

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN

10 31 95

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF URBAN INEQUALITY

1155 EAST 60TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON
Director and Lucy Flower University Professor
of Sociology and Public Policy

IRVING B. HARRIS GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES
TEL: (312) 702-0894
FAX: (312) 702-0926

VP/Alexis/GS
Fyi - must to coordinate with
to reply - DC

October 23, 1995

Jim Dorskind

Please coordinate
the reply, with

To: President Bill Clinton

Alexis + George.

From: William Julius Wilson

In re: Your request that I send you a memorandum on the steps that ought to be taken next to address the problems of race in America.

Mr. President, it was a pleasure to see and talk to you again at the ceremony for the National Medal of Science recipients. As I indicated in our brief conversation your speech on race in Austin, Texas was outstanding. I was very pleased when you asked me to send you a memorandum on my thoughts of what we should do next. Below are my thoughts.

I think that the idea of a national Commission to study and review the national state of race relations is a very good idea at this time. To support the work of this Commission I think that you should give several additional speeches on race similar in tone and compassion to the speech you delivered in Austin. I believe that these speeches should emphasize interracial unity to overcome the racial divide rhetoric.

These speeches might point out that our nation's response to racial discord has been disappointing. In discussing the problems we have a tendency to invoke the kind of rhetoric that exacerbates rather than alleviates urban and metropolitan racial tensions. Ever since the 1992 Los Angeles riot, the media has focused heavily on the factors that divide rather than those that unite racial groups. Emphasis on racial division peaked in 1995 following the jury's verdict in the O. J. Simpson murder trial. The racial divide, as depicted in the media, seemed as wide as ever.

The extent of the racial divisions in this country should not be minimized. The different reactions to the Simpson trial and the verdict in part reflect the

fundamentally dissimilar racial experiences of blacks and whites in America—the former burdened by racial injustice, the latter largely free of the effects of bigotry and hatred. Nonetheless, you should point out that the emphasis on racial differences has obscured the fact that African Americans, whites, and other ethnic groups share many common concerns, are victimized by many common problems, and have many common values, aspirations, and hopes.

As I point out in my new book (Jobless Ghettos: How the Disappearance of Work Affects Urban Life), which will be published next summer by Knopf, if inner-city blacks are experiencing the greatest problems of joblessness, it is to a large extent a more extreme form of economic marginality that has affected most Americans since 1980. Solutions to the broader problems of economic marginality in this country, including those that stem from changes in the global economy, will go a long way toward addressing the problems of inner-city joblessness, especially if the application of resources includes wise targeting to the groups most in need of help. Discussions that emphasize common solutions to commonly shared problems promote a sense of unity, regardless of the different degree of severity to which these problems afflict certain groups. Such messages bring races together, not apart, and are especially important during periods of racial tension. You should point out, however, that in comparison with the rhetoric on racial divisions interracial unity messages have been infrequent and are generally ignored in the media.

You should also emphasize in your speeches on race that it is important to recognize that racial antagonisms, or the manifestation of racial tensions, are products of economic, political and social situations. In a 1992 op-ed article in the New York Times, entitled "The Right Message," I used this argument to point out why it is important for political leaders to channel the frustrations of average citizens in positive or constructive directions during periods of economic duress. I discussed your 1992 political campaign and I pointed out that you not only explicitly acknowledged the growing racial tension in America and the need for political leadership to unite and not divide the races, but you had actually developed a public rhetoric that reflected these concerns. This campaign rhetoric warned Americans against the distraction of pitting race against race; it urged citizens to associate their declining real incomes, increasing job insecurity, and growing pessimism with the complex but real sources of these problems. I pointed out that the use of this positive public rhetoric during a period of intense racial tension enabled you to bring together antagonistic racial groups in an effective political coalition during the primary elections—even in Louisiana where a majority of white voters supported the former Klansman David Duke in the 1991 gubernatorial election. Unfortunately, the media failed to record the significance of this event.

A vision of interracial unity that acknowledges distinctively racial problems but, nonetheless, emphasizes common solutions to common problems

is more important now than ever. Such a vision should be developed, shared, and promoted by all leaders in this country, but especially by political leaders.

Mr. President, I have in mind a vision that promotes values of racial and intergroup harmony and unity and rejects the commonly held view that race is so divisive that whites, blacks, Latinos, and other ethnic groups cannot work together in a common cause. This vision recognizes that if a political message is tailored to a white audience, racial minorities draw back, just as whites draw back when a message is tailored to minority audiences. The foundation of this vision emphasizes issues and programs that concern the families of all racial and ethnic groups so that individuals of these groups will see their mutual interests and join in a multiracial coalition to move America forward; it promotes the idea that Americans have common interests and concerns—ranging from employment to the toll of crime and drug trafficking in their neighborhoods—that cross racial and class boundaries. This vision encourages Americans to see that the application of programs to combat these problems would benefit everyone, not just the truly disadvantaged; to recognize that the division between the suburbs and the central city is partly a racial one and that it is vitally important to emphasize city-suburban cooperation, not separation; and, finally, to endorse the idea that all groups should be able to achieve full membership in society because the problems of economic and social marginality rest with the inequities in society at large and not with group deficiencies.

