

Robeson Urges Government Defend Constitution Against Racists

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The events transpiring in Little Rock, Ark.,¹ constitute a bold and desperate attack upon constitutional government. Our national morality and the political integrity of the nation will be tested to the greatest degree in this struggle. No man or woman who loves this country and retains faith in the ultimate realization for all of the concepts of liberty that gave it birth can remain silent. The menacing implications of the theories of white supremacy stand exposed. Little Rock is in my opinion a symptom of the evils of racism that go to the very foundation of this system of government.

The logical consequences of a half century of compromise, procrastination, passivity and uncertainty surrounding the constitutional rights of the Negro people and their dignity as human beings can now be clearly seen. The half-century's failure of the federal government to protect the lives, property and rights of the Negro has produced the imminent danger of bloody racist outbreaks against Negro citizens that cannot possibly be localized should one occur. It has jeopardized orderly constitutional procedure throughout the nation and threatens the solidarity of the Union.

There is but one answer. The issues raised in the fight for Negro rights must be resolved in favor of equal democracy, equal justice, equality of opportunity for Negroes in every phase of national life. The responsibility to institute these forms of race relations rests upon the federal government and every branch of that government. There is no alternative if our country is to be saved from grave internal disorders and our national morality is to retain the last remnants of respect it has abroad.

What excuse can there be for hesitancy? The demands of the Negro people are consistent with the highest character of morality. They have been and remain consistent with the Bill of Rights and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution. The demands of the Negro people are consistent with the solemn obligations attached to our membership in the United Nations. I believe that history itself has repudiated the government's tolerance of the force and violence that has been employed to prevent the full participation of Negro citizens in the political, industrial and cultural life of America.

It is in this sphere of human relations that the greatest danger to our democracy exists. The unjustifiable attempts to legally lynch the Scottsboro Boys in Alabama, and the young Negro men known as the Trenton Six in New Jersey; the railroading of Rosalie Ingram and her two sons to life imprisonment in Georgia; the legal murder of Willie McGee in Mississippi; and a host of unpunished murders of innocent Negroes logically and inevitably have led up to Little Rock.

The blows that the Department of Justice has dealt those political forces which defended the rights of these victims and persistently called for the enforcement of constitutional liberties and human rights has been as a green light to the unrestricted racists.

The Vatican press has dealt realistically with racial discrimination. "Racial discrimination," it holds, "cannot be excused from any point of view." All who profess it should be deprived of all political rights and not permitted to hold office, it held. "There is no graver crime," the Pope's press states. "It runs counter to nature, to character, to aspirations and to the laws of the United States. It runs counter to the Constitution of the United States, which exalts and sanctions equality of men."

I recall that the racial attacks upon Negroes in South Africa resulting from "apartheid" policies were the object of a resolution adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations December 5, 1952. A commission was set up to study the racial situation in the Union of South Africa in the light of the "Purpose and Principle" of the Charter and with due regard to Articles 55 (e) and 56 which request members to co-operate with the Organization in order to promote respect for an observance of human rights. The status of the Negro in the USA violates the Charter of the UN and its Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is my opinion that the leaders of the fight against racism in America should carry this struggle again to the UN.²

It is my conviction that a national conference should be called to protest against and to plan a national campaign challenging every expression of white supremacy. No voice should be denied expression regardless of political views.

We stand confronted by a program of evil men which would destroy the last remnants of democracy in America. It has caused the federal government to vacillate and procrastinate in a manner menacing to the interests of the American people. History demands united action on the part of the people of our country to put an end to the myths of

white superiority. Common sense demands that the racists be removed from office; that racism be legally declared a crime and that the Constitution of the United States be defended with all the agencies of government.