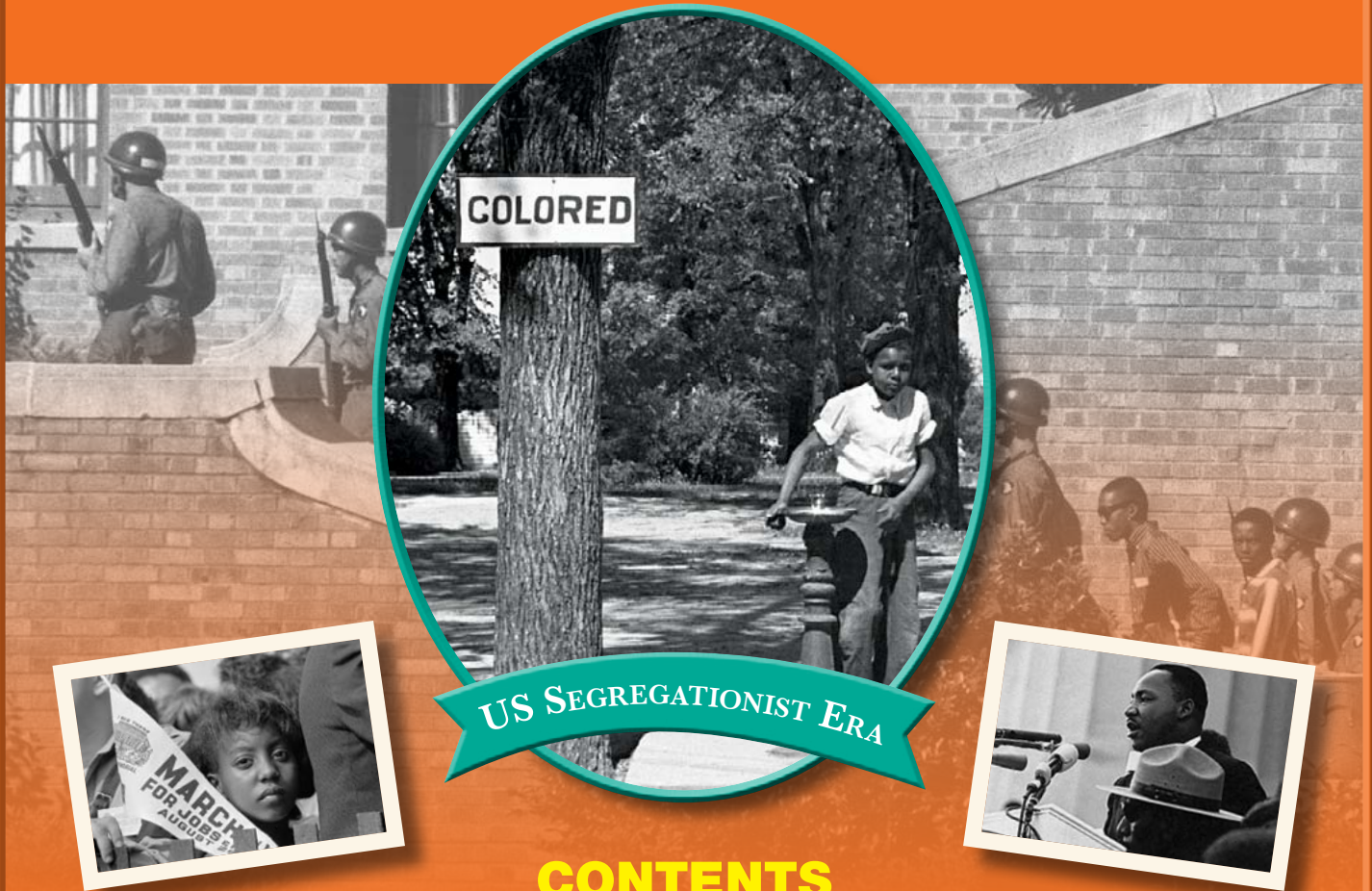


GROWING UP COLORED

Henry Louis Gates, Jr., noted writer and educator tells of his boyhood in the West Virginia town of Piedmont, where African Americans were second-class citizens but family pride ran deep.



US SEGREGATIONIST ERA

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GROWING UP COLORED

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

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[http://www.americanheritage.com/
content/growing-colored?page=show](http://www.americanheritage.com/content/growing-colored?page=show)

The noted writer and educator tells of his boyhood in the West Virginia town of Piedmont, where African Americans were second-class citizens but family pride ran deep.



"Colored Waiting Room" sign from segregationist era United States.

You wouldn't know Piedmont anymore—my Piedmont, I mean—the town in West Virginia where I learned to be a colored boy.

The 1950s in Piedmont was a sepia time, or at least that's the color my memory has given it. People were always proud to be from Piedmont—nestled against a wall of mountains, smack-dab on the banks of the mighty Potomac. We knew God gave America no more beautiful location. I never knew colored people anywhere who were crazier about mountains and water, flowers and trees, fishing and hunting. For as long as anyone could remember, we could outhunt, outshoot, and outswim the white boys in the valley. We didn't flaunt our rifles and shotguns, though, because that might make the white people too nervous.

The social topography of Piedmont was something we knew like the back of our hands. It was an immigrant town; white Piedmont was Italian and Irish, with a handful of wealthy WASPs on East Hampshire Street, and "ethnic" neighborhoods of working-class people everywhere else, colored and white.

For as long as anyone can remember, Piedmont's character has been completely bound up with the Westvaco paper mill: its prosperous past and doubtful future. At first glance, the town is a typical dying mill center, with a crumbling infrastructure and the resignation of its people to its gentle decline. Many once beautiful buildings stand empty and unkempt and testify to a bygone time of spirit and pride. The big houses on East Hampshire Street are no longer proud, as they were when I was a kid.

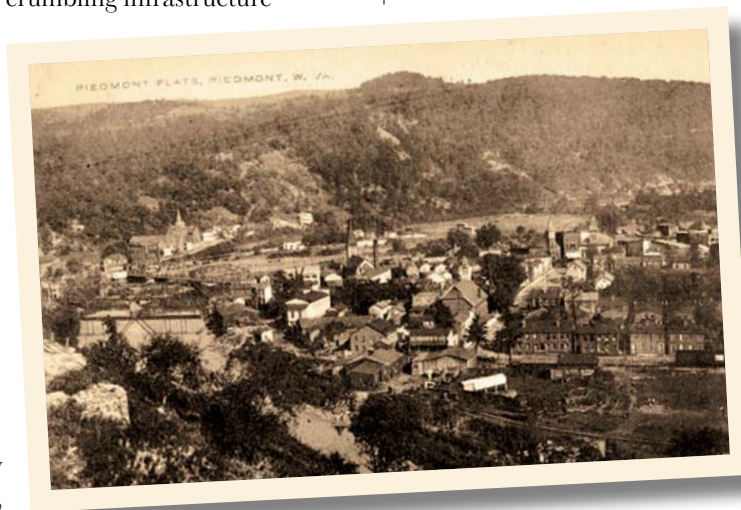
Like the Italians and the Irish, most of the colored people migrated to Piedmont at the turn of the 20th century to work at the paper mill,

which opened in 1888. All the colored men at the paper mill worked on "the platform"—loading paper into trucks until the craft unions were finally integrated in 1968. Loading is what Daddy did every working day of his life. That's what almost every colored grown-up I knew did.