Mr. President, in the introduction of my new book, Jobless Ghettos, I discuss these points because I feel that a public rhetoric of interracial unity is an essential and important first step in addressing the problems of race in the United States, including those that are related to the jobless ghetto. You drew from my last book, The Truly Disadvantaged, in your 1992 campaign. I think that you will find my new book even more useful given the problems that have emerged since then. I will make sure that you receive an advanced copy. The campaign will be in full swing when it comes out.

You will note that I am not recommending that you call for new programs. If you appoint a national Commission to study race in America, the appropriate time to discuss programs would be in reaction to the Commission's recommendation. What is needed now is a change in the public discourse on race. As President of the United States you could be an effective voice in promoting this change.

If I can be of further help, please let me know. I was pleased to learn from Vice President Gore that you found the materials from the discussions on race that we had at his house useful.

Date: 11/03/95 Time: 08:52

Clinton Says Subtle Form of Racism to Blame for Widening Rift

WASHINGTON (AP) After mulling over the nation's racial problems, President Clinton said he believes a subtle form of racism is to blame for widening differences in the way blacks and whites view American society.

This racism, Clinton said, "still permeates a lot of our social intercourse in America," erecting barriers between Americans and affecting blacks more often than others.

"These preconceptions that, somehow, African Americans don't share our same values when, in fact, so many African Americans have got to go the extra mile to embrace and live by the values ... I think, is a mistake," he said.

He said he is working on a plan to combat racism, "but I'm not ready to talk about it yet. I don't want to raise a lot of false hopes."

Clinton's musings came during a one-hour, 20-minute exchange Wednesday with a dozen members of the Trotter Group, an association of black columnists and editorial writers. The Associated Press obtained a transcript of the discussion on Thursday.

The group is named for William Monroe Trotter, the black editor of the Boston Guardian who, in 1914, carried his concerns about segregation and lynching to President Woodrow Wilson at the White House.

Clinton said he is giving considerable thought to following up on the Oct. 16 Million Man March in Washington and his speech on race, given that same day at the University of Texas.

He said he is considering appointing a commission, like the 1968 Kerner Commission, to study America's racial divide. It would have a specific duty, such as "organizing some kind of dialogue" on race, he said.

A few members of Congress asked Clinton for such a commission last month, arguing that race has become a hot national issue since the acquittal of O.J. Simpson for the murder of his ex-wife and her friend.

"There needs to be both a personal response and a policy response," Clinton said. "The last thing I want to do is study a problem that we already know about and to give any of us, including the president, an excuse for inaction."

Asked if he had analyzed his perceptions about black men and black leadership since the march, Clinton said he had. The march was organized by Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan and criticized by some as a platform for Farrakhan's anti-Semitic and racist rhetoric.

"I never thought (the march) was basically about Mr. Farrakhan. ... I thought it was basically about white folks," Clinton said, and about black men's desire for whites to see them as concerned family men, not criminals. "I'm, frankly, surprised it didn't happen earlier."

Clinton cited his record in defense of several key programs as proof of his commitment to racial fairness. He credited his defense of affirmative action as a key reason Republican leaders in Congress didn't pursue a "wholesale repeal" of race- and gender-preference programs this year.

Asked why black public figures specifically Jesse Jackson, Michael Jackson, Simpson lawyer Johnnie Cochran Jr. and Farrakhan appear to be criticized as racist or anti-Semitic for statements

T-
Full
Sound
family...
Kerner Commission
letter to
Frank Rich
while
from last
info summary

more often than whites, Clinton said he felt some ``have been unfairly criticized.''

``The issue is not to try to find somebody that white people can hate, just like some black leaders are made the object of hate or disdain,' ' Clinton said. ``The issue is to try to force people who do that to come down off their high horse and talk about the real issues.''

APNP-11-03-95 0848EST

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN
10-31-95

Lyndon B. Johnson, 1965

Mar. 15 [107]

what I hope to have encompassed in this legislation. Of course, there will be amendments and changes, and extensions and deletions. But I think that our message will go to the Congress Monday. Perhaps the bill will accompany it. If not, it will go there very shortly.

We will not only expect the Congress to give fair and just consideration to the administration bill, which they have been asking for for several days now, but to give

consideration to any one suggestion, as they always do.

So if you will be back at 9 o'clock Monday, we will have a briefing on the details of the message.

We thank you for enduring us this afternoon.

Merriman Smith, United Press International: Thank you, Mr. President.

NOTE: President Johnson's thirty-eighth news conference was held in the Rose Garden at the White House at 3:45 p.m. on Saturday, March 13, 1965.

107 Special Message to the Congress: The American Promise.

March 15, 1965

[As delivered in person before a joint session at 9:02 p.m.]

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, Members of the Congress:

I speak tonight for the dignity of man and the destiny of democracy.

I urge every member of both parties, Americans of all religions and of all colors, from every section of this country, to join me in that cause.

At times history and fate meet at a single time in a single place to shape a turning point in man's unending search for freedom. So it was at Lexington and Concord. So it was a century ago at Appomattox. So it was last week in Selma, Alabama.

There, long-suffering men and women peacefully protested the denial of their rights as Americans. Many were brutally assaulted. One good man, a man of God, was killed.

There is no cause for pride in what has happened in Selma. There is no cause for self-satisfaction in the long denial of equal rights of millions of Americans. But there is cause for hope and for faith in our democracy in what is happening here tonight.

For the cries of pain and the hymns and protests of oppressed people have summoned into convocation all the majesty of this great Government—the Government of the greatest Nation on earth.

