



For Jobs and Freedom

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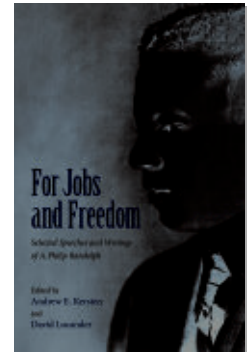
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Randolph Speaks His Mind, 1919–1967

A. Philip Randolph made his mark as a union organizer and civil rights leader, but his accomplishments and insights as a public intellectual also made him a voice of conscience. From his early days of delivering speeches on soapboxes on Harlem street corners to the newspaper columns he wrote during his elderly years, Randolph constantly sought platforms from which to remind Americans about the ills that plagued them and offer radical solutions to the problems of the era.

The documents in this chapter reveal consistent themes in many of Randolph's public pronouncements. He was a stern critic of all forms of discrimination, and a champion of egalitarianism. He spoke out against social divisions that created disharmony. Putting an end to lynching was at the top of Randolph's agenda, but so was ending segregation in all aspects of life, from education to public accommodations. Randolph was also a critic of any institution that seemed to be allied with those who would oppress black Americans. Early in his *Messenger* days, he chastised churches and religious leaders who toed the capitalist line about workers' rights or who were silent on the subject of racial prejudice. This position is at the heart of "The Failure of the Negro Church," a polemic that earned Randolph the label of atheist. Though at his most radical he may have seemed to approach that position, Randolph did not stray far from his African Methodist Episcopal roots. In fact, as he grew older, his public words became increasingly laced with religious overtones. This is particularly evident in the 1962 address he delivered in Bermuda, wherein he demonstrates a comfortable familiarity with church history and teachings. In this noteworthy speech, Randolph also predicted that the flourishing of a militant spirit would someday lead to an African American serving on the Supreme Court and, given enough time, residing in the White House as president of the United States.

These documents also reveal Randolph's deep commitment to the American traditions of democratic action, radicalism, and freedom. He was a champion of free speech. Perhaps nothing demonstrates this more than the 1944 controversy with Boss Crump, wherein Randolph defied the notorious Memphis sheriff to deliver an address about the importance of civil rights and civil liberties in a democratic society.

Perhaps the most impressive document in this chapter is Randolph's speech at the third annual meeting of the Negro American Labor Council. In it, one can find most of the major themes of his public career. He speaks historically, drawing a line between the civil rights struggles of the nineteenth century and those of the twentieth; he appeals to progressive solutions; he criticizes violence; and he promotes unity, democracy, economic prosperity, and freedom. This is Randolph at his best, and it was one of the last times that the nation listened attentively to his words.

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A. Philip Randolph, ca. 1911. (Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, A. Philip Randolph Papers, LC-USZ62-97538)

Lynching: Capitalism Its Cause; Socialism Its Cure (1919)

Randolph applied a class analysis to the crisis of lynching in America. As he saw it, this form of racial violence was the result of a Jim Crow system that kept poor whites and blacks separate and in a subordinate position. Through socialism, Randolph believed, economic and political power would be fairly distributed, thus removing the fractures that were at the foundation of social animosity. A critique of the two-party system underlies Randolph's conclusions, and this position is one he held true to for the next five decades.

First, What is lynching? Lynching, historically speaking, is a loose term applied to various forms of executing popular justice, or what is thought to be justice. It is punishment of offenders or supposed offenders by a summary procedure without due process of law. In short, the essence of lynching is that it is extra-legal.

What Object Does It Achieve?

From the lynchers' point of view it avenges crime—and is calculated to prevent future crime. During the Reconstruction period the Ku Klux Klan applied the lynch law to intimidate the newly enfranchised Negro voter; to prevent him from voting the Republican carpetbaggers from the North into control of the Southern state governments. The competition was between the former slave-holding class and the carpetbaggers for the power to levy taxes, to issue paper money, to raise revenue, and to grant franchise to private individuals for the operation of public utilities. Today lynching is a practice which is used to foster and to engender race prejudice to prevent the lynchers and the lynched—the white and black workers—from organizing on the industrial and voting on the political fields to protect their labor-power. Why do I affirm this and how is it done? This brings me to the consideration of capitalism as the cause of lynching.

