

The original documents are located in Box 7, folder “Chisholm, Shirley - Bicentennial Speech, June 19, 1976” of the Stanley Scott Papers at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

Copyright Notice

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Bettye L. Scott donated to the United States of America her copyrights in all of her husband's unpublished writings in National Archives collections. Works prepared by U.S. Government employees as part of their official duties are in the public domain. The copyrights to materials written by other individuals or organizations are presumed to remain with them. If you think any of the information displayed in the PDF is subject to a valid copyright claim, please contact the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

ADDRESS GIVEN BY CONGRESSWOMAN SHIRLEY CHISOIM (D. N.Y.) AT A BICENTENNIAL CELEBRATION AT HARPERS FERRY, WEST VIRGINIA ON JUNE 19, 1976 ENTITLED " HERITAGE DAYS: A BLACK PERSPECTIVE."

THE YEAR OF THE BICENTENNIAL HAS ENCOURAGED MANY OF US TO REFLECT UPON THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE AND TO ASSESS THE HISTORIC DEVELOPMENTS WHICH HAVE LED US TO THE REALITIES OF TODAY. THIS OPPORTUNITY, I BELIEVE, CAN BE A HEALTHY ONE FOR ALL OF US; FOR WE CAN TELL A GREAT DEAL ABOUT WHERE THIS COUNTRY IS GOING BY TAKING A GOOD LOOK AT WHERE IT HAS BEEN -- POLITICALLY, ECONOMICALLY, MORALLY. JUST AS WE CAN MAKE CERTAIN PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE ACTIONS OF INDIVIDUALS BASED UPON THEIR PAST EXPERIENCES AND VALUES, WE CAN BEST DEFINE OUR NATIONAL GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS BY REVIEWING OUR HISTORY. AND, ALL OF US WILL BE MORE ABLE TO GRAPPLE WITH THE PROBLEMS WHICH WILL BESET US IN THE NEXT DECADE AND BEYOND WHEN WE COME TO UNDERSTAND THE HERITAGE WHICH HAS MADE UP THE KIND OF PEOPLE, THE KIND OF NATION, WE ARE TODAY.

BUT, YOU MIGHT ASK, IS THERE ONE DEFINITION WHICH DESCRIBES SUCH A DIVERSE AND PLURALISTIC SOCIETY AS THE UNITED STATES OF 1976? WE ARE A PEOPLE WHOSE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT IS ROOTED IN VIOLENCE AND TURMOIL, YET WE HAVE ENDURED. WE ARE A NATION PROUD OF OUR IDEALS OF PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY; YET, WE HAVE A RELATIVELY LOW VOTER TURN OUT IN VIRTUALLY EVERY ELECTION. WE ARE THE RICHEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD, YET WE HAVE IN OUR MIDST TWENTY FIVE MILLION AMERICANS WHO RESIDE IN FAMILIES WHOSE ANNUAL INCOME FALLS BELOW THE NATIONAL POVERTY LINE. WE HAVE THE GREATEST ACCESS TO MEDICAL FACILITIES AND THE HIGHEST ACHIEVEMENTS IN HEALTH TECHNOLOGY; YET, THIRTY PER CENT OF THE CHILDREN



IN THE GHETTOS AND BARRIOS OF THIS COUNTRY ARE SUFFERING FROM SOME KIND OF MALNUTRITION WHICH WILL IMPAIR THEM FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES. AND WE PRIDE OURSELVES ON THE SO-CALLED "MELTING POT" OF OUR CITIZENRY WHICH THRIVES ON RACIAL AND ETHNIC DIVERSITY; YET, WE REMAIN A SOCIETY TORN BY RACIAL CONFLICT AND DISCRIMINATION.

AND WHILE THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN OUR PRINCIPLES AND OUR PRACTICES ABOUND, WE STILL CELEBRATE THE COMMON BOND WHICH BINDS US AS ONE PEOPLE AND PROPELS US INTO THE UNIQUE POSITION OF WORLD LEADERSHIP. YOU KNOW, FRIENDS, TWO HUNDRED YEARS IS NOT MUCH TIME REALLY, COMPARED TO THE NATIONS OF EUROPE WHICH ENJOYED THE POSITIONS OF WORLD POWER CENTURIES BEFORE AND WHICH ARE LAYERED WITH CULTURAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS HISTORIES SPANNING HUNDREDS OF YEARS. AND IN THOSE CIVILIZATIONS, FROM THOSE COUNTRIES WHICH CAME TO WORLD POWER AND PRESTIGE, THERE ARE LESSONS FOR THIS COUNTRY AND THIS GOVERNMENT WHICH, I BELIEVE, SHOULD BE RECOUNTED DURING THIS YEAR OF ANNIVERSARY.