Our mission is at once the oldest and the most basic of this country: to right wrong, to do justice, to serve man.

In our time we have come to live with moments of great crisis. Our lives have been marked with debate about great issues; issues of war and peace, issues of prosperity and depression. But rarely in any time does an issue lay bare the secret heart of America itself. Rarely are we met with a challenge, not to our growth or abundance, our welfare or our security, but rather to the values and the purposes and the meaning of our beloved Nation.

The issue of equal rights for American Negroes is such an issue. And should we defeat every enemy, should we double our wealth and conquer the stars, and still be unequal to this issue, then we will have failed as a people and as a nation.

Boen
Religious
in great over
Negroes
keeping around
Pc.

C-
I copy for
me pls.
T-

For with a country as with a person, "What is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

There is no Negro problem. There is no Southern problem. There is no Northern problem. There is only an American problem. And we are met here tonight as Americans—not as Democrats or Republicans—we are met here as Americans to solve that problem.

This was the first nation in the history of the world to be founded with a purpose. The great phrases of that purpose still sound in every American heart, North and South: "All men are created equal"—"government by consent of the governed"—"give me liberty or give me death." Well, those are not just clever words, or those are not just empty theories. In their name Americans have fought and died for two centuries, and tonight around the world they stand there as guardians of our liberty, risking their lives.

Those words are a promise to every citizen that he shall share in the dignity of man. This dignity cannot be found in a man's possessions; it cannot be found in his power, or in his position. It really rests on his right to be treated as a man equal in opportunity to all others. It says that he shall share in freedom, he shall choose his leaders, educate his children, and provide for his family according to his ability and his merits as a human being.

To apply any other test—to deny a man his hopes because of his color or race, his religion or the place of his birth—is not only to do injustice, it is to deny America and to dishonor the dead who gave their lives for American freedom.

THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Our fathers believed that if this noble view of the rights of man was to flourish, it

must be rooted in democracy. The most basic right of all was the right to choose your own leaders. The history of this country, in large measure, is the history of the expansion of that right to all of our people.

Many of the issues of civil rights are very complex and most difficult. But about this there can and should be no argument. Every American citizen must have an equal right to vote. There is no reason which can excuse the denial of that right. There is no duty which weighs more heavily on us than the duty we have to ensure that right.

Yet the harsh fact is that in many places in this country men and women are kept from voting simply because they are Negroes.

Every device of which human ingenuity is capable has been used to deny this right. The Negro citizen may go to register only to be told that the day is wrong, or the hour is late, or the official in charge is absent. And if he persists, and if he manages to present himself to the registrar, he may be disqualified because he did not spell out his middle name or because he abbreviated a word on the application.

And if he manages to fill out an application he is given a test. The registrar is the sole judge of whether he passes this test. He may be asked to recite the entire Constitution, or explain the most complex provisions of State law. And even a college degree cannot be used to prove that he can read and write.

For the fact is that the only way to pass these barriers is to show a white skin.

Experience has clearly shown that the existing process of law cannot overcome systematic and ingenious discrimination. No law that we now have on the books—and I have helped to put three of them there—can ensure the right to vote when local officials are determined to deny it.

In such a case our duty must be clear to all of us. The Constitution says that no person shall be kept from voting because of his race or his color. We have all sworn an oath before God to support and to defend that Constitution. We must now act in obedience to that oath.

GUARANTEEING THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Wednesday I will send to Congress a law designed to eliminate illegal barriers to the right to vote.

The broad principles of that bill will be in the hands of the Democratic and Republican leaders tomorrow. After they have reviewed it, it will come here formally as a bill. I am grateful for this opportunity to come here tonight at the invitation of the leadership to reason with my friends, to give them my views, and to visit with my former colleagues.

I have had prepared a more comprehensive analysis of the legislation which I had intended to transmit to the clerk tomorrow but which I will submit to the clerks tonight. But I want to really discuss with you now briefly the main proposals of this legislation.

This bill will strike down restrictions to voting in all elections—Federal, State, and local—which have been used to deny Negroes the right to vote.

This bill will establish a simple, uniform standard which cannot be used, however ingenious the effort, to flout our Constitution.

It will provide for citizens to be registered by officials of the United States Government if the State officials refuse to register them.

It will eliminate tedious, unnecessary lawsuits which delay the right to vote.

Finally, this legislation will ensure that properly registered individuals are not prohibited from voting.

I will welcome the suggestions from all of

the Members of Congress—I have no doubt that I will get some—on ways and means to strengthen this law and to make it effective. But experience has plainly shown that this is the only path to carry out the command of the Constitution.

To those who seek to avoid action by their National Government in their own communities; who want to and who seek to maintain purely local control over elections, the answer is simple:

Open your polling places to all your people.

Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin.

Extend the rights of citizenship to every citizen of this land.

THE NEED FOR ACTION

There is no constitutional issue here. The command of the Constitution is plain.

There is no moral issue. It is wrong—deadly wrong—to deny any of your fellow Americans the right to vote in this country.

There is no issue of States rights or national rights. There is only the struggle for human rights.

I have not the slightest doubt what will be your answer.

The last time a President sent a civil rights bill to the Congress it contained a provision to protect voting rights in Federal elections. That civil rights bill was passed after 8 long months of debate. And when that bill came to my desk from the Congress for my signature, the heart of the voting provision had been eliminated.

This time, on this issue, there must be no delay, no hesitation and no compromise with our purpose.

