

PPT accompaniment for the Consortium's

Sitting Down to Stand Up for Democracy



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Daybreak in Alabama, by Langston Hughes

When I get to be a composer
I'm gonna write me some music about
Daybreak in Alabama
And I'm gonna put the purtiest songs in it
Rising out of the ground like a swamp mist
And falling out of heaven like soft dew.
I'm gonna put some tall tall trees in it
And the scent of pine needles
And the smell of red clay after rain
And long red necks
And poppy colored faces
And big brown arms
And the field daisy eyes
Of black and white black white black people
And I'm gonna put white hands
And black hands and brown and yellow hands
And red clay earth hands in it
Touching everybody with kind fingers
And touching each other natural as dew
In that dawn of music when I
Get to be a composer
And write about daybreak
In Alabama.





Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand today, 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 their captivity.

But one hundred years later, the Negro still is not free. One hundred years later, the life of the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of segregation and the chains of discrimination. One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languished in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land. And so we've come here today to dramatize a shameful condition.

In a sense we've 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, yes, black men as well as white 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."

And so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, 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 slave owners 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 state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of 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, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of "interposition" and "nullification" -- one day right there in Alabama little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.

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



The Montgomery Bus Boycott

December 1, 1955

- NAACP member Rosa Parks is arrested for refusing to give up her seat at the front of the "colored section" of a bus to a white passenger, defying a southern custom of the time.
- In response to her arrest the Montgomery black community launches a bus boycott, which will last for more than a year, until the buses are desegregated Dec. 21, 1956.
- As newly elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., is instrumental in leading the boycott.



“People always say that I didn't give up my seat because I was tired, but that isn't true. I was not tired physically, or no more tired than I usually was at the end of a working day. I was not old, although some people have an image of me as being old then. I was forty-two. No, the only tired I was, was tired of giving in.”



The Montgomery Bus Boycott

December 1, 1955

- Interestingly, nine months before Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin had been the first person to resist bus segregation in Montgomery, Alabama, preceding Parks.
- The court case stemming from her refusal to give up her seat on the bus, decided by the U.S. District Court, eventually declared bus segregation in Alabama unconstitutional.
- Montgomery's black leaders did not publicize Colvin's pioneering effort for long because she was a teenager and became pregnant while unmarried. The NAACP leaders worried about using her to represent their movement, given the complicated society of the time.





The Greensboro Sit-Ins

February 1, 1960

- Four black students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College begin a sit-in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter.
- Although they are refused service, they are allowed to stay at the counter. The event triggers many similar nonviolent protests throughout the South.
- Six months later the original four protesters are served lunch at the same Woolworth's counter.
- Student sit-ins would be effective throughout the Deep South in integrating parks, swimming pools, theaters, libraries, and other public facilities.



The Royal Ice Cream Company, 1957 - Durham, NC

- The 1960 Greensboro sit-ins sparked a national movement but were not the first such action. Individual and group protest actions prior to 1960, generally isolated and often without wider impact, took place across the state and region.
- For example, in 1957, Durham's Royal Ice Cream Company had a doorway on the Dowd Street side with a "White Only" sign and, on Roxboro Street, a sign marked "Colored Only." A partition separated the two sections inside the building.
- On June 23, 1957, Rev. Douglas Moore, pastor of a Durham church, and a group of African American protestors took up booths in the white section of the parlor. When they refused to budge, the manager called the police. They were then charged with trespassing.
- On June 24 they were found guilty of trespassing and each fined \$10 plus court costs.
- On appeal the case went to Superior Court and a jury trial. An all-white jury rendered a guilty verdict of trespass on each defendant. The case was appealed to the North Carolina Supreme Court that upheld the law regarding segregated facilities. On July 15, 1958, the seven protestors paid fines totaling \$433.25. Attorneys appealed the decision to the U.S. Supreme Court but the High Court refused to hear the case.



Southern Negro Leaders Conference on Transportation and Nonviolent Integration

...But far beyond this, we call upon them [African Americans] to accept Christian Love In full knowledge of its power to defy evil. We call upon them to understand that non-violence is not a symbol of weakness or cowardice, but as Jesus demonstrated, non-violent resistance transforms weakness into strength and breeds courage in face of danger. We urge them, no matter how great the provocation to dedicate themselves to this motto:

Not one hair of one white person shall be harmed.

We advocate non-violence in words, thought and deed, we believe this spirit and this spirit alone can overcome the decades of mutual fear and suspicion that have infested and poisoned our Southern culture...





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The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

My dear Mr. President:

We expect you will be interested in our ^XFreedom Ride, 1961. It is designed to forward the completion of integrated bus service and accommodations in the Deep South.

About fifteen CORE members will travel as inter-state passengers on Greyhound and Trailways routes. We leave Washington early in May and, travelling through Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi, plan to arrive in New Orleans on Wednesday, May 17th.

The group is interracial. Two-thirds are Southerners. Three are women. We propose to challenge, en route, every form of segregation met by the bus passenger. We are experienced in, and dedicated to, the Gandhian principles of non-violence.

Our plans are entirely open. Further information is available to all.

Freedom Ride is an appeal to the best in all Americans. We travel peaceably to persuade them that Jim Crow betrays democracy. It degrades democracy at home. It debases democracy abroad. We feel that there is no way to overstate the danger that denial of democratic and constitutional rights brings to our beloved country.

And so we feel it our duty to affirm our principles by asserting our rights. With the survival of democracy at stake, there is an imperative, immediate need for acts of self-determination. "Assess your animosities and make your sons Americans," said Robert E. Lee. Freedom Ride would make that, "All your sons -- NOW!"

Sincerely yours,

James Farmer
National Director

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encs.

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"When a person places the proper value on freedom, there is nothing under the sun that he will not do to acquire that freedom. Whenever you hear a man saying he wants freedom, but in the next breath he is going to tell you what he won't do to get it, or what he doesn't believe in doing in order to get it, he doesn't believe in freedom. A man who believes in freedom will do anything under the sun to acquire . . . or preserve his freedom."

"I believe in the brotherhood of man, all men, but I don't believe in brotherhood with anybody who doesn't want brotherhood with me. I believe in treating people right, but I'm not going to waste my time trying to treat somebody right who doesn't know how to return the treatment."