THE MOST IMPORTANT CONCLUSION WE CAN DRAW IS THAT NO NATION -- REGARDLESS OF ITS WEALTH, ITS ORGANIZATION, ITS MILITARY POWER -- HAS BEEN ABLE TO SURVIVE IF THAT NATION CONTINUED TO SQUANDER ITS FORTUNES ON THOSE ALREADY BLESSED AND IGNORE THE PEOPLE WHO ARE MOST IN NEED. THE FALL OF GREAT NATIONS FROM POWER WAS BROUGHT ABOUT HISTORICALLY NOT FROM ATTACKS FROM WITHOUT, BUT RATHER FROM DECAY AND DISTRUST FROM WITHIN. AND I DO NOT BELIEVE THAT OUR NATION CAN ENDURE ANOTHER TWO CENTURIES WITHOUT PUTTING ITS HOUSE IN ORDER AND WITHOUT ACKNOWLEDGING THAT THE AMERICAN DREAM IS NOT A REALITY FOR MILLIONS OF AMERICANS.



FOR THAT REASON, I BELIEVE THAT THE BICENTENNIAL HAS A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE TO BLACK AMERICANS, FOR THE DILEMMAS WE FACE AS A MINORITY GROUP TODAY -- FROM THE CLASSROOM TO THE UNEMPLOYMENT LINE -- HAVE RESULTED FROM THE CONSISTENT PATTERNS WHICH HAVE BEEN AS MUCH A PART OF AMERICAN HISTORY AS THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE. AND UNLESS WE ATTACK THESE ROOT CAUSES OF RACISM AND DISCRIMINATION, WE WILL CONTINUE TO FRAGMENT WHAT IS ALREADY A DANGEROUSLY DIVIDED SOCIETY.

THE GREATEST CHALLENGE FACING US TODAY IS NOT THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR ATTACK OR THE EMERGENCE OF GOVERNMENTS WHICH ASSEMBLE UNDER DIFFERING ECONOMIC SYSTEMS AND PHILOSOPHIES, IN MY ESTIMATION. IT IS THE STRUGGLE WITHIN OUR GATES TO ASSURE THAT ALL CITIZENS REGARDLESS OF THEIR RACE, ETHNIC ORIGIN OR SEX, ARE NOT DENIED THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS AND ARE ALLOWED TO ACHIEVE THEIR EDUCATIONAL OR OCCUPATIONAL POTENTIAL. ALL OF US RECOGNIZE THAT BLACK AMERICANS HAVE MADE GREAT STRIDES DURING THE PAST DECADE TOWARD THOSE ENDS, BUT THE STRUGGLE CONTINUES BECAUSE THE EXPANSION OF THE RIGHTS OF FREEDOM AND EQUALITY HAS NOT BEEN REALIZED.

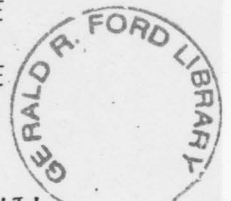
RACISM THROUGHOUT OUR HISTORY HAS BEEN CONSISTENT; IT MAY HAVE BEEN TEMPORIZED BY CHANGES IN THE LAW, BY COURT ORDERS AND BY LIBERTARIAN OUTRAGE -- BUT IT SURFACES AGAIN IN ANOTHER COURT-ROOM CHALLENGE OR IN THE RESEGREGATION PATTERNS IN OUR CITIES. THE MOVE TOWARD EDUCATIONAL INTEGRATION HAS TAUGHT US THAT DE FACTO AND DE JURE SEGREGATION ARE DIFFERENT IN NAME ONLY; WHEN THE G.N.P. DIPS AND THE LABOR MARKET BECOMES OVERCROWDED, WE EXPECT THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF "LAST HIRED, FIRST FIRED" WILL



REPLACE ALL THE ADVANCEMENTS WE HAVE MADE WITH AFFIRMATIVE ACTION. AND, WE HAVE SEEN BOSTON BECOME BIRMINGHAM, REMINDING US THAT THE INHERENTLY RACIST ATTITUDES IN AMERICA ARE NOT REGIONAL PHENOMENA, BUT INSTEAD PERVASIVE REALITIES.