We cannot, we must not, refuse to protect the right of every American to vote in every election that he may desire to participate in.

And we ought not and we cannot and we must not wait another 8 months before we get a bill. We have already waited a hundred years and more, and the time for waiting is gone.

So I ask you to join me in working long hours—nights and weekends, if necessary—to pass this bill. And I don't make that request lightly. For from the window where I sit with the problems of our country I recognize that outside this chamber is the outraged conscience of a nation, the grave concern of many nations, and the harsh judgment of history on our acts.

WE SHALL OVERCOME

But even if we pass this bill, the battle will not be over. What happened in Selma is part of a far larger movement which reaches into every section and State of America. It is the effort of American Negroes to secure for themselves the full blessings of American life.

Their cause must be our cause too. Because it is not just Negroes, but really it is all of us, who must overcome the crippling legacy of bigotry and injustice.

And we shall overcome.

As a man whose roots go deeply into Southern soil I know how agonizing racial feelings are. I know how difficult it is to reshape the attitudes and the structure of our society.

But a century has passed, more than a hundred years, since the Negro was freed. And he is not fully free tonight.

It was more than a hundred years ago that Abraham Lincoln, a great President of another party, signed the Emancipation Proclamation, but emancipation is a proclamation and not a fact.

A century has passed, more than a hundred years, since equality was promised.

And yet the Negro is not equal.

A century has passed since the day of promise. And the promise is unkept.

The time of justice has now come. I tell you that I believe sincerely that no force can hold it back. It is right in the eyes of man and God that it should come. And when it does, I think that day will brighten the lives of every American.

For Negroes are not the only victims. How many white children have gone uneducated, how many white families have lived in stark poverty, how many white lives have been scarred by fear, because we have wasted our energy and our substance to maintain the barriers of hatred and terror?

So I say to all of you here, and to all in the Nation tonight, that those who appeal to you to hold on to the past do so at the cost of denying you your future.

This great, rich, restless country can offer opportunity and education and hope to all: black and white, North and South, sharecropper and city dweller. These are the enemies: poverty, ignorance, disease. They are the enemies and not our fellow man, not our neighbor. And these enemies too, poverty, disease and ignorance, we shall overcome.

AN AMERICAN PROBLEM

Now let none of us in any sections look with prideful righteousness on the troubles in another section, or on the problems of our neighbors. There is really no part of America where the promise of equality has been fully kept. In Buffalo as well as in Birmingham, in Philadelphia as well as in Selma, Americans are struggling for the fruits of freedom.

This is one Nation. What happens in Selma or in Cincinnati is a matter of legitimate concern to every American. But let each of us look within our own hearts and

our own communities, and let each of us put our shoulder to the wheel to root out injustice wherever it exists.

As we meet here in this peaceful, historic chamber tonight, men from the South, some of whom were at Iwo Jima, men from the North who have carried Old Glory to far corners of the world and brought it back without a stain on it, men from the East and from the West, are all fighting together without regard to religion, or color, or region, in Viet-Nam. Men from every region fought for us across the world 20 years ago.

And in these common dangers and these common sacrifices the South made its contribution of honor and gallantry no less than any other region of the great Republic—and in some instances, a great many of them, more.

And I have not the slightest doubt that good men from everywhere in this country, from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Golden Gate to the harbors along the Atlantic, will rally together now in this cause to vindicate the freedom of all Americans. For all of us owe this duty; and I believe that all of us will respond to it.

Your President makes that request of every American.

PROGRESS THROUGH THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

The real hero of this struggle is the American Negro. His actions and protests, his courage to risk safety and even to risk his life, have awakened the conscience of this Nation. His demonstrations have been designed to call attention to injustice, designed to provoke change, designed to stir reform.

He has called upon us to make good the promise of America. And who among us can say that we would have made the same progress were it not for his persistent brav-

ery, and his faith in American democracy.

For at the real heart of battle for equality is a deep-seated belief in the democratic process. Equality depends not on the force of arms or tear gas but upon the force of moral right; not on recourse to violence but on respect for law and order.

There have been many pressures upon your President and there will be others as the days come and go. But I pledge you tonight that we intend to fight this battle where it should be fought: in the courts, and in the Congress, and in the hearts of men.

We must preserve the right of free speech and the right of free assembly. But the right of free speech does not carry with it, as has been said, the right to holler fire in a crowded theater. We must preserve the right to free assembly, but free assembly does not carry with it the right to block public thoroughfares to traffic.

We do have a right to protest, and a right to march under conditions that do not infringe the constitutional rights of our neighbors. And I intend to protect all those rights as long as I am permitted to serve in this office.

We will guard against violence, knowing it strikes from our hands the very weapons which we seek—progress, obedience to law, and belief in American values.

In Selma as elsewhere we seek and pray for peace. We seek order. We seek unity. But we will not accept the peace of stifled rights, or the order imposed by fear, or the unity that stifles protest. For peace cannot be purchased at the cost of liberty.

In Selma tonight, as in every—and we had a good day there—as in every city, we are working for just and peaceful settlement. We must all remember that after this speech I am making tonight, after the police and the FBI and the Marshals have all gone, and after you have promptly passed this bill, the

people of Selma and the other cities of the Nation must still live and work together. And when the attention of the Nation has gone elsewhere they must try to heal the wounds and to build a new community.