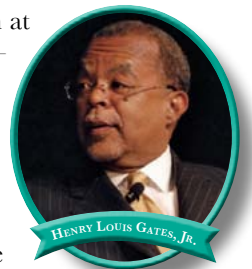
Colored people lived in three neighborhoods that were clearly demarcated, as if by ropes or turnstiles. Welcome to the Colored Zone, a large stretched banner could have said. And it felt good in there, like walking around your house in bare feet and underwear, or snoring right out loud on the couch in front of the TV—swaddled by the comforts of home, the warmth of those you love.

Of course, the colored world was not so much a neighborhood as a condition of existence. And though our own world was seemingly self-contained, it impinged upon the white world of Piedmont in almost every direction. Certainly, the borders of our world seemed to be encroached upon when some white man or woman showed up where he or she did not belong, such as at the black Legion Hall. Our space was violated when one of them showed up at a dance or a party. The rhythms would be off. The music would sound not quite right: attempts to pat the beat off just so. Everybody would leave early.

Before 1955, most white people were just shadowy



Piedmont Plate postcard, Piedmont, WV, center.



GROWING UP COLORED

– CONTINUED –

presences in our world, vague figures of power like remote bosses at the mill or tellers at the bank. There were exceptions, of course, the white people who would come into our world in ritualized, everyday ways we all understood. Mr. Mail Man, Mr. Insurance Man, Mr. White-and-Chocolate Milk Man, Mr. Landlord Man, Mr. Police Man: we called white people by their trade, like allegorical characters in a mystery play. Mr. Insurance Man would come by every other week to collect premiums on college or death policies, sometimes 50 cents or less.

I guess some chafed more than others against the mundane impediments of the color line. “It’s no disgrace to be colored,” the black entertainer Bert Williams famously observed early in the century, “but it is awfully inconvenient.” For most of my childhood, we couldn’t eat in restaurants or sleep in hotels, we couldn’t use certain bathrooms or try on clothes in stores. Mama insisted that we dress up when we went to shop. She was a fashion plate when she went to clothing stores, and wore white pads called shields under her arms so her dress

or blouse would show no sweat. “We’d like to try this on,” she’d say carefully, articulating her words precisely and properly. “We don’t buy clothes we can’t try on,” she’d say when they declined, and we’d walk out in Mama’s dignified manner. She preferred to shop where we had an account and where everyone knew who she was.

At the Cut-Rate Drug Store, no one colored was allowed to sit down at the counter or tables, with one exception: my father. I don’t know for certain why Carl Dadisman, the proprietor, wouldn’t stop Daddy from sitting down. But I believe it was in part because Daddy was so light-complected, and in part because, during his shift at the phone company, he picked up orders for food and coffee for the operators. Colored people were supposed to stand at the counter, get their food to go, and leave. Even when Young Doc Bess would set up the basketball team with free Cokes after one of many victories, the colored players had to stand around and drink out of paper cups while the white players and cheerleaders sat down in the red Naugahyde booths and drank out of glasses.

I couldn’t have been much older than five or six as I sat with my father at the Cut-Rate one afternoon, enjoying two scoops of caramel ice cream. Mr. Wilson, a stony-faced, brooding Irishman, walked by. “Hello, Mr. Wilson,” my father said.

“Hello, George.”

I stopped licking my ice cream, genuinely puzzled. Mr. Wilson must have confused my father with somebody else, but who? There weren’t any Georges among the colored people in Piedmont. “Why don’t you tell him your name, Daddy?” I asked loudly. “Your name isn’t George.”

“He knows my name, boy,” my father said after a long pause. “He calls all colored people George.”

I knew we wouldn’t talk about it again; even at that age, I was given to understand that there were some subjects it didn’t do to worry to

death. Now that I have children, I realize that what chagrined my father wasn’t so much the Mr. Wilsons of the world as the painful obligation to explain the racial facts of life to someone who hadn’t quite learned them yet. Maybe Mr. Wilson couldn’t hurt my father by calling him George; but I hurt him by asking to know why.

In 1957, Mama was elected the first colored secretary of the PTA, and I thought no more beautiful woman existed than Mama. I was secure in her knowledge of how to be in the world and command respect. Mama didn’t care to

live in white neighborhoods or be around white people. White people, she said, were dirty: They tasted right out of pots on the stove. Only some kind of animal would ever taste out of a pot on the stove. Anybody with manners knew that; even colored people without manners knew that. It was white people who didn’t know that. Tasting right out of a pot was almost as bad as drinking after somebody on the same side of the cup, or right after them on a Coca-Cola bottle without wiping their lips off real good. “I’d rather go thirsty myself,” Uncle Raymond would say.

I first got to know white people as “people” through their flickering images on television shows. It was the television set that brought us together at night, and the television set that brought in the world outside the valley. When I was in first grade, we’d watch Superman, Lassie, Jack Benny, Danny Thomas, Circus Boy, and Loretta Young. My favorite shows were *The Life of Riley*, in part because he worked in a factory like my Daddy did, and *Ozzie and Harriet*, in part because Ozzie never seemed to work at all. With a show like *Topper*, I felt as if I were getting a glimpse, at last, of the life the rich white people must be leading in their big mansions on East Hampshire Street. Smoking jackets and cravats, spats and canes, elegant garden parties and martinis. People who wore suits to dinner! This was a world so elegantly distant from ours, it was like a voyage to another galaxy, light-years away.



"Colored" drinking fountain from mid-20th century.

GROWING UP COLORED

— CONTINUED —

A year later, however, a new show swept most of the others away. *Leave It to Beaver* was a world much closer, but nonetheless just out of reach.

Beaver's street was where we wanted to live, Beaver's house where we wanted to eat and sleep, Beaver's father's firm where we'd have liked Daddy to work. These shows for us were about property, the property that white people could own and that we couldn't. About a level of comfort and ease at which we could only wonder. It was the world that the integrated school was going to prepare us to enter and that, for Mama, would be the prize.

Lord knows, we weren't going to learn how to be colored by watching television. Seeing somebody colored on TV was an event.