I WOULD LIKE TO DISCUSS FOR A MOMENT WHAT I CONSIDER A VERY DANGEROUS TREND IN WASHINGTON BECAUSE THAT TREND ADVERSELY AFFECTS SO MANY OF OUR MINORITY AND LOW-INCOME INDIVIDUALS. WE ARE OF COURSE IN THE WORST ECONOMIC SITUATION IN THE COUNTRY IN FORTY YEARS; THE PRESIDENTIAL POLICIES ADVOCATING LITTLE GOVERNMENT SPENDING AND RESULTING IN A RECESSIONARY CYCLE HAVE FORCED A CURTAILMENT IN FEDERAL DOMESTIC SPENDING. THE PROGRAMS WHICH ARE BEARING THE GREATEST BURDEN ARE THOSE WHICH WERE DESIGNED TO AID THE POOR AND THE NEAR-POOR OF THIS COUNTRY; THE LEGISLATORS WHO HAD BEEN IN THE FOREFRONT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT IN THE 1960'S HAVE RETREATED TO "SAFER" POSITIONS ON SUCH ISSUES AS AFFIRMATIVE ACTION, EQUAL EMPLOYMENT, INTEGRATION AND RELATED MATTERS. INSTEAD OF VOTING THE CONSCIENCES, THEY ARE FINDING THAT THEY MUST PANDER TO THE NEEDS OF THEIR WHITE CONSTITUENCIES AND THOSE CONSTITUENCIES ARE DEMANDING THAT LESS EMPHASIS BE PLACED BY GOVERNMENT ON THE NEEDS OF THE MINORITIES AND MORE ON THE MIDDLE CLASS.

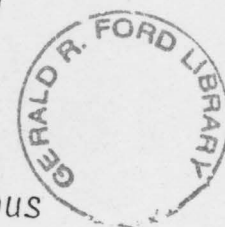
IN RETROSPECT, WE WILL FIND THAT THE REVERSAL OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS THRUST DURING THIS PERIOD HAS BEEN DUE TO THE ECONOMIC FACTORS WHICH HAVE RENDERED EVEN MIDDLE CLASS INCOMES INADEQUATE. THE FACT THAT MANY WHITE BLUE COLLAR WORKERS ARE NOW FACED WITH UNEMPLOYMENT, THE FACT THAT STUDENTS ARE GRADUATING FROM COLLEGE WITH NO JOB PROSPECTS ... THESE UNSETTLING TRENDS ARE BRINGING



TO THE SURFACE RACIST ATTITUDES LIKE THOSE WE WITNESSED IN THE 1950'S. WE ARE FINDING THAT WE HAVE TO START OVER TO ESTABLISH THOSE LEGAL PRECEDENTS WE THOUGHT WE GUARANTEED THROUGH THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964. IT IS ALL THAT THOSE OF US WHO REPRESENT MINORITY CONSTITUENCIES IN CONGRESS CAN DO TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL WELFARE PROGRAMS LIKE FOOD STAMPS, MEDICARE, HEAD START AND DAY CARE, WHEN WHAT WE REALLY NEED IS MORE PROGRAMS AND MORE FUNDING TO MEET THE ESCALATING HUMAN NEEDS RESULTING FROM THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS.

WE RECENTLY DEBATED A KEY ISSUE IN CONGRESS WHICH CENTERED AROUND THE FINANCIAL SOLVENCY OF MY CITY DURING THE PERIOD OF CONTROVERSY SURROUNDING THE PENDING BANKRUPTCY OF NEW YORK CITY. THERE WAS THEN, AND CONTINUES TO BE, SOME DEEP, ANTI-NEW YORK SENTIMENT IN CONGRESS; AND THERE ARE MANY OF US IN CONGRESS WHO CONTEND THAT THE NEGLECT FOR THE CITIES IS A NEW VARIATION ON THE SAME THEME OF RACISM. BECAUSE OUR URBAN AREAS HAVE BECOME INCREASINGLY BLACK AND BROWN, THERE HAS BEEN LESS INTEREST IN REVITALIZING THEM, AND THE PRACTICE OF "WHITE FLIGHT" HAS BEEN CONDONED, EVEN ENCOURAGED IN SOME CASES, BY THE POLICIES OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENTS.

