



Department of Justice

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Address by
ATTORNEY GENERAL RAMSEY CLARK
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If we could disenthral ourselves from the immediate--what happened last week, yesterday, earlier today and is expected, or prepared for release, later today--we might gain some clearer notion of where we are and whither we tend. Any surveyor knows that to plot a course of points too close together is to risk gross error.

Saturated as we are with happenings, we obscure massive change which is the fundamental fact of our existence. We easily miss the major trend because of the fascination of the minor event. Numbers is the problem: Numbers of everything, including quite prominently, words, written and spoken.

Whatever happened to Professor William Strunk, Jr.'s Rule 13 of the elements of style? How was it lost, when it was most needed? It it titled you recall "Omit Needless Words"

and is more than an element of style, it is an essential to communication in a mass society. It requires that vigorous communication be concise--that every word tell.

Were it not for the clear necessity of a filibuster compelled by exposure to questioning, I could happily comply with Rule 13, omit needless words, and sit down now. The most basic of instincts, self-preservation, counsels keep talking.

Disengaged, we might say of civil rights that in a time of great change, to a degree never before accomplished in an ordered society, broad advances have been made. Indeed, history might place the progress of the American Negro in our times among its greatest chapters in man's never-ending quest for freedom and justice. Our achievements are remarkable.

But for all that has been done, our relative position, because of the sweeping change in which we are caught, has not improved. We may have slipped.

My thesis is that we live in a time of vast and fundamental change. Population increase and technological developments impel us to accelerating speeds. Our thought and action must match their pace. We add more Americans each year than lived when the Republic was founded. Two-hundred million today, we were but seventy-six million in 1900, but will be three-hundred forty million or more 33 years hence in 2000. Science and technology

doubles our knowledge of the physical world each decade: a 16 fold increase in 40 years and the utilization of new technology expands with discovery.

The leisurely adaptations of yesterday are a luxury we can no longer afford. Foresight and diligence are the order of the day.

Nearly two million Negroes have left the South in this decade. They will compete in new markets. Their education will determine in large measure their ability to compete. Between 1960 and 1965, the percentage of non-white students in public schools in Baltimore increased from 50 to 61; in Boston from 16 to 26; in Chicago from 40 to 52; Detroit 43 to 55; Houston 26 to 34; Philadelphia 47 to 56; St. Louis 49 to 60; San Francisco 33 to 43. This is five short years. What can we expect in the present and the next five? What of the colleges which must be our hope for leadership? While Negroes comprise 11 percent of our total population, less than five percent of all college students are Negro. More than one-half of all Negro college students attend predominantly Negro colleges in the Southern and Border States. These predominantly Negro institutions have low scales of faculty pay, low percentages of doctorates on their faculties, low capital expenditures and limited endowments. Student dropout rates are high.

Perhaps one-half of the graduates of these predominantly Negro colleges will themselves become teachers. Another generation will be trained by them.

Poor Richard told us "the only thing more expensive than education is ignorance" but he could not have foreseen the full import of his words today.

Education is the foundation for employment which is the beginning of opportunity for the poor.

A generation after Franklin Roosevelt found us one-third ill housed, ill clothed, ill fed, we know 39 percent of our Negroes, compared with 12 percent of the balance of our people, live in poverty. Unemployment for non-white in March was 7.4 percent compared to 3.1 percent for whites. Over 30 percent of the Negro girls and 25 percent of the Negro boys between 16 and 21 cannot find employment. The heavy concentration of the unemployment is in the ghettos where at times in places it exceeds 50 percent. And among the employed 6.7 percent of the non-whites are in professions compared to 13.3 percent of the whites; the non-white managers and proprietors are 2.6 percent compared to 10.7 percent for whites, while white non-farm laborers are 4.2 percent compared to 11.7 percent of the non-whites.

More persons are living in segregated sections of cities today than ever before. The rising number of children living in urban ghettos is creating more new de facto school segregation than all our legal efforts against traditional rule-imposed school segregation are able to eliminate. The Negroes in schools less than 95 percent Negro has risen from 1 percent to 12.25 percent since 1963. Yet as a direct result of housing segregation, there is more school segregation today than ever before in our history.

Not only are more people living in ghettos, the ghettos themselves are getting worse. From 1960 to 1965, the average family income in Watts, for example, dropped 8 percent from \$5,100 to \$4,700, while the national average income was rising 14 percent. In Hough, a comparable Negro ghetto in Cleveland, average family income dropped 16 percent--down from \$4,700 to \$3,900.

Thus while we can take heart at the 72 percent increase in Negro voter registration in five states since enactment of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; at the registration of more than 5,000 Negroes in nine counties since federal examiners were assigned only last week, at the historic decree by the Fifth Circuit Court on March 29 setting clear standards for school desegregation and the follow-up government motions in more than 40 school cases; at the lowering of racial bars by places of public accommodations; this is clearly not enough.

We must move forward on broad fronts; education, employment, housing, health, and poverty. We must secure the remaining legal rights, still denied minorities, such as jury service, and finally adequately protect the federal rights of all our people. We are confronted with an immense and growing need which must be met while it can be met. The greater tasks are still ahead.

We must move forward because our ideals dictate it, because justice requires it and because our circumstances compel it. We must move forward despite the distraction of those who call for violence or divert our attention to unrelated issues.

"We are" as Camus said "all condemned to live together." But it is a condemnation for which we should be thankful. Huddie Ledbetter, the immortal Minstrel of Mooringsport, Louisiana, put it better. "We're in the same boat brother and when you shake one end you're gonna rock the other."

We have an unprecedented challenge. We should be grateful it is ours. For as President Johnson said in his address at Howard University, "It is the glorious opportunity of this generation to end the one huge wrong of the American Nation and, in so doing, to find America for ourselves, with the same immense thrill of discovery which gripped those who first began to realize that here, at last, was a home for Freedom.