

Forty-two per cent of the Negro families of our country still earn less than \$2,000 a year, while just sixteen per cent of the white families earn less than \$2,000 a year. Twenty per cent of the Negro families of our country still earn less than a thousand dollars a year, while just five per cent of the white families earn less than a thousand dollars a year. Eighty-eight per cent of the Negro families of our country earn less than five thousand dollars a year, while just fifty-six per cent of the white families earn less than five thousand dollars a year. So we see this great gulf, we see this tragic economic problem alive and existing all over our country and it tells us that we still have a long, long way to go before the problem of racial injustice is solved.

And there is another problem which seems to exist everywhere; often it is referred to as the white backlash. We have to discuss this problem very honestly. People tend to think of the so-called white backlash as a new phenomenon and I always say that it is a new name for a very old phenomenon because the fact is that there has never been a solid, monistic, determined commitment to the question of racial justice on the part of the vast majority of the white Americans. Now this does not say that there are no white persons of good will in our country who are absolutely committed on this question. There are many white persons of good will who have seen the moral light and who are absolutely committed to racial justice. But we have to honestly admit that there has never been a consistent, a determined, a massive program to really get rid of racial injustice. America has constantly taken one step forward but at the same time it took a step backwards on the question of racial justice.

Years ago, in 1863 to be exact, the Negro was freed from the shackles of physical slavery, but he was freed without having in the process any land, any money, or anything to make the freedom real. The nation at the same time was giving millions of acres of land to its white peasants, so to speak, from

Europe in the west and midwest while denying its black peasants from Africa even one acre of land. As Frederick Douglass said: "Emancipation for the Negro was freedom and famine at the same time." In 1875 the nation passed a civil rights bill and it was a strong bill and yet it refused to enforce it. In 1964 the bill that I referred to earlier was passed and yet there are some aspects of that bill that have never been enforced in all of their dimensions. In 1954 the Supreme Court rendered the great decision that I mentioned and to this day only twelve per cent of the Negro children of the south are attending integrated schools. And when you get the deep south, only about two per cent of the Negro children are attending integrated schools, which means on this scale it will take another ninety-seven years to get schools integrated in the south.

The nation initiated a war against poverty but put so little money in it that it is hardly a good skirmish against poverty. Suburban politicians talk eloquently against open housing and in the same breath say that they are not racists. All of this tells us that the white backlash is nothing new. It is a new name for an old phenomenon. It tells us in very real terms that there is a great deal of soul searching that must be done because America has been back lashing on the question of the fundamental God-given human rights for its negro citizens for more than three hundred years. All of this tells us that we have a long, long way to go.

Now I would like to take the moments left to suggest some of the things that must be done if we are to go this additional distance in making justice and brotherhood, indeed integration, a reality in our country. It will be necessary to initiate massive action programs all over the country if this problem is to be solved.

Now in order to initiate the kind of action program that I am talking about it is necessary to get rid of one or two myths of the time. I am sure you've heard that myth – it is the notion that only time can solve the problem – and we hear this a great deal in the civil rights movement. There are always those individuals, and some of them are very sincere, who say to Negroes and their allies in the white community: "just be nice and continue to pray and in a hundred or two years the problem will work itself out because only time can solve the problem." Well, I think there is an answer to that myth and it is that time is neutral and it can be used either constructively or destructively. My friends I must honestly say to you today that I am absolutely convinced that the forces of ill will in our nation, the extreme rightists of our nation, the forces committed to negative ends of our nation, have used time much more effectively than the forces of good will. And it may well be that we will have to repent in this generation not merely for the violence of the bad people but for the silence of the good people. Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God; and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of social stagnation. And so it is necessary to help time and to realize that the time is always right to do right. Edmund Burke said some time ago, "When evil men combine good men must unite." This is a great challenge facing America. When evil men plot, good men must plan. When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. When evil men would seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice. This is the great challenge facing America if a genuine action program is to be a reality.

And there is another myth, another false notion that gets around a great deal and it is the notion that only education and religion can solve the problem and that legislation really can't solve the problem of racial injustice. Now, of course, there is a half-truth here because education and religion have great roles to play in changing attitudes, in changing the heart. It is very important to do this if integration

is to become reality, and I would be the last to say that attitudes must not be changes. They must be changed if integration is to become an ultimate reality in our society; men and women must be obedient to the unenforceable. I recognize this. The problem will never be totally solved until men rise to the majestic heights of seeing that they are brothers. The white man must make justice a reality for the Negro, not merely because the law says it but because it is right, because the Negro is a brother.

But after saying this we must point out the other side, which is equally important, and that is that even though we can't legislate the whole process, legislation is important. It may be true that morality cannot be legislated, but behavior can be regulated. It may be true that the law can't change the heart, but it can restrain the heartless. It may be true that the law can't make people love me, but it can restrain them from lynching me and I think that's pretty important also. So, while the law may not change the hearts of men it does change the habits of men. And you know when you change the habits of people, pretty soon their attitudes will be changed; pretty soon their hearts will be changed and I submit to you today that civil rights legislation is still a necessity. It is a necessity to bring it into being and then after it comes into being enforce it in all of its dimensions.