This cannot be easily done on a battleground of violence, as the history of the South itself shows. It is in recognition of this that men of both races have shown such an outstandingly impressive responsibility in recent days—last Tuesday, again today.

RIGHTS MUST BE OPPORTUNITIES

The bill that I am presenting to you will be known as a civil rights bill. But, in a larger sense, most of the program I am recommending is a civil rights program. Its object is to open the city of hope to all people of all races.

Because all Americans just must have the right to vote. And we are going to give them that right.

All Americans must have the privileges of citizenship regardless of race. And they are going to have those privileges of citizenship regardless of race.

But I would like to caution you and remind you that to exercise these privileges takes much more than just legal right. It requires a trained mind and a healthy body. It requires a decent home, and the chance to find a job, and the opportunity to escape from the clutches of poverty.

Of course, people cannot contribute to the Nation if they are never taught to read or write, if their bodies are stunted from hunger, if their sickness goes untended, if their life is spent in hopeless poverty just drawing a welfare check.

So we want to open the gates to opportunity. But we are also going to give all our people, black and white, the help that they need to walk through those gates.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS GOVERNMENT

My first job after college was as a teacher in Cotulla, Tex., in a small Mexican-American school. Few of them could speak English, and I couldn't speak much Spanish. My students were poor and they often came to class without breakfast, hungry. They knew even in their youth the pain of prejudice. They never seemed to know why people disliked them. But they knew it was so, because I saw it in their eyes. I often walked home late in the afternoon, after the classes were finished, wishing there was more that I could do. But all I knew was to teach them the little that I knew, hoping that it might help them against the hardships that lay ahead.

Somehow you never forget what poverty and hatred can do when you see its scars on the hopeful face of a young child.

I never thought then, in 1928, that I would be standing here in 1965. It never even occurred to me in my fondest dreams that I might have the chance to help the sons and daughters of those students and to help people like them all over this country.

But now I do have that chance—and I'll let you in on a secret—I mean to use it. And I hope that you will use it with me.

This is the richest and most powerful country which ever occupied the globe. The might of past empires is little compared to ours. But I do not want to be the President who built empires, or sought grandeur, or extended dominion.

I want to be the President who educated young children to the wonders of their world. I want to be the President who helped to feed the hungry and to prepare them to be taxpayers instead of taxeaters.

I want to be the President who helped the poor to find their own way and who protected the right of every citizen to vote in

every election.

I want to be the President who helped to end hatred among his fellow men and who promoted love among the people of all races and all regions and all parties.

I want to be the President who helped to end war among the brothers of this earth.

And so at the request of your beloved Speaker and the Senator from Montana; the majority leader, the Senator from Illinois; the minority leader, Mr. McCulloch, and other Members of both parties, I came here tonight—not as President Roosevelt came down one time in person to veto a bonus bill, not as President Truman came down one time to urge the passage of a railroad bill—but I came down here to ask you to share this task with me and to share it with the people that we both work for. I want this to be the Congress, Republicans and Democrats alike, which did all these things

for all these people.

Beyond this great chamber, out yonder in 50 States, are the people that we serve. Who can tell what deep and unspoken hopes are in their hearts tonight as they sit there and listen. We all can guess, from our own lives, how difficult they often find their own pursuit of happiness, how many problems each little family has. They look most of all to themselves for their futures. But I think that they also look to each of us.

Above the pyramid on the great seal of the United States it says—in Latin—"God has favored our undertaking."

God will not favor everything that we do. It is rather our duty to divine His will. But I cannot help believing that He truly understands and that He really favors the undertaking that we begin here tonight.

NOTE: The address was broadcast nationally.
See also Items 108, 109, 409.

108 Special Message to the Congress on the Right To Vote. March 15, 1965

To the Congress of the United States:

In this same month ninety-five years ago—on March 30, 1870—the Constitution of the United States was amended for the fifteenth time to guarantee that no citizen of our land should be denied the right to vote because of race or color.

The command of the Fifteenth Amendment is unequivocal and its equal force upon State Governments and the Federal Government is unarguable.

Section 1 of this Amendment provides: The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

By the oath I have taken "to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution of the United States," duty directs—and strong personal conviction impels—that I advise the Congress that action is necessary, and necessary now, if the Constitution is to be upheld and the rights of all citizens are not to be mocked, abused and denied.

I must regretfully report to the Congress the following facts:

1. That the Fifteenth Amendment of our Constitution is today being systematically and willfully circumvented in certain State and local jurisdictions of our Nation.

2. That representatives of such State and local governments acting "under the color of law," are denying American citizens the

NEW YORK TIMES

Journal
FRANK RICH

October 25, 1995

Million Man Stall

Washington aversion therapy.

"I met Jesse, strangely enough, through Ross Perot," said Felix Rohatyn this week, recalling the "Six Degrees of Separation" coincidence that led him into an unexpected alliance with Jesse Jackson.

Mr. Rohatyn, the investment banker who masterminded New York City's fiscal comeback in the mid-1970's, was on the phone with Mr. Perot, talking about building schools. Mr. Jackson, who was in Mr. Perot's office, conveyed his desire to meet with Mr. Rohatyn about the crisis in America's cities. Next thing you know Mr. Jackson and Mr. Rohatyn had joined forces on a plan called "Rebuild America," to raise \$500 billion for investment in generating jobs and repairing the infrastructure in the nation's rotting urban core.