MY POINT IS THIS: THE SIGNS OF RACISM BECOME MOST OBVIOUS IN A FREE MARKET ECONOMY WHEN THAT ECONOMY IS FACED WITH A RECESSION SUCH AS THE ONE EMANATING FROM THE CURRENT ADMINISTRATION'S FISCAL POLICIES. ALL OF THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE DURING THE 1960'S IN THE AREA OF CIVIL RIGHTS HAVE SUFFERED TREMENDOUS STEBACKS DURING THE PAST TWO ADMINISTRATIONS. AND THE "BENIGN NEGLECT" ATTITUDES

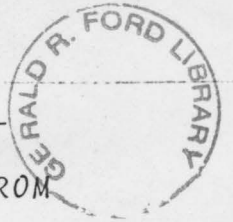


ON THE PART OF THE PAST TWO PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATIONS -- COUPLED WITH THE EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE RESULTED FROM OUR SAGGING ECONOMY -- HAVE DONE MORE TO UNDERMINE THE PRINCIPLES OF EQUALITY AND JUSTICE THAN AT ANY OTHER TIME IN OUR HISTORY.

AND WHAT HAS BEEN THE REACTION ON THE PART OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY TO THIS REPLAY OF THIS DISCRIMINATING AND DEVASTATING CYCLE OF DISCRIMINATION, JOB DISPLACEMENT AND A LACK OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY? UNFORTUNATELY, MORE AND MORE BLACK AMERICANS ARE "OPTING OUT" OF THE POLITICAL PROCESS. THE ENTHUSIASM ONCE EVIDENT IN OUR COMMUNITIES AND ESPECIALLY AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE HAS TURNED TO FRUSTRATION OR APATHY. PEOPLE FROM EVERY ECONOMIC STRATA HAVE RETREATED FROM POLITICS BECAUSE THEY NO LONGER BELIEVE THAT IT IS POSSIBLE TO MAKE ANY MEANINGFUL CHANGES IN THE SYSTEM.

DESPITE THE FACT THAT THERE ARE MORE AND MORE BLACK ELECTED OFFICIALS IN POSITIONS FROM COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS TO MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, THE BLACK POPULATION REMAINS GROSSLY UNDER-REPRESENTED. THERE ARE MORE THAN ONE HALF MILLION ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE UNITED STATES FOR EXAMPLE. IF WE WERE TO MAKE PREDICTIONS SOLELY ON THE BASIS OF POPULATION, WE MIGHT EXPECT THAT AT LEAST TEN PER CENT OF THESE OFFICES ARE HELD BY BLACKS TO CORRESPOND TO THE APPROXIMATE BLACK SHARE OF THE POPULATION. BUT, THE FIGURES TELL A DIFFERENT STORY. ACCORDING TO THE JOINT CENTER FOR POLITICAL STUDIES, THE NUMBER OF BLACK OFFICE HOLDERS IN 1975 WAS APPROXIMATELY 3,500 ... OR LITTLE MORE THAN ONE PER CENT.

ONLY EIGHTEEN OF THE 535 MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ARE BLACK -- ONLY THREE PER CENT OF THE TOTAL. THERE IS ONLY ONE BLACK SENATOR AND NO BLACK GOVERNORS, AND BLACKS ELECTED TO STATE OFFICE MAKE UP





LESS THAN TWO PER CENT OF THE TOTAL.

SO MUCH FOR BLACK POLITICAL POWER AND THE EMERGING BLACK POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS THAT HAS BEEN, IN MY OPINION, EXAGGERATED DURING THE PAST FEW YEARS. IT IS CERTAINLY TRUE THAT BLACK AMERICANS POSSESS A GREAT POTENTIAL FOR POLITICAL INFLUENCE, BUT THAT POWER HAS REMAINED DORMANT UNTIL NOW AND IT MUST BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON A NATIONAL SITUATION OF MASSIVE UNDER-REPRESENTATION OF BLACK PEOPLE IN THOSE POSITIONS WHICH SO DEEPLY AFFECT THEIR LIVES.