"Colored, colored, on Channel Two," you'd hear someone shout. Somebody else would run to the phone, while yet another hit the front porch, telling all the neighbors where to see it. And everybody loved *Amos 'n Andy*—I don't care what people say today. What was special to us was that their world was all colored, just like ours. Of course, they had their colored judges and lawyers and doctors and nurses, which we could only dream about having, or becoming—and we did dream about those things. Kingfish ate his soft-boiled eggs delicately, out of an egg cup. He even owned an acre of land in Westchester County, which he sold to Andy, using the facade of a movie set to fake the mansion. As far as we were concerned, the foibles of Kingfish or Calhoun the lawyer were the foibles of individuals who happened to be funny. Nobody was likely to confuse them with the colored people we knew, no more than we'd

confuse ourselves with the entertainers and athletes we saw on TV or in *Ebony* or *Jet*, the magazines we devoured to keep up with what was happening with the race. And people took special relish in Kingfish's malapropisms: "I denies the allegation, Your Honor, and I resents the alligator."



Photo of the Cleaver family from the television program Leave it to Beaver.

Civil rights took us all by surprise. Every night we'd wait until the news to see what "Dr. King and dem" were doing. It was like watching the Olympics or the World Series when somebody colored was on. In 1957, when I was in second grade, black children integrated Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. We watched it on TV. All of us watched it. I don't mean Mama and Daddy and Rocky. I mean all the colored people in America watched it, together, with one set of eyes. We'd watch it in the morning, on the Today Show on NBC, before we'd go to school; we'd watch it in the evening, on the news, with Edward R. Murrow on CBS. We'd watch the Special Bulletins at night, interrupting our TV shows.

The children were all well scrubbed and greased down, as we'd say. Starched shirts, white, and creased pants, shoes shining like a buck private's spit shine. Those Negroes were clean. The children would get off their school bus surrounded by soldiers from the National Guard and by a field of state police. They would stop at the steps of the bus and seem to take a very deep breath. Then the phalanx of children would start to move slowly along this gully of sidewalk and rednecks that connected the steps of the school bus with the white wooden doubled doors of the school. All kinds of crackers would be lining that gully, separated from the children by rows of state police, who formed a barrier arm in arm. Cheerleaders from the all-white high school that was desperately trying to stay that way were dressed in those funny little pleated skirts, with a big red C for "Central" on their chests, and they'd wave their pompoms and start to cheer: "Two, four, six, eight—we don't want to integrate!" And all those crackers and all those



Members of the 101st US Airborne Division escorting the Little Rock Nine to school when they integrated into the previously all-white Central High School, Little Rock, AK.

rednecks would join in that chant as if their lives depended on it. Deafening, it was: even on our 12-inch black-and-white TV.

Whatever tumult our small screen revealed, though, the dawn of the civil rights era could be no more than a spectator sport in Piedmont. It was almost like a war being fought overseas. And all

GROWING UP COLORED

– CONTINUED –

things considered, white and colored Piedmont got along pretty well in those years, the 50s and early 60s. At least as long as colored people didn't try to sit down in the Cut-Rate or at the Rendezvous Bar, or eat pizza at Eddie's, or buy property, or move into the white neighborhoods, or dance with, date, or dilate upon white people. Not to mention try to get a job in the craft unions at the paper mill. Or have a drink at the white VFW, or join the white American Legion, or get loans at the bank. Or just generally didn't get out of line. Other than that, colored and white got on pretty well.

One summer recently, I sat at a sidewalk cafe in Italy, and three or four "black" Italians walked casually by, as well as a dozen or more blacker Africans. Each spoke to me; rather, each nodded his head slightly or acknowledged me by a glance, ever so subtly. When I was growing up, we always did this with each other, ships passing in a sea of white folk.

Yet there were certain Negroes who would avoid acknowledging you in this way in an integrated setting, especially if the two of you were the ones doing the integrating. "Don't go over there with those white people if all you're going to do is Jim Crow yourselves"—Daddy must have said to me a thousand times. And by that I think he meant we shouldn't cling to each other out of habit or fear, or use protective coloration to evade the risks of living life like any other human being, or use clannishness as a cop-out for exploring ourselves and possibly making new selves, forged in the crucible of integration.

But there are other reasons that people distrust the reflex—the nod, the glance, the murmured greeting. One reason is a resentment at being lumped together with 30 million African Americans whom you don't know and most of whom you will never know. Completely by the accident of racism, we have been born together with people with whom we may or may not have something in common, just because we are "black." Thirty million Americans are black, and 30 million is a lot of people. One day you wonder: What do the misdeeds of Mike Tyson have to do with me? So why do I feel implicated? And how can I not feel racial recrimination when I can feel racial pride?

And yet there is that feeling, that gooseflesh sense of identity that I felt at watching Nelson Mandela walk out of prison, his princely straight back

and unbowed head. It is part of what I mean by being colored. I want to be able to take special pride in a Jessye Norman aria, a Muhammad Ali shuffle, a Michael Jordan slam dunk, a Spike Lee movie, a Thurgood Marshall opinion, a Toni Morrison novel, or James Brown's Camel Walk.

Above all, I enjoy the unself-conscious moments of a shared cultural intimacy, whatever form they take, when no one else is watching, when no white people are around. Like Joe Louis's fights, which my father still talks about as part of the fixed repertoire of stories that texture our lives. His eyes shine as he describes how Louis hit Max Schmeling so many times and so hard, and how some reporter asked him, after the fight: "Joe, what would you have done if that last punch hadn't knocked Schmeling out?" And how Joe responded, without missing a beat, "I'da run around behind him to see what was holdin' him up."

Even so, I rebel at the notion that I can't be part of other groups, that I can't construct identities through elective affinities, that race must be the most important thing about me. Is that what I want on my gravestone: Here lies an African American? So I'm divided. I want to be black, to know black, to luxuriate in whatever I might be calling blackness at any particular time—but to do so

in order to come out the other side, to experience a humanity that is neither colorless nor reducible to color. Bach and James Brown. Sushi and fried catfish. Part of me admires those people who can say with a straight face that they have transcended any attachment to a particular community or group ... but I always want to run around behind them to see what holds them up.

This is why I continue to speak to colored people I pass on the streets. ♦



The author's cousin, Patricia Coleman, was the first cheerleader of color at Piedmont High School. But when the coach bought the basketball team Cokes after a victory, she and the black players had to stand and drink out of paper cups while the whites relaxed in Naugahyde booths and drank from glasses, above left.

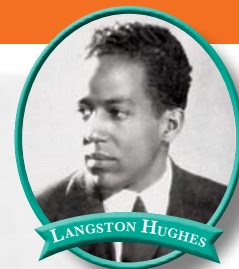
Pride of Piedmont, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the young batboy of the high school baseball team (far left), would become valedictorian of his class and be elected president of the band, the science club, and the Episcopal Young Churchmen. Later, Gates earned degrees from Yale and Cambridge.

GROWING UP COLORED

HARLEM (POEM, 1951)

by LANGSTON HUGHES

<http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poem/175884>



HARLEM

What happens to a dream deferred?

Does it dry up
like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore-

And then run?

Does it stink like rotten meat?

Or crust and sugar over-
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags

like a heavy load.

Or does it explode?