That was in 1992. In 1995, one week after the Million Man March and counting, the rebuilding of urban America not only remains a dream deferred but a dream hardly talked about by politicians of either party. Speaking with both Mr. Jackson and Mr. Rohatyn in separate interviews since the march, I was struck once again by how much of official Washington's post-march babble is, by contrast, beside the point.

The two men go their own ways and, unsurprisingly, part company on one crucial matter in the march's aftermath. Mr. Rohatyn — like many others, myself among them — was "very disappointed" by Mr. Jackson's decision "to put himself squarely on the side of separatism" by appearing on the podium with Louis Farrakhan. "If Jesse really wanted to do something symbolic, he

should have stood with the black marchers and said nothing," Mr. Rohatyn added. "The marchers, with great unity and dignity, reminded the country we have a problem. That was the message, not what was happening on the podium."

Mr. Jackson's lukewarm rationale for Mr. Farrakhan — as a potentially positive force for voter registration and black-Jewish dialogue — remains unpersuasive. But his definition of the marchers' message parallels Mr. Rohatyn's and can hardly be dismissed. As Mr. Jackson speaks of the need for devising a "bipartisan national urban policy" that goes beyond either the current welfare debate or the Farrakhan slogans of self-help, so Mr. Rohatyn elaborates that the cancer of race begins in the cities, with black despair and white flight: "If we don't deal with it in the cities, we can't deal with it at all. Clinton, Gingrich and Dole must stand up and say we're going to jointly deal with urban problems, in ways that meet the objectives of white communities and taxpayers as well as of minorities who are dying in cities with no school system worthy of the name, no jobs, no medical care and no hope of entering the 21st century."

None of this will be easy, of course, or cheap. When Mr. Rohatyn had to

negotiate the New York City bailout, he told the various factions: "There are no alternatives that involve pleasure and pain, there are only alternatives that involve pain and agony. The ideal is to avoid agony. You can't avoid pain."

Today's politicians do not like to talk in public about policy alternatives that involve pain. And so no one in political office offers any scheme to rebuild America, whether a variation of Mr. Rohatyn's dormant idea or something new. Bill Clinton delivers a fine speech on racism the morning of the march — without venturing concrete policy prescriptions. Republicans conveniently embrace the spirituality of the march as its principal message — as if the marchers' pride and dignity will rebuild America all by themselves. Well-meaning Congressmen of both parties, white and black, call for a new Kerner Commission to redefine the problem — an idea rightly dismissed by Mr. Jackson as well as by Mr. Rohatyn ("We don't need a new commission to study whether we have a racial problem — we know we have a race problem.").

All the while, our cities continue on an apocalyptic spiral that Mr. Rohatyn sees as "close to irreversible." As the likes of Mr. Farrakhan, Benjamin Chavis and their white extremist counterparts scheme to exploit the crisis, we wait and wait for some leader in Washington who might regard the Million Man March as an urgent cue to action, however painful, rather than as merely a cost-free political opportunity to pat the marchers on the head. □

95 OCT 25 P 6: 19
Totus
In can
Missed
Lusk

11/2/55

Note on looking at F. R. L. 10-25
Column on much on March:

There are 2 different kinds of
various possible: one that would
be about dialogue & discourse
between the races. An effort for
greater understanding etc etc.

The other could be ^{part of} a
policy effort - i.e. that
urban deterioration is so
profound & so serious, that
only way to begin to address
it is by getting in bipartisan
way. Getting serious R's
brought in. Not BRAC style

as BRAC suggested, but a
real comm'n with political
sense & a high level R's who
do actually care about these
issues.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF URBAN INEQUALITY

I.B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies
The University of Chicago

FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

1155 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Phone (312) 702-0894 Fax (312) 702-8822

Date: *October 23, 1995*

To: *President Bill Clinton*

ATTN: *James Doriskind*

Fax Number: *(202) 456-2993*

Telephone:

From: *William Julius Wilson*

Number of pages faxed: 3 (+1 cover page)

Comments:

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF URBAN INEQUALITY
1155 EAST 60TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON
*Director and Lucy Flower University Professor
of Sociology and Public Policy*

IRVING B. HARRIS GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES
TEL: (312) 702-0894
FAX: (312) 702-0926

October 23, 1995

To: President Bill Clinton

From: William Julius Wilson

In re: Your request that I send you a memorandum on the steps that ought to be taken next to address the problems of race in America.

Mr. President, it was a pleasure to see and talk to you again at the ceremony for the National Medal of Science recipients. As I indicated in our brief conversation your speech on race in Austin, Texas was outstanding. I was very pleased when you asked me to send you a memorandum on my thoughts of what we should do next. Below are my thoughts.

I think that the idea of a national Commission to study and review the national state of race relations is a very good idea at this time. To support the work of this Commission I think that you should give several additional speeches on race similar in tone and compassion to the speech you delivered in Austin. I believe that these speeches should emphasize interracial unity to overcome the racial divide rhetoric.

These speeches might point out that our nation's response to racial discord has been disappointing. In discussing the problems we have a tendency to invoke the kind of rhetoric that exacerbates rather than alleviates urban and metropolitan racial tensions. Ever since the 1992 Los Angeles riot, the media has focused heavily on the factors that divide rather than those that unite racial groups. Emphasis on racial division peaked in 1995 following the jury's verdict in the O. J. Simpson murder trial. The racial divide, as depicted in the media, seemed as wide as ever.