Now, just a word as to the reason for inquiring into the cause. All medical scientists are agreed that precedent to prescribing a remedy for a disease, a diagnosis should be made in order to ascertain its cause—because in order to remove the effects of a disease, physical or social, you must first remove the cause. To illustrate: Let us assume that a community is situated beside a swampy marsh where poisonous vapors hover over the putrid, pestiferous, standing waters, and where malarial germs and mosquitoes infest. Let us further assume that the people of this community suffer continually from malarial fever. Scientists have determined that mosquitoes are carriers of malarial germs. Now, is it not logical to assume that the swampy marsh is the cause of the malady and the mosquito but the occasion, and that in order to

wipe out the effects, malarial fever, it is necessary to remove the cause of the occasion—the marsh? This, then, is no less true of lynching than of any other disease or social evil, such as child labor, white slavery, intemperance, poverty and criminal acts in general.

For clarity of exposition I shall divide the causes into two classes, and I shall treat them in the order of ultimate and immediate or occasional causes. But, before proceeding to build our structure of the real causes of lynching, we shall do the excavation work by clearing away the debris of alleged but fallacious causes. First, it is maintained by most superficial sociologists that “race prejudice” is the cause of lynching. But the fallacy of this contention is immediately apparent in view of the fact that out of 3,337 persons lynched between 1882 and 1903, there were 1,192 white persons. Leo Frank, Frank Little and Robert Prager, all white men, are instances of recent date. Second, it is held by some that “rape of white women” is the real cause. Again, this argument is untenable when it is known that out of the entire number of persons lynched during the above stated period, only 34 percent can be ascribed to rape as the cause. Third, still others contend that the “law’s delay” is the controlling cause. This also is without force when the fact is known that men have had their day in court—[but they were] taken out and lynched, despite the fact that they (the accused) were convicted or acquitted; Leo Frank is an instance in proof. Thus much for what are some of the occasions but not the causes of lynching. We shall now consider the real and positive causes of this national evil.

As to the Meaning of Capitalism

Capitalism is a system under which a small class of private individuals make profits out of the labor of the masses by virtue of their ownership of the machinery and sources of production and exchange. For instance, the railroads of this country are owned by less than 600,000 stockholders who employ more than 3,000,000 persons. The ownership of the railroads by the 600,000 stockholders enables them to make billions of profits out of the labor of the 3,000,000 workers. Now there is the crux of the problem. A business is carried on for profits. Labor is the chief item in the expense of production. It is to the interest of the employer to work the laborer long hours and pay as low wages as possible. On the other hand, it is to the interest of the laborer to get as high wages and work as short hours as possible. Hence the conflict between the capitalists and the workers. The desire and power to make profits of the owner of the means of wealth production, which labor must use in order to make wages which to live, is at the basis of this conflict.

Let us see how it applies to our proposition in question. We will now review its economic aspects.

During the Civil War, one-third of the manpower of the South was killed

off. The Civil War resulted in the abolition of property rights in Negroes. Free labor was abolished. For 250 years the slave-owning class had the right, sanctioned by government, to use a Negro as a horse, a machine. And the invention of the cotton gin had forced the market value of slaves up. Huge fortunes had been made and the slave-owners had lived in luxury, ease, comfort and splendor off the labor of Negroes. When the end of this came, the industry of the South was paralyzed. There was a shortage of white labor-power. The Negroes had been freed and they distrusted and suspected their former masters. In short, intoxicated with the new wine of freedom, they were disinclined to work.

