



Department of Justice

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE
UNTIL 10:00 A.M. EST
MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 1989

ADDRESS

OF

THE HONORABLE DICK THORNBURGH
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE

THE 20TH ANNUAL ECUMENICAL SERVICE

MONDAY, JANUARY 16, 1989
EBENEZER BAPTIST CHURCH
ATLANTA, GEORGIA

NOTE: Because Mr. Thornburgh often speaks from notes, the speech as delivered may vary from the text. However, he stands behind this speech as printed.

America's history is perhaps most accurately reflected in the beliefs, the dreams, and the sacrifices of our greatest citizens.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was one of those citizens...one who held the deepest beliefs...who dreamed the loftiest of dreams....and who made the ultimate sacrifice in pursuit of those beliefs and those dreams.

To Dr. King peace and love were the only effective answers to violence and hate.

He believed that racial harmony and social progress could be brought about by peaceful means... and dreamed that all people could live together in fellowship and goodwill.

And for that dream, he died, striving to the end against the hatred and intolerance of those who did not share his vision.

Dr. King believed that every person on this earth possesses certain inalienable rights.

And from that belief sprang his dream that the men and women, and all the children, of our nation and this world -- regardless of race, religion, or culture -- would be freed from bigotry and racism.

And in his struggle to realize that dream, he died, trying to free the oppressed from the bonds which enslaved them.

Dr. King believed that educational, economic and social opportunities are essential to the fulfillment of individual freedom.

And he dreamed that justice and equality would one day allow everyone to realize that freedom.

And he died on the long journey to bring those opportunities to all who might seek them.

A giant in the pageant of Americans who have struggled for freedom and human dignity, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. walked the path of peace through a world besieged by ignorance and fear.

Through his beliefs and his dreams, he strove to reach a promised land, by setting an example of conscience for all Americans to follow...an example of conscience which continues to lead us in our pursuit of justice and right, as individuals, as a government and as a nation.

An example which is exemplified in the words inscribed on the facade of our United States Department of Justice:

"Justice in the life and conduct of the state is possible only as first it resides in the hearts and souls of the citizens."

Dr. King's teachings and his service to his fellow man stands as a lasting contribution to this nation and to the world...a contribution for which we will always be grateful.

His unflagging belief in basic human rights inspired men and women everywhere...and we thrive on that inspiration.

He gave us the gift of us his courage and wisdom...and we will cherish that gift forever.

He gave us a dream of justice and equality....and we hold tight to that dream.

He gave us his spirit...a spirit which death did not conquer...and which will never fade from our vision.

And finally, he gave us his life...that life which we honor today.

To this man, a martyr slain in his prime while trying to make America, and the world, a place where equality, justice, freedom and peace would flourish...

To this man, who had a dream of brotherly love to counter every nightmare of anger and hate...

To this man, who gave his life so that America might find its soul...we say: "Thank you for showing us the path...thank you for lighting our way."

And may God bless your memory to this nation and to the world.