GROWING UP COLORED

BY EXECUTIVE ORDER—PRESIDENT TRUMAN WIPES OUT SEGREGATION IN ARMED FORCES

CHICAGO DEFENDER | JULY 31, 1948

<http://www.loc.gov/exhibits/odyssey/archive/09/0902001r.jpg>

On July 26, 1948, President Harry Truman issued two executive orders. One instituted fair employment practices in the civilian agencies of the federal government; the other provided for “equality of treatment and opportunity in the armed forces without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin.”



GROWING UP COLORED

ON THE TREATMENT OF THE LITTLE ROCK NINE

DAISY BATES | DECEMBER 17, 1957

[http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaodyssey:
@field%28NUMBER+@band%28mssmisc+ody0918a%29%29](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/aaodyssey:@field%28NUMBER+@band%28mssmisc+ody0918a%29%29)



"The Paper That's Published For Its Readers"



P. O. BOX 2179

Little Rock, Arkansas

December 17, 1957

Mr. Roy Wilkins
20 West 40th Street
New York, N. Y.

30618 DEC 1957

Dear Mr. Wilkins:

Conditions are yet pretty rough in the school for the children. Last week, Minnie Jean's mother, Mrs. W. B. Brown, asked me to go over to the school with her for a conference with the principal, and the two assistant principals. Subject of conference: "Firmer disciplinary measures, and the withdrawal of Minnie Jean from the glee club's Christmas program." The principal had informed Minnie Jean in withdrawing her from the program that "When it is definitely decided that Negroes will go to school here with the whites, and the troops are removed, then you will be able to participate in all activities." We strongly challenged this statement, which he denied making in that fashion.

We also pointed out that the treatment of the children had been getting steadily worse for the last two weeks in the form of kicking, spitting, and general abuse. As a result of our visit, stronger measures are being taken against the white students who are guilty of committing these offenses. For instance, a boy who had been suspended for two weeks, flunked both six-weeks tests, and on his return to school, the first day he knocked Gloria Ray into her locker. As a result of our visit, he was given an indefinite suspension.

The superintendent of schools also requested a conference the same afternoon. Clarence and I went down and spent about two hours. Here, again we pointed out that a three-day suspension given Hugh Williams for a sneak attack perpetrated on one of the Negro boys which knocked him out, and required a doctor's attention, was not sufficient punishment. We also informed him that our investigation revealed that there were many pupils willing to help if given the opportunity, and that President Eisenhower was very much concerned about the Little Rock crisis. He has stated his willingness to come down and address the student body if invited by student leaders of the school. This information was passed on to the principals of the school, but we have not been assured that leadership would be given to children in the school who are willing to organize for law and order. However, we have not abandoned the idea. Last Friday, the 13th, I was asked to call Washington and see if we could get FBI men placed in the school December 16-18.



In 1957, Daisy Bates helped nine African American students become the first to attend the all-white Central High School in Little Rock, AK, who became known as the Little Rock Nine (pictured with Bates, above).



Central High School,
Little Rock, AK, above.

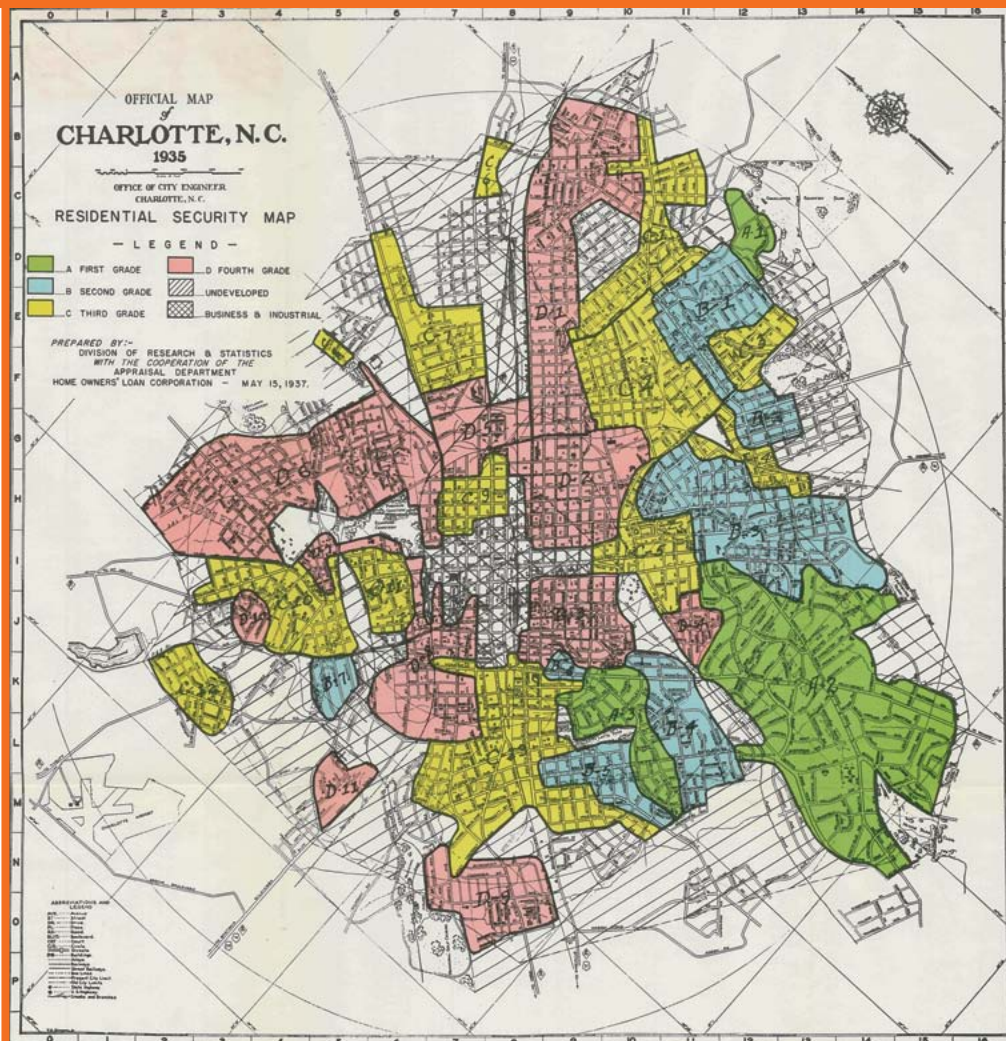
GROWING UP COLORED

REDLINING (1937-)

BRENT GASPAIRE

<http://www.blackpast.org/?q=aah/redlining-1937>

Redlining refers to a discriminatory pattern of disinvestment and obstructive lending practices that act as an impediment to home ownership among African Americans and other people of color. Banks used the concept to deny loans to homeowners and would-be homeowners who lived in these neighborhoods. This in turn resulted in neighborhood economic decline and the withholding of services or their provision at an exceptionally high cost. The origin of the term stems from the policies developed by the Home Owners Loan Corporation (HOLC) created in 1933 by the Franklin Roosevelt Administration to reduce home foreclosures during the Depression and then institutionalized by the 1937 US Housing Act which established the Federal Housing Association (FHA). Federal housing agencies including the HOLC and the FHA determined whether areas were deemed unfit for investment by banks, insurance companies, savings and loan associations, and other financial services companies. The areas were physically demarcated with red shading on a map (see attached map of Charlotte, NC). In contrast, zones which were to receive preferential lending status were marked in green shading and intermediate areas in blue shading. Often these decisions were arbitrarily based on the area's racial composition rather than income levels. While the practice was almost universal before 1968, the Civil Rights Act passed that year theoretically outlawed redlining. Nonetheless its impact was felt long after that. ♦



Redlining Map, Charlotte, North Carolina, 1935



Sign with American flag "We want white tenants in our white community," directly opposite the Sojourner Truth homes, a new U.S. federal housing project in Detroit, Michigan. A riot was caused by white neighbors' attempts to prevent Negro tenants from moving in.