IT IS TRUE ALSO THAT, SINCE THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, NO BLACK LEADER HAS EMERGED TO GALVINIZE THE MASSES. WE DO NOT HAVE A CONSENSUS OF POLITICAL THOUGHT, OR A CONCRETE AGENDA WHICH CAN LEND THE DIRECTION TO THE THRUST FOR MORE PARTICIPATION AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY. IN MANY WAYS, AND IN MANY AREAS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, BLACKS ARE WORSE OFF NOW THAN THEY WERE TEN YEARS AGO.

NOW, I DO NOT MEAN TO MINIMIZE THE DEDICATION, THE STRUGGLE AND THE SUCCESS WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM THE COMMITMENT TO CHANGE EVIDENCED AMONG BLACK AMERICANS DURING THE PAST TWO DECADES. IT IS REAL; IT IS WIDESPREAD. RIGHT NOW, THERE ARE SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENTS IN SCHOOL INTEGRATION WHICH ARE BRINGING BLACK CHILDREN AND WHITE CHILDREN TOGETHER IN A POSITIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME. THERE ARE MANY EQUALLY SUCCESSFUL MINORITY OWNED AND OPERATED BUSINESS VENTURES WHICH ARE HELPING GIVE BLACKS ECONOMIC POWER IN THEIR OWN COMMUNITIES. THERE ARE MANY OTHER EXAMPLES OF BLACKS TAKING CONTROL OF THEIR OWN LIVES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES, AND OF NEIGHBORHOODS BECOMING RACIALLY MIXED FOR THE

FIRST TIME.

BUT I DO WANT TO POINT UP THE LIMITATIONS OF OUR ENDEAVORS AS WE REFLECT UPON OUR HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AS A RACE LONG SEPARATED FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF AMERICAN THOUGHT AND POLITICAL ACTION. IT IS NOT EASY TO REJECT ONE'S HERITAGE; AND I BELIEVE THAT THE SCARS LEFT BY THE ENSLAVEMENT OF OUR ANCESTORS AND BY THE CONTINUAL PRACTICE OF RACISM THROUGHOUT AMERICA'S TWO HUNDRED YEARS AS A NATION REMAIN OBSTACLES TO THE REALIZATION OF TRUE FREEDOM AND TRUE EQUALITY. THOSE SCARS ARE VISIBLE IN OUR CRIME STATISTICS: OUR PRISONS ARE FILLED WITH MORE BLACKS THAN

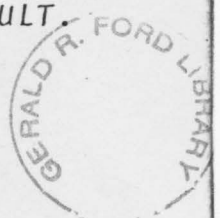
WHITES DESPITE THE FACT THAT WE COMPRISE ONLY ONE TENTH OF THE POPULATION. THOSE SCARS ARE EVIDENCED IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM; BLACKS HAVE A MUCH HIGHER DROPOUT RATE, AND MUCH LOWER ACHIEVEMENT SCORES THAN THEIR WHITE COUNTERPARTS. AND, FRIENDS, THE SCARS OF RACISM ARE FOUND IN THE ATTITUDES OF OUR CHILDREN AS THEY REFLECT WHAT IT MEANS TO BE BLACK IN THE UNITED STATES. A RECENT PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY CONCLUDED THAT BLACK CHILDREN BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE GOING TO FAIL OR FARE POORLY IN SCHOOL, IN JOBS, AND IN RELATIONSHIPS FOUR TIMES MORE OFTEN THAN WHITE CHILDREN.

I AM CONCERNED ABOUT THE EMOTIONAL DEPRIVATION WHICH HAS RESULTED FROM OUR PAST POLICIES BECAUSE PAST POWER STRUCTURES WHICH ENSLAVED BLACK HUMANITY ARE STILL A PART OF OUR LIVES. IN HIS CONTEMPORARY PORTRAIT OF BLACK AMERICA, "THE FIRE NEXT TIME," JAMES BALDWIN CHARACTERIZED THOSE PERVERSIVE ATTITUDES THIS WAY. HE WROTE: "NEGROES IN THIS COUNTRY ARE TAUGHT REALLY TO DESPISE THEMSELVES FROM THE MOMENT THEIR EYES OPEN ON THE WORLD. THE



WORLD IS WHITE AND THEY ARE BLACK. WHITE PEOPLE HOLD THE POWER ... AND THE WORLD HAS INNUMERABLE WAYS OF MAKING THIS DIFFERENCE KNOWN AND FELT AND FEARED. LONG BEFORE THE NEGRO CHILD PERCEIVES THIS DIFFERENCE, AND EVEN LONGER BEFORE HE UNDERSTANDS IT, HE HAS BEGUN TO BE CONTROLLED BY IT."