President Johnson a few days ago once more presented to Congress civil rights legislation. Now one aspect of the legislation deals with rectifying the jury system of the south. Everybody should know there is a need for the passage of that bill. The murder of Mr. Jackson the other day in Natchez, Mississippi, should reveal the need for passage for this particular aspect of the bill. I submit to you today that if this bill is not passed, if something isn't done to deal with justice in the south, those who murdered Mr. Jackson, even if they are confined, even if they are indicted, will never be convicted. And so there is need for legislation to deal with the maladministration of justice.

The other aspect of that legislation calls for an open housing bill. This bill died in Congress last year and it died because congressmen responding to their constituents decided that they would vote against it. A bit of democracy died last year when that bill died and I hope there will not be a deeper death of democracy this year because if Negroes and whites cannot learn to live together in housing, we will not solve many of the great problems that we face in our country today. And so it is time to deal positively with this question of housing discrimination because as long as it is there, there will be segregation in the schools, de facto segregation. As long as housing discrimination is there, a great deal of the economic problem will be solved. I see this every day in Chicago. Many of the industries are moving to the suburbs and these suburbs are generally lily white, and Negroes live fourteen and fifteen miles away. It isn't that these plants are discriminating – they will employ Negroes – but Negroes don't have the means of transportation to get there, they don't live there, so it only compounds the economic problem. As long as there is housing discrimination, as long as we avoid integrating housing in our country, it will only exacerbate the social problems. There is no more dangerous trend, as I see it, in America today than the growing building up of Negro central cities ringed by white suburbs. It is an invitation to social disaster and so there is a need for this kind of legislation and I would hope that all men of good will over our country will rise up and call for passage of this bill.

There is another thing that I would like to mention in passing and that is the economic problem that the Negro confronts. I think any massive action program should involve a plan to really deal with the economic problem that the Negro faces in America. The Negro is still at the bottom of the economic ladder. The vast majority of the Negroes of our country find themselves perishing on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material posterity. Now you can see all of the social problems that come into being as a result of poverty. People who find themselves caught in the

clutches of poverty have nothing to lose. Again, there is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it, who feel that they have nothing to lose. These are the people who will riot; these are the people who will listen to words of non-violence but these words will fall on deaf ears in terms of a response.

So for many reasons it is necessary to do something positive about the economic problem. Now it isn't a hard job. We have the resources in America, a nation with a national gross production of 750 billion dollars as we have this year and it will go to 780 billion dollars next year. A nation with that much money, the richest nation in the world, could get rid of poverty, could get rid of slums, could get rid of economic deprivation, could get rid of all the conditions of deprivation in housing, in the economic and educational area, in a few years if it really gave itself to it. If our country would just designate two per cent of this national gross product a year for the purpose of truly eradicating slums, truly putting the Negro on his economic two feet, the problem could be solved in the next ten years.

Now I know people say to the Negro: You ought to lift yourself by your own bootstraps. And that is true. The Negro must do everything he can to equip himself to get education and to prepare himself for the transition that is taking place. On the other hand, it is cruel just to say to a bootless man that he should lift himself by his own bootstraps. It is even worse to tell a man to lift himself by his own bootstraps when somebody is standing on his boot. And this is what the Negro has confronted all these years. We have to face the fact that many Negroes have been so scarred by this unjust system, so scarred by the legacy of slavery and segregation that it will be impossible for them to lift themselves up by their own bootstraps. Nobody else has done it in history. No other immigrant group has done it in America and the Negro will not be able to do it by himself. He must do all that he can but there must be a massive governmental program to make this lifting a possibility. And I say this morning that a nation that can spend thirty-five billion dollars to fight an ill-considered war in Vietnam, thirty-five billion dollars a year, and that can spend twenty billion dollars to put a man on the moon, can spend billions of dollars to put God's children on their own two feet right here on earth.

I think this is the greatest challenge facing America today. It is not a question of resources; it is a question of the will and a question of reordering our national priorities. If we don't do this we will turn around and see that we are more concerned about winning the war in Vietnam than we are about winning the war against poverty right here at home. This is, I believe, one of the greatest challenges facing our nation today – to get rid of poverty, to deal with the economic problem that the Negro confronts, not only the Negro but that all of the poverty stricken people of our country confront. I happen to be discussing the Negro problem today, but I do not overlook the fact that there are millions of Appalachian whites who are poverty-stricken, there are many American Indians who are poverty-stricken, there are many Mexican Americans, many Puerto Ricans, who are poverty stricken, and I am as much concerned about their getting out of poverty as I am concerned about the Negro getting out of poverty. The nation has the resources to deal with this if it will only develop the will. I want to say another thing, as we think of integration in the next few years, as we work to make it a reality. It will be necessary as we develop the action program to attach to that action program a realization of the fact that whites and Negroes are inevitably tied together. And I think by seeing this we will move more and more toward an integrated society if we come to see that our destinies are tied together. There are those who fail to see this; there are those whites who fail to see this. And as a reaction to many whites who fail to see this, some Negroes are now failing to see this. I think it is necessary for us to come back to see that there is no separate black path to power and fulfillment that does not intersect white routes, that it is as necessary to see that there is no separate white path to power and fulfillment short of social disaster that does not meet the demands of black aspiration for

freedom and human dignity. We are tied together. The Negro needs the white man to free him of his fear; the white man needs the Negro to free him of his guilt. We are tied together in all aspects – our language, our music, our cultural patterns, our material prosperity, and even our food – an amalgam of black and white.