GROWING UP COLORED

ANNUAL ADDRESS

JOSEPH JACKSON

DELIVERED AT 84TH ANNUAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL BAPTIST CONVENTION
COBO HALL ARENA | DETROIT, MICHIGAN | SEPTEMBER 10, 1964

<http://teachingamericanhistory.org/library/document/annual-address/>

PARTICIPATING IN THE STRUGGLE OF AMERICA

As Christians we are a part of our nation and a part of the struggle of America. America was brought into being to satisfy and to answer the human longing for freedom. There was the urge in man to be related to other men as men without a modifier or any kind of limitation or restriction. There was an awareness of a human kinship deeper than race, more profound than nationality, and more inclusive than any accepted religious creed. In addition to the quest for a new geographical spot there was a search for a new human relationship, a new freedom, and new opportunities. These basic urges inspired the early colonies to brave the dangers of a rough and unknown sea, and seek a land in which they could live as free men and aspire to the highest possible goals of life without the enslavement of the past or being the victims of the determinism of enforced circumstances. They wanted a chance to explore and to search out the meaning of life for themselves, and an opportunity to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience.

They soon became convinced that there was no such land, no such Utopia, but all they would find would be an opportunity to make such a land and such a country. They were convinced it could be made out of the desires that now possessed their souls and out of the thirst for liberty that dominated their lives.

America was born in a struggle and as a struggle for freedom, and for the opportunity to develop the highest resources of mankind. The Declaration of Independence and the Federal Constitution were the results of our fathers' attempts to

put on paper the ideals that inspired the birth of the nation, and those principles by which and on which the nation was erected and sustained. There have been errors, mistakes, and gross sins committed against this American venture, but this high venture has not been repudiated or negated. The Massachusetts theocracy became oppressive and hostile toward freedom. Some human beings were slain in the episode of the great Witch Hunt. Slavery took its toll, denying to thousands the human dignity that God had bestowed upon them;

and as a result of the defense of this cruel institution, the nation was divided into two armed camps, and a cruel civil war saw Americans take the lives of Americans, and brothers shedding their brothers' blood. But from the dust and dirt of this tragic event the American ideals sprang up again with new vigor and vitality, and continued its upward march on the rough highway of human history. This American venture is powerful but not perfect; ever growing but not grown; and still becoming, but is not yet complete. The kind hand of destiny and the benevolent providence of Almighty God have placed the American Negro along with other races and nationalities in this flowing stream of the nation's life for which we are justly proud. As patriotic Americans we are devoted to our nation's cause, and are wedded to its ideals and principles. By precept and example, by instinct and intuition, we now know the difference between that which is truly American and that which is not. We draw a clear distinction between that which is germane to the nation's life and that which is foreign, hostile, and antagonistic to the



Cobo Hall Arena, Detroit, MI.

soul of our nation. To the former we pledge our total allegiance and commit every ounce of energy, our strength, all of our powers, and even our very lives. But against the latter we stand with uncompromising determination, and will not rest until all the enemies of our nation have been subdued and conquered. This is the true meaning of the civil rights struggle.

THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE

Much time and space is given in the public press to the problem of civil rights. It has engaged the minds of our congressmen, and has occasioned many days of debate and deliberation. In the name of civil rights thousands have marched through the streets of our cities, boycotts have been staged, picket lines have been thrown around places of businesses, institutions of learning; and in every nook and corner of the country voices have been heard in the defense of and in the interest of civil rights.

What is this struggle for civil rights? I answer, it is an effort of American citizens to get full equality of opportunity. It is the resolution and the determination that there shall be in these United States one class of citizens and that is first class citizens. This is a struggle to adopt in practice as well as theory the concept of man on which the Declaration of Independence is based, and



JOSEPH JACKSON

GROWING UP COLORED

ANNUAL ADDRESS

– CONTINUED –

to fully implement the Federal Constitution, one of the greatest documents for human freedom since the writing of the Magna Carta. The civil rights struggle is a struggle for full freedom, justice, and equality before the law. It is a struggle to bring from paper the lofty ideals of America, and to apply them in practice to the lives and actions of all Americans. In reality it is America's struggle to be herself, to fulfill the highest promises of her being, and to build a social order after the pattern and dreams of our founding fathers and in the light of the wisdom of the ages.

The civil rights struggle then is not a struggle to negate the high and lofty philosophy of American freedom. It is not an attempt to convert the nation into an armed camp or to substitute panic and anarchy in the place of law and order. It is in no wise an attempt to negate or to amend downward the highest laws of this land proclaiming freedom and justice for all.

WHY THEN THE STRUGGLE?

The answer is there is a group in the United States that believes that when the constitution speaks of the rights of American citizens it meant only men whose skins were white. This group believes in segregation as a means of protecting the best interests of the nation and of keeping the races separate and pure. But as we look at the degrees of pigmentation among all the races in these United States, I ask my segregationist friends, don't you think it is rather late now to talk about the purity of the race; for the blood of white segregationists is in the veins of many whom they would ostracize, and their kinship is a biological fact. Many segregationists fear that granting equality of opportunity to people of color will in some way jeopardize their liberties, encroach upon their freedom, and threaten their rank, position, and security. But such fear is unfounded if the doctrine of American democracy is true. For no free man has any grounds to fear the spread of the privileges of true freedom to all men,

for the greater the number of free men the more secure is freedom and less is the power and danger of oppression. Abraham Lincoln sensed this fact when he said: "By giving freedom to the slaves we insure freedom to the free." The presence of one bound man pollutes the whole stream of human society; and the rattle of one chain of oppression creates a discord that breaks the harmony in every democratic system, and disturbs the mind and poisons the heart of every man with fear and dread, so that the would-be master finds himself mentally and morally the dweller in the hovels of slaves, the servant of a cause that is hostile to democracy, and becomes himself, the victim of the baser emotions of his own nature.

THERE IS A GROUP IN THE UNITED STATES

that believes that when the constitution speaks of the rights of American citizens it meant only men whose skins were white.