THE CENTRAL QUESTION WHICH CONFRONTS ALL BLACK AMERICANS, THEN, IS WHETHER WE CAN ULTIMATELY REJECT THIS LEGACY OF INFERIORITY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RAMIFICATIONS WHICH RESULT. IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THE STRUGGLE TO ESCAPE THE SHROUD OF SECOND-CLASS CITIZENSHIP HAS ONLY BEGUN. WE ARE NOT AT THE CROSSROADS OF OUR DEVELOPMENT AS BLACK AMERICANS, WE ARE ONLY AT THE THRESHOLD. THE ESCAPE FROM SLAVERY DIDN'T END WITH THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION; IT ONLY BROUGHT THE PROBLEM INTO A DIFFERENT ARENA.



THE ROAD OUT OF THE DEHUMANIZING QUAGMIRE FOR BLACK AMERICANS BEGINS WITH THE ACHIEVEMENT OF PARITY IN EDUCATION, IN EMPLOYMENT, IN ALL FACETS OF LIFE. THE INCREASED PARTICIPATION IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND THE ELECTION OF MORE BLACKS TO DECISION-MAKING POSITIONS WILL SERVE TO ENHANCE THE CAUSE AS BLACKS TAKE THEIR APPROPRIATE SHARE OF THE POWER -- NOT THE TOKEN REPRESENTATION WHICH BELONGS TO ALL OF US NOW. AND THEN, ONLY THEN, CAN WE BEGIN TO UNDO THE TREMENDOUS PSYCHIC DAMAGE WHICH HAS BEEN VISITED UPON EVERY GENERATION OF BLACK AMERICANS. WHEN BLACKS BEGIN TO TAKE THEIR RESPECTIVE PLACES AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY, THEIR CHILDREN WILL NO LONGER ASSUME FAILURE BUT WILL STRIVE FOR SUCCESS. AND AT THAT POINT; WHEN THE DREAMS AND HOPES AND EXPECTATIONS

OF ALL BLACK CHILDREN ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN THE DREAMS AND HOPES OF WHITE CHILDREN, ONLY THEN WILL BLACK AMERICANS BE ABLE TO COUNT FREEDOM AMONG THEIR BLESSINGS.

MY FRIENDS, WE HAVE MILES TO GO AND THE STAKE IS PERSONAL -- NOT JUST FOR EACH AND EVERY BLACK IN OUR NATION, BUT FOR EVERYONE WHO CALLS HIMSELF AMERICAN. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LIVE AS A "HOUSE DIVIDED" NOR CAN WE ALLOW ANOTHER GENERATION OF OUR CHILDREN TO SUFFER ALL THE PANGS OF INEQUALITY AND LOST POTENTIAL. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN MY BELIEF THAT SOCIAL PROGRESS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE MUST GO HAND IN HAND WITH FREEDOM. AS WE CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY AS AMERICANS, AS BLACK AMERICANS, WE SHOULD REMEMBER THAT THE TRADITION OF DEMOCRACY REQUIRES THAT WE CONTINUE TO SEEK A HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL OUR CITIZENS, AND THAT WE CONTINUE TO CONFRONT THE CHALLENGES AS THEY PRESENT THEMSELVES. THE GREAT CHALLENGE BEFORE US IS OUR OWN PURSUIT OF JUSTICE FOR OUR BROTHERS AND OUR SISTERS AND TO OVERCOME THE SCARRED HERITAGE OF OPPRESSION WHICH HAS PREVENTED TOO MANY OF OUR BLACK CITIZENS FROM EVER EXPERIENCING THE PRINCIPLES UPON WHICH THIS COUNTRY WAS BUILT ... LET ALONG CELEBRATING THEM.

