

# THE NEGRO "AMERICAN" AND CIVIL RIGHTS

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American Colonies declared their independence and cast off the economic and political yoke of Great Britain. Their desires and theory of government were incorporated in the now famous Declaration of Independence which has since become the Bible of American Political Philosophy. Derived in part from John Locke's theory of the contractual origin of civil society, the Declaration of Independence embodied what was considered the natural rights of man, and the architects of American Democracy held these truths to be self-evident: "That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with inherent and unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed."

In view of these noble and sacred principles, it would appear that the "Negro Question" should never have arisen in the United States. However, this is, unfortunately, not the case. The unrest and desire for "the rights of man" amongst the American Negroes is but a continuation of the struggle of men throughout modern history to gain liberty and personal respect.

The anti-integration factions in the United States have no moral, religious, social or economic grounds on which to stand in their absolute denial of the right of the Negro to the attainment of life, liberty and happiness. For a man or a group of men to assert their belief in the teachings of Christian religion and, at the same time, condone the suppression of a race is the ultimate in hypocrisy. Such Christian belief as "Love thy Neighbor" and "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" and the contents of the Declaration of Independence were not formulated for any race, be it white, black, yellow, or red.

They apply to a man identified with himself, and not with the color of his skin. The greatest condemnation of the actions of the segregationists can be expressed on moral and religious issues since in the United States a white man is deemed better

than a Negro simply because he is white. It begins and ends at this point. The relative standards of education, personal morals, and individual character play no part in determining whether a man be denied or given the rights to which he is entitled under a democratic system of government.

It stands to the lasting shame of the United States that its armed forces in World War II contained many Negroes. Did they fight for the conditions under which they are now unjustly forced to live, or did they enter the conflict to protect their nation? In view of this, where is the justification for their present existence.

The religious aspect of the condemnation can best be understood by a consideration of a famous painting in which Christ is depicted blessing children of all races. The point here is painfully clear.

At the present moment the question which concerns the Government is what will develop if the present state of affairs continues. America has already lost a good deal of face overseas; this is not surprising since, by her own example, she has shown the democratic system so openly abused.

Rancor, violence, disunity and national shame can only hamper America's national standing and security. To paraphrase

the words of Lincoln: "In giving freedom to the Negro we assure freedom to the free honourable alike in what we give and what we preserve."

On June 19, President Kennedy introduced the "CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1963" to the Congress of the United States. Perhaps the most important part of this bill occurs in the preamble, where it is stated that: "Discrimination by reason of race, color, religion, or national origin is incompatible with the concepts of liberty and equality to which the government of the United States is dedicated. In recent years substantial steps have been taken toward eliminating such discrimination throughout the nation. Never-

denial of certain individual rights."

The United States government has taken action through the courts and by other means to protect those who are peacefully demonstrating to obtain access to these public facilities; and it has taken action to bring an end to discrimination in rail, bus and airline terminals, to open up restaurants and other public facilities in all buildings leased as well as owned by the Federal government, and to assure full equality of access to all federally owned parks, forests and other recreational areas. When uncontrolled mob action directly threatened the nondiscriminatory use of transportation facilities in May, 1961, Fed-

The unemployment rate of Negro workers is more than twice as high as that of the working force as a whole. In many of America's cities, both north and south, the number of jobless Negro youth—creates an atmosphere of frustration, resentment and unrest which does not bode well for the future. Delinquency, vandalism, gang warfare and crime are all directly related to unemployment among whites and Negroes alike—and recent labor difficulties in Philadelphia may well be only the beginning if more jobs are not found in the larger northern cities in particular.

Employment opportunities, moreover, play a major role in determining whether the rights described above are meaningful. There is little value in a Negro's obtaining the right to be admitted to hotels and restaurants if he has no cash in his pocket and no job.

The Negro desires for equal rights have been, admirably stated by author, James Baldwin, a Negro, the essence of his argument being: "At the root of the Negro problem is the necessity of the white man to find a way of living with the Negro in order to live with himself."

American History, as Baldwin sees it, is an unending story of man's inhumanity to man, of the white's refusal to see the black simply as another human being, of the delusions and the Negro's demoralization.

These serious contradictions in the practice of Democracy in America must be removed immediately, it is to be hoped and prayed for that the Civil Rights Bill will become American Law.

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the less, many citizens of the United States, solely because of their race, color, or national origin, are denied rights and privileges accorded to other citizens and thereby subjected to inconveniences, humiliations, and hardships. Such discrimination impairs the general welfare of the United States by preventing the fullest development of the capabilities of the whole citizenry and my limiting participation in the economic, political, and cultural life of the nation.

"The Negro's drive for justice, however, has not stood still—nor will it, it is now clear, until full equality is achieved. The growing and understandable dissatisfaction of Negro citizens with the present pace of desegregation, and their increased determination to secure for themselves the equality of opportunity and treatment to which they are rightfully entitled, have underscored what should already have been clear: the necessity of the Congress enacting this year—but also additional legislation providing legal remedies for the

eral Marshals were employed to restore order and prevent potentially widespread personal and property damage. Growing nationwide concern with this problem, however, makes it clear that further Federal action is needed now to secure the right of all citizens to the full enjoyment of all facilities which are open to the general public.

Such legislation is clearly consistent with the U.S. Constitution and with the concepts of both human rights and property rights.

Discrimination in education is one basic cause of the other inequalities and hardships inflicted upon the Negro citizens. The lack of equal educational opportunity deprives the individual of economic opportunity, restricts his contribution as a citizen and community leader, encourages him to drop out of school and imposes a heavy burden on the effort to eliminate discriminatory practices and prejudices from American national life.

Unemployment falls with special cruelty on minority groups.

## -Letter-

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of the most congenial student bodies in its history. We need this unity and togetherness. Let's keep wearing those smiles and being in a jovial mood!

Robert L. Parker