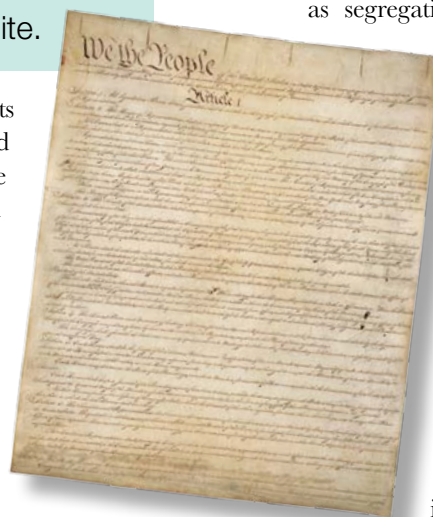
This struggle for civil rights has remained for a hundred years because there are persons among us who are still the victims of the psychology of chattel slavery and are yet blinded to the verdict of history and indifferent to the logic of life, and in deep rebellion against the voice of God. Some believe that their very future and the future well-being of their families depend on keeping alive the cursed demon of segregation. In the language of one segregationist: "Yes, we believe in segregation, and we will not be changed. We will not be frightened or forced. We will oppose you with every ounce of strength that we have. We will

fight you from breakfast until noon. We will eat our noon-day meal and then re-turn to the field of battle and fight you until sunset. If opportunity permits we will catch a bite to eat in the twilight and return to our post and fight until the morning comes." With such determination, with such faith in the way of segregation, with such commitment to the evils of discrimination, and with such opponents of democracy and freedom, it is no surprise that the struggle for civil rights has remained so long and still re-mains one of the grave struggles of the land and country.

The second reason why the struggle for civil rights has continued is that the segregated does not and cannot accept segregation as a way of life. The bound men have read with care the great promises of our Federal Constitution, and they have heard clearly the pronouncements of statesmen, and have followed the logic of every philosopher of freedom, and they now know that segregation and racial discrimination have no logical or legitimate place in the American character and constitution. The segregated is just as determined to destroy the awful demand of racial segregation as segregationists are to keep it alive.

This struggle will continue because of the inner nature of the segregated themselves. There has been implanted in the hearts and minds of all men the hope, the love, and expectation of freedom, and this inner conviction compels us, and

the freedom of soul constrains us so that we cannot rest in chains or be at peace in a house of bondage, or compromise with the dungeons of discrimination and accept as our lot the cruel and oppressive



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hand of those heartless masters who allow pigmentation of skin to blind them to the inner principles of truth and to the revealed purposes of God. The struggle goes on because two determinations meet: one; to enslave, and the other; to be free, and here can be no compromise, and from the task of solving the problem of freedom there must be no retreat.

SOME SUGGESTIONS TO THE AMERICAN NEGRO

But we as a people must keep ever before us the true meaning of our struggle so that we will never be used as tools in the hands of those who love not the nation's cause but seek the nation's hurt and not our help. Hence there are some things that we must do.

1. In our struggle for civil rights we must remain always in the mainstream of American democracy. Our cause must never be divorced from the American cause, and our struggle must not be separated from the American struggle. We must stick to law and order, for as I have said in the past I say now, there are no problems in American life that cannot be solved through commitment to the highest laws of our land and in obedience to the American philosophy and way of life. In spite of criticisms and notwithstanding threats and open attacks, I have not retreated from this position and never will as long as America is the America of the Federal Constitution and a land of due process of law. We cannot win our battle through force and unreasonable intimidation. As a minority group we cannot win outside of the protection and power of the just laws of this land. Read history with open eyes and attentive minds, and we will discover that no minority group has and can win in a struggle by the direct confrontation of the majority and by employing the same type of pressures and powers that the majority possess in abundance. The hope of the minority struggle is with the just laws of the land

and the moral and constructive forces that are germane to this nation's life and character.

While we must be determined to achieve the best, we must not be guided by a spirit of revenge, blind emotions, and uncontrolled temper. When we act by these baser emotions we find ourselves contradicting ourselves. We will deny freedom of speech to those who differ with us, and will seek to do the things that will embarrass others however costly it may be to us and to them. When we are guided by revenge we do not choose our program of action wisely. There are some groups who are thus motivated, will go in, sit in, or lie in, in places that have objected to their presence. These same groups when they are dissatisfied in places that have accepted them, will give up their achieved rights and walk out in protest and revenge. Our actions must be guided both by logic and by law.

NEGROS MUST BECOME REGISTERED VOTERS

and fight their battles in the polling booth.

2. The methods that we employ in the present struggle must not lead us into open opposition to the laws of the land. In some cases the technique of direct action and

demonstrations have led to mob violence and to vandalism. At least some who have desired to practice these negative methods have used the technique of so-called direct action.

3. Negroes must become registered voters and fight their battles in the polling booth. In the coming campaign we must not allow our prejudices, our hatred for individuals, to lead us into emotional outbursts and disrespect. The candidates contending for the presidency of the United States deserve, and should enjoy, the respect from every American citizen. It is beneath the dignity of this fair land of ours to seek to howl down, and to boo from platforms any candidate whom we do not favor. We must make choice of the candidate whom we think will serve the best interest of this nation and the nation's cause, and then take our ballot and help to elect our choice. As I told this convention in 1956, I tell you again, the ballot is our most important weapon. We must not neglect it, forfeit or sell it, but use it for the protection of the nation, the promotion of freedom, the promotion of every citizen,



Participants in the 54-mile march from Selma to Montgomery, AL, above, faced violence and death at the hands of Selma police in several marches led by Martin Luther King to stop discrimination in voting. President Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act, a landmark piece of national legislation, on August 6, 1965, with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks looking on, left.

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and for the glory of the United States of America. What I said in 1956 I still say now.

4. Negroes must still make their own leaders. We must not expect the public press, radio, and television to do this job for us. These news media are too busy with other responsibilities to be assigned the task of choosing Negro leaders to represent the race in these days of stress and strain. Negroes must not forget that we have many fields in which leaders are necessary and important, and we should accept and follow the leaders in their respective field; that is, when they are right. We have political leaders, many of whom are worthy of our confidence and our respect. We shall follow them and show our appreciation for them. We have some dedicated civil rights leaders. We should respect them and follow them in their chosen field when they are right. We have religious leaders. We should respect and follow them when they are committed to the task of human betterment, human uplift, and the work of re-making the social order in the name of justice, righteousness, and peace.

We have worthy business leaders who can show us the way to improve our economic status, and to develop our available economic resources. Let us follow them. We have educators who are making their contribution in the field of thought and of mental growth. Let us honor them and respect them, and let us not discourage Negro educators by advocating directly or indirectly, that they are by nature inferior to educators in other racial groups.

We have athletes and comedians. Let us still applaud our athletes when they achieve on the field of competition, and let us join with others and freely laugh at the jokes that our comedians give. But we must not confuse these various fields. There must not develop any dictatorship of any one field, and athletes and comedians must not make the mistake of assuming the role of political, religious, and cultural leaders. We as a race must see to it that each man serves

in his field, and we must not allow the white community to pick our leaders or to tell us what Negro we should follow.