But cotton must be picked; lumber must be cut; turpentine must be dipped; railroads must be built. In fact, profits must be made. Negroes must work or be made to work; besides, they must work cheaply. How can this be done? This is how it was and is done: Vagrancy laws are enacted which provide for the imprisonment of all Negroes who have no visible means of support. Of course, it is impossible for a Negro to show that he has any visible means of support. The result is that hordes of unemployed Negroes are hustled off to jail and the convict camps. Their fines are paid by employers of labor for lumber mills, cotton plantations, railroads, etcetera, [and] they are assigned into their custody, put to work at a wage of 30 and 40 cents a day. They are also compelled to trade at the company's store, which sells its wares at 100 percent higher than other stores. A debt for railroad fare to the works and for maintenance while at work 'til payday is made. Moreover, when the fines of imprisoned Negroes are paid, they are required to sign labor contracts, the non-performance of which is presumptive proof of fraudulent intent at the time of making it, which the state laws make a crime. And as a white planter himself tells the story: A planter can arrest a man upon the criminal charge of receiving money under false pretenses, which is equivalent to the charge of stealing; you get him convicted; he is fined, and being penniless, in lieu of the money to pay the fine he goes to jail; then you pay the fine and cost, the judge assigns him to you to work out the fine and you have him back on your plantation, backed up by the authority of the state. This is peonage. It is maintained for profits. This is capitalism. And this does not apply to Negroes only. It is the common fate of the servant class, black and white. But they must not [be allowed to] understand that their interests are common. Hence race prejudice is cultivated. Lynching, Jim-Crowism, and segregation are used to widen the chasm between the races.

This profit system of capitalism also applies to the farmer through the crop-lien system. This is a system whereby a lien mortgage is taken upon the crops of the poor white and black famers for a loan. It operates in this way: The poor farmer, being in need of provisions for his family until harvesting time,

borrow money on his planted, and sometimes unplanted, crops from a big merchant or bank. The rate of interest is so high, sometimes as high as 1000 percent on the dollar, according to Comptroller of Currency John Skelton Williams, [that] the farmer is unable to pay the interest, to say nothing about the principal.

The farmer's inability to meet his note results in the loss of his farm. He then becomes a farm tenant and works up the Metayer system, or the plan of giving a part of the crop produced to the owner for the privilege of cultivating the land. This crop-lien system is profitable to the bankers of the South. Both white and black farmers are fleeced by this financial system. But white and black farmers won't combine against a common foe on account of race prejudice. Race antagonism, then, is profitable to those who own the farms, the mills, the railroads and the banks. This economic arrangement in the south is the fundamental cause of race prejudice, which is the fuse which causes the magazine of capitalism to explode into race conflicts—lynchings.

Prejudice is the chief weapon in the South [that] enables the capitalists to exploit both races. In the East, North and West, state militias, secret detective strike-breaking agencies, religion or nationality is used. The capitalists play Jewish against Irish Catholic workers. As we have our Waco, Memphis and East St. Louis lynching of Negroes, there are also Bayonne, West Virginia and Ludlow massacres of white workers and their families. The capitalists want profits, they don't care who makes them for them. In the South today over a million little white children are taken from school, put into factories and driven 10 and 12 hours a day until their little bodies are broken upon the wheels of industry; all because their labor is cheaper and more profits can be made out of them than out of grown-ups. They are competing with their fathers and brothers and they force the wage scale down by virtue of their increasing the labor supply.

This is how much the Southern white gentlemen capitalists care about white children [of] whom they prate so much. Capitalism knows no color line. It will coin the blood, sweat and suffering of white women and white children or black women and black children into dollars and dividends. So much for the economic aspects.

But this thing must be supported by law, and this brings us to the political cause of lynching. How does it operate? Vagrancy laws are enacted by politicians who are selected by political parties which are controlled by those who supply the campaign funds. These funds are contributed by the bankers, railroad directors, lumber mill and cotton plantation-owners whose large profits depend upon the low wages and long hours of work of the servant class. This has been the work of [James] Vardaman, [Ben] Tillman and the "lily white" Republicans. The laws making the nonperformance of a labor contract a

crime are placed on the statute books by certain anti-labor and incidentally anti-Negro politicians. Sheriffs into whose custody Negroes charged with criminal acts are placed are nominated, elected or appointed by parties, which are responsible to powerful financial agencies which profit by fostering race prejudice and lynching, etcetera. This is why sheriffs don't protect their prisoners, not because they are afraid of the mob. So that when a mob demands a Negro in the custody of a sheriff nominated and elected by a political machine whose campaign funds are made up by banks and loan agencies, and by big employers of labor, which lend money to poor white and black farmers at usurious rates of interest and who hold labor in peonage, you can realize and appreciate how the sheriff will act. Self-interest will control his actions and he can always be expected to act in the interest of those who have the power to remove him.