The extent of the racial divisions in this country should not be minimized. The different reactions to the Simpson trial and the verdict in part reflect the

fundamentally dissimilar racial experiences of blacks and whites in America—the former burdened by racial injustice, the latter largely free of the effects of bigotry and hatred. Nonetheless, you should point out that the emphasis on racial differences has obscured the fact that African Americans, whites, and other ethnic groups share many common concerns, are victimized by many common problems, and have many common values, aspirations, and hopes.

As I point out in my new book (Jobless Ghettos: How the Disappearance of Work Affects Urban Life), which will be published next summer by Knopf, if inner-city blacks are experiencing the greatest problems of joblessness, it is to a large extent a more extreme form of economic marginality that has affected most Americans since 1980. Solutions to the broader problems of economic marginality in this country, including those that stem from changes in the global economy, will go a long way toward addressing the problems of inner-city joblessness, especially if the application of resources includes wise targeting to the groups most in need of help. Discussions that emphasize common solutions to commonly shared problems promote a sense of unity, regardless of the different degree of severity to which these problems afflict certain groups. Such messages bring races together, not apart, and are especially important during periods of racial tension. You should point out, however, that in comparison with the rhetoric on racial divisions interracial unity messages have been infrequent and are generally ignored in the media.

You should also emphasize in your speeches on race that it is important to recognize that racial antagonisms, or the manifestation of racial tensions, are products of economic, political and social situations. In a 1992 op-ed article in the New York Times, entitled "The Right Message," I used this argument to point out why it is important for political leaders to channel the frustrations of average citizens in positive or constructive directions during periods of economic duress. I discussed your 1992 political campaign and I pointed out that you not only explicitly acknowledged the growing racial tension in America and the need for political leadership to unite and not divide the races, but you had actually developed a public rhetoric that reflected these concerns. This campaign rhetoric warned Americans against the distraction of pitting race against race; it urged citizens to associate their declining real incomes, increasing job insecurity, and growing pessimism with the complex but real sources of these problems. I pointed out that the use of this positive public rhetoric during a period of intense racial tension enabled you to bring together antagonistic racial groups in an effective political coalition during the primary elections—even in Louisiana where a majority of white voters supported the former Klansman David Duke in the 1991 gubernatorial election. Unfortunately, the media failed to record the significance of this event.

A vision of interracial unity that acknowledges distinctively racial problems but, nonetheless, emphasizes common solutions to common problems

is more important now than ever. Such a vision should be developed, shared, and promoted by all leaders in this country, but especially by political leaders.

Mr. President, I have in mind a vision that promotes values of racial and intergroup harmony and unity and rejects the commonly held view that race is so divisive that whites, blacks, Latinos, and other ethnic groups cannot work together in a common cause. This vision recognizes that if a political message is tailored to a white audience, racial minorities draw back, just as whites draw back when a message is tailored to minority audiences. The foundation of this vision emphasizes issues and programs that concern the families of all racial and ethnic groups so that individuals of these groups will see their mutual interests and join in a multiracial coalition to move America forward; it promotes the idea that Americans have common interests and concerns—ranging from employment to the toll of crime and drug trafficking in their neighborhoods—that cross racial and class boundaries. This vision encourages Americans to see that the application of programs to combat these problems would benefit everyone, not just the truly disadvantaged; to recognize that the division between the suburbs and the central city is partly a racial one and that it is vitally important to emphasize city-suburban cooperation, not separation; and, finally, to endorse the idea that all groups should be able to achieve full membership in society because the problems of economic and social marginality rest with the inequities in society at large and not with group deficiencies.

Mr. President, in the introduction of my new book, Jobless Ghettos, I discuss these points because I feel that a public rhetoric of interracial unity is an essential and important first step in addressing the problems of race in the United States, including those that are related to the jobless ghetto. You drew from my last book, The Truly Disadvantaged, in your 1992 campaign. I think that you will find my new book even more useful given the problems that have emerged since then. I will make sure that you receive an advanced copy. The campaign will be in full swing when it comes out.

You will note that I am not recommending that you call for new programs. If you appoint a national Commission to study race in America, the appropriate time to discuss programs would be in reaction to the Commission's recommendation. What is needed now is a change in the public discourse on race. As President of the United States you could be an effective voice in promoting this change.

If I can be of further help, please let me know. I was pleased to learn from Vice President Gore that you found the materials from the discussions on race that we had at his house useful.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF URBAN INEQUALITY

I.B. Harris Graduate School of Public Policy Studies
The University of Chicago

FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

1155 East 60th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60637

Phone (312) 702-0894 Fax (312) 702-8822

Date: *October 23, 1995*

To: *President Bill Clinton*

ATTN: *James Doriskind*

Fax Number: *(202) 456-2993*

Telephone:

From: *William Julius Wilson*

Number of pages faxed: 3 (+1 cover page)

Comments:

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF URBAN INEQUALITY
1155 EAST 60TH STREET
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637

WILLIAM JULIUS WILSON
*Director and Lucy Flower University Professor
of Sociology and Public Policy*

IRVING B. HARRIS GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF PUBLIC POLICY STUDIES
TEL: (312) 702-0894
FAX: (312) 702-0926

October 23, 1995

To: President Bill Clinton

From: William Julius Wilson

In re: Your request that I send you a memorandum on the steps that ought to be taken next to address the problems of race in America.