5. Let us be courageous enough not only to oppose the wrong and the un-American actions in our nation, but we must also appreciate and rejoice in the achievements of our nation. There are some recent achievements which give us reason for hope, grounds for trust, and basis for rejoicing.

Ten years ago the Supreme Court of the United States rose above its old concept of separate but equal, and declared that segregation had no place in America's system of public education. This year, after a long, hard, and laborious fight, the

LET US BE COURAGEOUS ENOUGH

not only to oppose the wrong and the un-American actions in our nation, but we must also appreciate and rejoice in the achievements of our nation.

Congress of the United States passed the strongest civil rights bill in its history, and the president signed into law a document that said that segregation has no place in American life and destiny. The call is to all of us to accept these facts and build on them. We must not ignore the constructive laws of our land, we must not organize, condone, or support mobs that parade in the name of freedom. We must not turn aside from decency and the constructive American standards in our quest for freedom. In our haste let us not be haughty. In our determination we must not become detrimental, and in our demonstrations we cannot afford to damn the nation of which we are a vital part.

6. DIRECT ACTION IN THE POSITIVE

We have heard much in recent months about direct action in terms of boycotts, pickets, sit-ins, and demonstrations of various kinds. In each case the purpose as stated is a lofty one; namely, the winning of civil rights and the achievement of the equality of opportunity. I repeat, these are worthy ends and desirable goals, but this kind of direct action is orientated against others, and for the most part, must be classified in the negative since they have been designed to stop, arrest, or hinder certain orderly procedures in the interest of civil rights. In some cases however, these actions have been against practices and laws considered to be both evil and unjust.

Today, I call for another type of direct action; that is, direct action in the positive which is orientated towards the Negro's ability, talent, genius, and capacity. Let us take our economic resources, however insignificant and small, and organize and harness them, not to stop the economic growth of others, but to develop our own and to help our own community. If our patronage withdrawn from any store or business enterprise will weaken said enterprise, why not organize these resources and channel them into producing enterprises that we ourselves can direct and control. In the act of boycotting, our best economic talents are not called into play, and we ourselves are less productive and seek to render others the same. Why not build for ourselves instead of boycotting what others have produced? We must not be guilty of possessing the minds and actions of a blind Sampson who pulled a massive building down upon him-self as well as his enemies, and died with them in a final act of revenge. No act of revenge will lift a race from thralldom, and any direct actions that reduce the economic strength and life of the community is sure to punish the poor as well as the rich. Direct actions that encourage and create more tensions, ill will, hostility, and hate, will tend to

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make more difficult the mental, moral, and spiritual changes essential to new growth and creativity in human relations.

Remember that when we seek to change certain acquired notions and habits of men we are seeking to change

that which is very vital in human nature. When we labor to change segregationists and racists who believe they are right, we are facing the task of re-conditioning human emotions and building within. new patterns of thought, and changing human nature itself. In addition to that type of direct action which is negative and aimed

at the correction of others, we need the type of direct action also that starts with ourselves which tends to produce a higher type of life within us as well as within others, and which aims to build a better community in which the available moral forces may be used to create new attitudes and new dispositions where human beings will regard others as they regard themselves. Why should we expect direct actions against others to bear immediate fruit, and then procrastinate and postpone the direct actions that will make us better business men, better statesmen, better thinkers, and better men and women with better homes and better fellowship NOW? Now must not only be applied to the needs for changes and attitudes of segregationists, it must also be applied to us as people and as a race when we aspire for the best and seek the more constructive and creative methods of life. We can be better now. We can acquire a better education now, we can organize our capital now and receive our share in this economy of free enterprise now. In spite of all that we have attained as a people we have not exhausted our possibilities, and the past does not define the limits of our

potential. Are we not as well equipped to respond to the call of the right, the just, the good, the highest, and the best as are the white segregationists against whom we fight? Has not the great God put in our

outs and struggle now to make the best out of the education that is now available? The call to stay out of school does not appeal to the highest in students but to the ordinary and the easy. It requires less initiative to stay out of school than it does to attend school. It requires less mental alertness to refuse to study than it does to study. Is not some education better than no education? Of course we should get all the education possible and go as far up the ladder of intellectual attainments as our powers will allow us.

We must strive for the very best opportunities, the best possible schools, and the best possible teachers, but if these are not available to us then let us make the best use of what we do have.

Remember that the future is with the person who knows, thinks, understands, and who has character and soul, and who can pro-duce, invest, create and live in harmony with the highest and the best. Of course we adults must continue to correct all the evils which make education more difficult. We must strive for quality education and seek to make available all the resources possible for the education of the young, but our young people must keep their feet in the upward path of learning and their minds stayed on the quest for truth.

The progress of the race lies not in continued street demonstrations, and the liberation of an oppressed people shall not come by acts of revenge and retaliation but by the constructive use of all available opportunities and a creative expansion of the circumstances of the past into stepping stones to higher things. ♦

African American school children entering the Mary E. Branch School in Farmville, VA, center.



WE MUST STRIVE FOR THE VERY BEST

opportunities, the best possible schools, and the best possible teachers, but if these are not available to us then let us make the best use of what we do have.

souls the thirst for truth and righteousness? Are we not endowed as co-workers with the great creative spirit of the universe? Then we need not wait until all is well before we harness our resources and venture upon new ways of life and creativity.

We must not play ourselves too cheap or postpone the day of greater things when the hour of fulfillment is already at hand. To the leaders of school boycotts who have called children to remain out of school in order to help correct the evils and errors of an imperfect system of education, are you willing now to use your influence to lead young people to desert the ranks of drop-

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I HAVE A DREAM

MARTIN L. KING

<http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/texts/mlkdream.html>

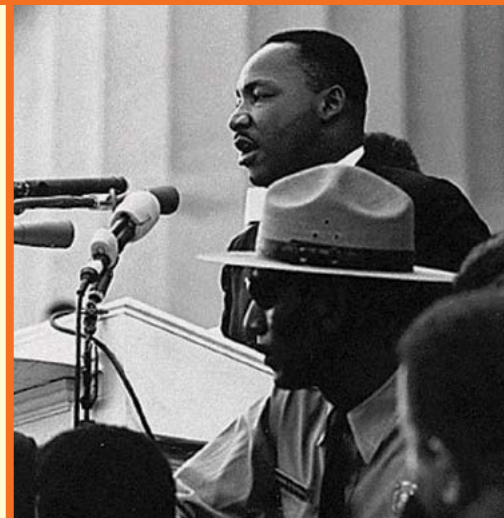
Martin Luther King's landmark speech on the state of racial equality and the civil rights movement delivered on the footsteps of the Lincoln Memorial.

Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This momentous decree came as a great beacon light of hope to millions of Negro slaves who had been seared in the flames of withering injustice. It came as a joyous daybreak to end the long night of captivity.

But one hundred years later, we must face the tragic fact that the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. So we have come here today to dramatize an appalling condition.