The ruling class of the South has, through disfranchisement and the poll-tax, deprived the working class of the power to protect their interests. The electorate there is small. It is easier for the capitalists to control or to corrupt a small electorate than a large one. Politically, race feeling is also capitalized [on] by young ambitious politicians who make their campaigns on the slogan of "Negro domination." This is how politics fortifies and re-enforces lynch law in the South.

What are the social causes? There are three: the schools, church and press. An uneducated working class won't revolt, won't organize; hence, the meager sums of \$2.22 and \$4.92 are appropriated for the education of [a] black and white child, respectively, per year. The white church is paid to preach the Christianity of lynch law profits. The press is owned and controlled by the employing class, and it is used to influence the minds of the race; to foment race hatred; it gives wide circulation to that insidious doctrine of the Negroes being the hewers of wood and drawers of water for white men. It features in bold headlines such titles as "lynch the black brute," "young white girl raped by black burly fiend," etcetera. This produces a psychology which expresses itself through the mob. Anything may occasion a community to burn a Negro. It might be a well-dressed Negro; a Negro who speaks good English or a Negro who talks back to a white man.

To sum up, capitalism is at the basis of the economic, political and social arrangements of the South and it is defended, supported, promoted and upheld by the Republican and Democratic parties of the North, South, East and West. Neither the Republican nor the Democratic party has ever condemned peonage or lynching. They can not [because] they are owned by the capitalists.

What then is the cure? I hold . . . that Socialism is the only cure. Why? First, what is it? Briefly, it is the social ownership and democratic management of

the means and sources of production and exchange for social use and not for private profit.

How Does This Effect Lynching?

Socialism would deprive individuals of the power to make fortunes out of the labor of other individuals by virtue of their ownership of the machinery which the worker must use in order to live. When an individual or class may make profits out of the labor of black and white workers, it is to his or to the interest of the class to use any means to keep them (the workers) from combining in order to raise wages, to lower their hours of work or to demand better working conditions. This is the only reason why prejudice is fostered in the South. Of course, it may not be possible to trace every lynching or act of prejudice to a direct economic cause, but the case may be explained by the law of habit. When social practices are once set, they act or recur with a dangerous accuracy. It is now a social habit to lynch Negroes. But when the motive for promoting race prejudice is removed, viz., profits, by the social ownership, control and operation of the machinery and sources of production through the government, the government being controlled by the workers; the effects of prejudice, race riots, lynching, etcetera, will also be removed.

For instance, if railroads were owned and democratically managed by the government, collective and social service function would not be prostituted to Jim Crow cars in order to pander and cater to race prejudice. No individuals would be making profits out of them and consequently there would be no interest in promoting race antagonisms. Lynchings, the product of capitalism, would pass as the burning of heretics and the Spanish Inquisition, the product of religious intolerance, passed. Besides, Socialism would arm every man and women with the ballot. Education would be compulsory and universal. The vagrancy law, child labor and peonage would no longer exist. Tenant-farming and the crop-lien system would be discarded. And every worker would receive the full product of his toil. This is the goal of Socialism. This is why every Negro should be a Socialist.

In conclusion, workingmen and -women of my race, don't allow Republican and Democratic leaders to deceive you. They are paid by Rockefeller, Morgan, Armour, Carnegie, owners of Southern railroads, coal mines, lumber mills, turpentine stills, cotton plantations, etcetera, who make millions out of your labor. Don't be deceived by the small increase in wages which you are receiving; the capitalists are taking it back by increasing the cost of food, fuel, clothing and rent. Don't be deceived by any capitalist bill to abolish lynching; if it became a law, it would never be enforced. Have you not the Fourteenth Amendment, which is supposed to protect your life, property, liberty and guarantee you the vote? Does it do it? No. Why? Because it is nullified through

administration by capitalists, Republican and Democratic representatives, who profit from lynching and who want lynching to continue. Lynching will not stop until Socialism comes. You can strike a death blow to lynching by voting for Socialism. Black and white workers unite. You have nothing to lose but your chains; you have the world to gain.

SOURCE: *The Messenger* 2 (March 1919): 9–12.