Mr. President, it was a pleasure to see and talk to you again at the ceremony for the National Medal of Science recipients. As I indicated in our brief conversation your speech on race in Austin, Texas was outstanding. I was very pleased when you asked me to send you a memorandum on my thoughts of what we should do next. Below are my thoughts.

I think that the idea of a national Commission to study and review the national state of race relations is a very good idea at this time. To support the work of this Commission I think that you should give several additional speeches on race similar in tone and compassion to the speech you delivered in Austin. I believe that these speeches should emphasize interracial unity to overcome the racial divide rhetoric.

These speeches might point out that our nation's response to racial discord has been disappointing. In discussing the problems we have a tendency to invoke the kind of rhetoric that exacerbates rather than alleviates urban and metropolitan racial tensions. Ever since the 1992 Los Angeles riot, the media has focused heavily on the factors that divide rather than those that unite racial groups. Emphasis on racial division peaked in 1995 following the jury's verdict in the O. J. Simpson murder trial. The racial divide, as depicted in the media, seemed as wide as ever.

The extent of the racial divisions in this country should not be minimized. The different reactions to the Simpson trial and the verdict in part reflect the

fundamentally dissimilar racial experiences of blacks and whites in America—the former burdened by racial injustice, the latter largely free of the effects of bigotry and hatred. Nonetheless, you should point out that the emphasis on racial differences has obscured the fact that African Americans, whites, and other ethnic groups share many common concerns, are victimized by many common problems, and have many common values, aspirations, and hopes.

As I point out in my new book (Jobless Ghettos: How the Disappearance of Work Affects Urban Life), which will be published next summer by Knopf, if inner-city blacks are experiencing the greatest problems of joblessness, it is to a large extent a more extreme form of economic marginality that has affected most Americans since 1980. Solutions to the broader problems of economic marginality in this country, including those that stem from changes in the global economy, will go a long way toward addressing the problems of inner-city joblessness, especially if the application of resources includes wise targeting to the groups most in need of help. Discussions that emphasize common solutions to commonly shared problems promote a sense of unity, regardless of the different degree of severity to which these problems afflict certain groups. Such messages bring races together, not apart, and are especially important during periods of racial tension. You should point out, however, that in comparison with the rhetoric on racial divisions interracial unity messages have been infrequent and are generally ignored in the media.

You should also emphasize in your speeches on race that it is important to recognize that racial antagonisms, or the manifestation of racial tensions, are products of economic, political and social situations. In a 1992 op-ed article in the New York Times, entitled "The Right Message," I used this argument to point out why it is important for political leaders to channel the frustrations of average citizens in positive or constructive directions during periods of economic duress. I discussed your 1992 political campaign and I pointed out that you not only explicitly acknowledged the growing racial tension in America and the need for political leadership to unite and not divide the races, but you had actually developed a public rhetoric that reflected these concerns. This campaign rhetoric warned Americans against the distraction of pitting race against race; it urged citizens to associate their declining real incomes, increasing job insecurity, and growing pessimism with the complex but real sources of these problems. I pointed out that the use of this positive public rhetoric during a period of intense racial tension enabled you to bring together antagonistic racial groups in an effective political coalition during the primary elections—even in Louisiana where a majority of white voters supported the former Klansman David Duke in the 1991 gubernatorial election. Unfortunately, the media failed to record the significance of this event.

A vision of interracial unity that acknowledges distinctively racial problems but, nonetheless, emphasizes common solutions to common problems

is more important now than ever. Such a vision should be developed, shared, and promoted by all leaders in this country, but especially by political leaders.

Mr. President, I have in mind a vision that promotes values of racial and intergroup harmony and unity and rejects the commonly held view that race is so divisive that whites, blacks, Latinos, and other ethnic groups cannot work together in a common cause. This vision recognizes that if a political message is tailored to a white audience, racial minorities draw back, just as whites draw back when a message is tailored to minority audiences. The foundation of this vision emphasizes issues and programs that concern the families of all racial and ethnic groups so that individuals of these groups will see their mutual interests and join in a multiracial coalition to move America forward; it promotes the idea that Americans have common interests and concerns—ranging from employment to the toll of crime and drug trafficking in their neighborhoods—that cross racial and class boundaries. This vision encourages Americans to see that the application of programs to combat these problems would benefit everyone, not just the truly disadvantaged; to recognize that the division between the suburbs and the central city is partly a racial one and that it is vitally important to emphasize city-suburban cooperation, not separation; and, finally, to endorse the idea that all groups should be able to achieve full membership in society because the problems of economic and social marginality rest with the inequities in society at large and not with group deficiencies.

Mr. President, in the introduction of my new book, Jobless Ghettos, I discuss these points because I feel that a public rhetoric of interracial unity is an essential and important first step in addressing the problems of race in the United States, including those that are related to the jobless ghetto. You drew from my last book, The Truly Disadvantaged, in your 1992 campaign. I think that you will find my new book even more useful given the problems that have emerged since then. I will make sure that you receive an advanced copy. The campaign will be in full swing when it comes out.

You will note that I am not recommending that you call for new programs. If you appoint a national Commission to study race in America, the appropriate time to discuss programs would be in reaction to the Commission's recommendation. What is needed now is a change in the public discourse on race. As President of the United States you could be an effective voice in promoting this change.

If I can be of further help, please let me know. I was pleased to learn from Vice President Gore that you found the materials from the discussions on race that we had at his house useful.