Until America sees this, the problem will never be solved. We are all caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. Maybe John Donne was speaking to us when he said in graphic terms years ago: “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main,” and he goes on toward the end to say, “any man’s death diminishes me because I am involved in mankind, therefore never send to know for whom the bells toll, it tolls for thee.”

And so with this, with a massive action program, we can move on into a brighter tomorrow where justice and brotherhood will be a reality. If we are going to do this job relatively committed, I should say the absolutely committed person, must join hands and really go all out to do the job. It means a kind of divine discontent. You know there are certain words in very academic discipline that become clichés and stereotypes. Every academic discipline has its technical nomenclature. Modern psychology has a word that is probably used more than any other word in psychology. It is the word, “maladjusted.” It is the ring and pride of child psychology – “maladjusted.” Now, of course, we all want to live the well-adjusted life in order to avoid neurotic and schizophrenic personalities. But as I move toward my conclusion I would like to say to you today in a very honest manner that there are some things in our society and some things in our world for which I am proud to be maladjusted, and I call upon all men of good will to be maladjusted to these things until the good societies realize. I must honestly say to you that I never intend to adjust myself to racial segregation and discrimination. I never intend to adjust myself to religious bigotry. I never intend]to adjust myself to economic conditions that will take necessities from the many to give luxuries to the few and leave millions of God’s children smothering in an airtight cage of poverty in the midst of an affluent society. I never intend to adjust myself to the madness of militarism and the self-defeating effects of physical violence.

For in a day when Sputnik and Explorers and Geminis are dashing through outer space and guided ballistic missiles are carving highways of death through the stratosphere, no nation can win a war. It is no longer a choice between violence and non-violence. It is either non-violence or non-existence and the alternative to disarmament, the alternative to a great suspension of nuclear tests, the alternative to a cessation of bombing in North Vietnam and a willingness to negotiate with the Viet Cong in bringing that tragic conflict to an end through a negotiated settlement, may well be a civilization plunged into the abyss of annihilation. And our earthly habitat will be transformed into an inferno that even the mind of Dante could not envision.

Maybe the need in our world today is for the maladjustment that will cause committed men to take a stand and speak out against racism, against militarism, against economic exploitation. It may well be that our world today is in need of a new organization, the “International Association for the Advancement of Created Maladjustment”; men and women who will be as maladjusted as the prophet Amos, who, in the midst of an age where men were practicing many injustices, could cry out in words that echo across the centuries: “Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream”; as maladjusted as Abraham Lincoln, who had the vision to see that this country could not survive half slave and half free; as maladjusted as Thomas Jefferson, who could etch across the pages of history words lifted to cosmic proportions: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights, that

among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”; as maladjusted as Jesus Christ, who could say: “He who lives by the sword, will perish by the sword.” Through such maladjustment we will be able to emerge from the bleak and desolate midnight of man’s inhumanity to man and to the bright and glittering daybreak of freedom and justice to all of God’s children.

Let me say finally that I’m not in despair about the future as difficult as the days are that we are living in and as difficult as the days ahead may be. I believe that we are going to achieve freedom; I believe we are going to get there by and by. Abused and scorned though we may be, our destiny is tied up with the destiny of America. Before the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth, we were here; before Jefferson etched across the pages of history I have just mentioned, we were here; before the beautiful words of the “Star-Spangled Banner” were written, we were here. For more than two centuries our foreparents labored here without wages. They made cotton king and they built the homes of their masters in the midst of the most humiliating and oppressive conditions and yet out of a bottomless vitality they continue to grow and develop. And if the inexpressibly cruelties of slavery couldn’t stop us the opposition that we now face, including the so-called white backlash, will surely fail.

We are going to win our freedom in America because God’s will and the sacred heritage of our nation are embodied in our echoing demands. And this is why I can still sing the theme song of our movement, “We shall overcome.” We shall overcome, because Carlisle is right, “No lie can live forever.” We shall overcome because William Cullen Bryant is right, “Truth crushed to earth will rise again.” We shall overcome because James Russell Lowell is right, “Truth forever on the scaffold, wrong forever on the throne, yet that scaffold sways the future and behind the dim unknown, standeth God within the shadow keeping watch above his own.

With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to speed up the day when all of God’s children, all over the nation, black and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: “Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, we are free at last!”

Thank you.