In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check --- a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds". But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation. So we have come to cash this check --- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now is the time to make real the promises of democracy. Now is the time to rise from the dark and



Martin Luther King, Jr. delivering "I Have a Dream" at the 1963 Washington DC Civil Rights March.

GROWING UP COLORED

I HAVE A DREAM

– CONTINUED –

desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.

It would be fatal for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundation of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges.

But there is something that I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred.

We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to a distrust of all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. We can not walk alone.

And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who are asking the devotees of civil rights, "when will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as the Negro is the victim of unspeakable horrors of police brutality. We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream.

I am not unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some of

GROWING UP COLORED

I HAVE A DREAM

– CONTINUED –

you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered by the winds of police brutality. You have been the veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work with the faith that unearned suffering is redemptive.

Go back to Mississippi, go back to Alabama, go back to South Carolina, go back to Georgia, go back to Louisiana, go back to the slums and ghettos of our northern cities, knowing that somehow this situation can and will be changed. Let us not wallow in the valley of despair.

I say to you today, my friends, that in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed—"We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slaveowners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day the state of Alabama, whose governor's lips are presently dripping with the words of interposition and nullification, will be transformed into a situation where little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls and walk together as sisters and brothers.

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, and rough places will be made plains, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith with which I return to the south. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With

GROWING UP COLORED

I HAVE A DREAM

– CONTINUED –



View from the Lincoln Memorial toward the Washington Monument on August 28, 1963

this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with a new meaning "My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing. Land where my fathers died, land of the pilgrim's pride, from every mountainside, let freedom ring."

And if America is to be a great nation this must come true. So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. Let freedom ring from the heightening Alleghenies of Pennsylvania.

Let freedom ring from the snowcapped Rockies of Colorado.

Let freedom ring from the curvaceous peaks of California.

But not only that—let freedom ring from Stone Mountain in Georgia.

Let freedom ring from Lookout Mountain of Tennessee.

Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi. From every mountainside, let freedom ring.

When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men 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!" ♦

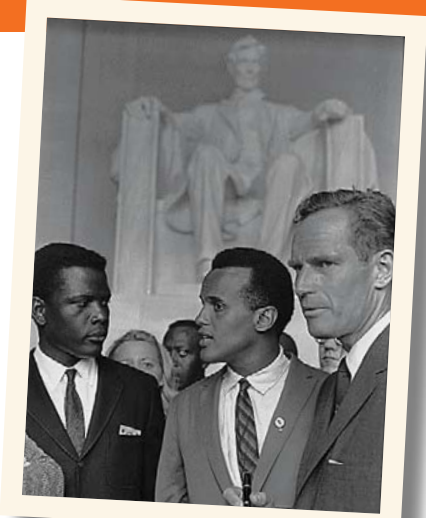
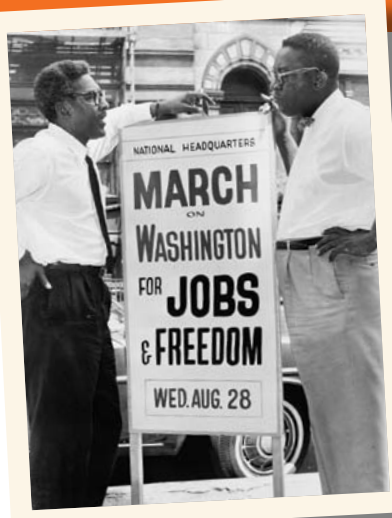
GROWING UP COLORED

MARCH ON WASHINGTON

<http://www.nationalportal.org/content/march-washington>



March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, Washington, DC, August 28, 1963.



ADDITIONAL IMAGES: Bayard Rustin (left) and Cleveland Robinson (right), organizers of the March, on August 7, 1963, pictured to left. Demonstrator at the March, above. Actors Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, and Charlton Heston in the Lincoln Memorial during the March, right.

GROWING UP COLORED

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT, 1964

TITLE II—INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AGAINST DISCRIMINATION IN PLACES OF PUBLIC ACCOMMODATION (Excerpt)

<http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?doc=97>

SEC. 201.

(a) All persons shall be entitled to the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, and privileges, advantages, and accommodations of any place of public accommodation, as defined in this section, without discrimination or segregation on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin.

(b) Each of the following establishments which serves the public is a place of public accommodation within the meaning of this title if its operations affect commerce, or if discrimination or segregation by it is supported by State action:

- (1) any inn, hotel, motel, or other establishment which provides lodging to transient guests, other than an establishment located within a building which contains not more than five rooms for rent or hire and which is actually occupied by the proprietor of such establishment as his residence;
- (2) any restaurant, cafeteria, lunchroom, lunch counter, soda fountain, or other facility principally engaged in selling food for consumption on the premises, including, but not limited to, any such facility located on the premises of any retail establishment; or any gasoline station;
- (3) any motion picture house, theater, concert hall, sports arena, stadium or other place of exhibition or entertainment; and
- (4) any establishment (A)(i) which is physically located within the premises of any establishment otherwise covered by this subsection, or (ii) within the premises of which is physically located any such covered establishment, and (B) which holds itself out as serving patrons of such covered establishment.

(c) The operations of an establishment affect commerce within the meaning of this title if

- (1) it is one of the establishments described in paragraph (1) of subsection (b);
- (2) in the case of an establishment described in paragraph (2) of subsection (b), it serves or offers to serve interstate travelers or a substantial portion of the food which it serves, or gasoline or other products which it sells, has moved in commerce;
- (3) in the case of an establishment described in paragraph (3) of subsection (b), it customarily presents films, performances, athletic teams, exhibitions, or other sources of entertainment which move in commerce; and
- (4) in the case of an establishment described in paragraph (4) of subsection (b), it is physically located within the premises of, or there is physically located within its premises, an establishment the operations of which affect commerce within the meaning of this subsection. For purposes of this section, "commerce" means travel, trade, traffic, commerce, transportation, or communication among the several States, or between the District of Columbia and any State, or between any foreign country or any territory or possession and any State or the District of Columbia, or between points in the same State but through any other State or the District of Columbia or a foreign country.

SEC. 202.

All persons shall be entitled to be free, at any establishment or place, from discrimination or segregation of any kind on the ground of race, color, religion, or national origin, if such discrimination or segregation is or purports to be required by any law, statute, ordinance, regulation, rule, or order of a State or any agency or political subdivision thereof.

SEC. 203.

No person shall (a) withhold, deny, or attempt to withhold or deny, or deprive or attempt to deprive, any person of any right or privilege secured by section 201 or 202, or (b) intimidate, threaten, or coerce, or attempt to intimidate, threaten, or coerce any person with the purpose of interfering with any right or privilege secured by section 201 or 202, or (c) punish or attempt to punish any person for exercising or attempting to exercise any right or privilege secured by section 201 or 202. ♦



Lyndon B. Johnson signs the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Among the guests behind him is Martin Luther King, Jr.