A New Crowd—A New Negro (1919)

The Russian Revolution and other challenges to the hierarchies taking place throughout Europe inspired Randolph. Believing that these events signaled that the “Old Crowd”—those of the old ruling class—were being swept away, he believed that America was ripe for similar changes. In this essay from *The Messenger*, Randolph maintains that African Americans need to support a “New Crowd” of fresh leaders and cast aside the Republican cronies whose ineffectiveness at challenging racism was becoming glaringly obvious in the face of such injustices as lynchings and persistent inequality.

Throughout the world among all peoples and classes, the clock of social progress is striking the high noon of the Old Crowd. And why? The reason lies in the inability of the Old Crowd to adapt itself to the changed conditions, to recognize and accept the consequences of the sudden, rapid and violent social changes that are shaking the world. In wild desperation, consternation and despair, the proud scions of regal pomp and authority, the prophets and high-priests of the old order, view the steady and menacing rise of the great working class. Yes, the Old Crowd is passing, and with it, its false, corrupt and wicked institutions of oppression and cruelty; its ancient prejudices and beliefs and its pious, hypocritical and venerated idols.

It's all like a dream! In Russia, one-hundred and eighty million of peasants and workmen—disinherited, writhing under the ruthless heel of the Czar for over three hundred years, awoke and revolted and drove their hateful oppressors from power. Here a New Crowd arose—the Bolsheviks, and expropriated their expropriators. They fashioned and established a new social machinery, the Soviet, to express the growing class consciousness of teaming millions, disillusioned and disenchanted. They also chose new leaders—Lenin and Trotsky—to invent and adopt scientific methods of social control; to marshal, organize and direct the revolutionary forces in constructive channels to build a New Russia. . . .

And the natural question arises: what does it all mean to the Negro? First it

means that he, too, must scrap the Old Crowd. For not only is the Old Crowd useless, but like the vermiform appendix, it is decidedly injurious, it prevents all real progress. Before it is possible for the Negro to prosecute successfully a formidable offense for [fighting] injustice and [establishing] fair play, he must tear down his false leaders, just as the people of Europe are tearing down their false leaders. Of course, some of the Old Crowd mean well. But what matter is it that poison be administered to the sick intentionally or out of ignorance? The result is the same—death. And our indictment of the Old Crowd is that: it lacks the knowledge of methods for the attainment of ends which it desires to achieve. For instance, the Old Crowd never counsels the Negro to organize and strike against low wages and long hours. It cannot see the advisability of the Negro, who is the most exploited of the American workers, supporting a workingman's political party.

The Old Crowd enjoins the Negro to be conservative, when he has nothing to conserve. Neither his life nor his property receives the protection of the government which conscripts his life to “make the world safe for democracy.” The conservative in all lands are the wealthy and the ruling class. The Negro is in dire poverty, and he is no part of the ruling class.

But the question naturally arises: who is the Old Crowd? In the Negro schools and colleges the most typical reactionaries are Kelly Miller, [Robert Russa] Moton and William Pickens. In the press [W. E. B.] Du Bois, James Weldon Johnson, Fred R. Moore, T. Thomas Fortune, Roscoe Conkling Simmons and George Harris are compromising the case of the Negro. In politics Charles W. Anderson, W. H. Lewis, Ralph Tyler, Emmet Scott, George E. Haynes, and the entire old line palliating, me-to-boss gang of Negro Republican politicians, are hopelessly ignorant and distressingly unwilling of their way.

In the church the old crowd still preaches that “the meek will inherit the earth,” “if the enemy strikes you on one side of the face, turn the other,” and “you may take all this world but give me Jesus.” “Dry Bones,” “The Three Hebrew Children in the Fiery Furnace” and “Jonah in the Belly of the Whale,” constitute the subjects of the Old Crowd, for black men and women who are overworked and under-paid, lynched, Jim Crowed and disfranchised—a people who are yet languishing in the dungeons of ignorance and superstition. Such then is the Old Crowd. And this is not strange to the student of history, economics, and sociology.

A man will not oppose his benefactor. The Old Crowd of Negro leaders had been and is subsidized by the Old Crowd of White Americans—a group which viciously opposes every demand made by organized labor for an opportunity to live a better life. Now, if the Old Crowd of white people opposes every demand of white labor for economic justice, how can the Negro expect

to get that which is denied the white working class? And it is well nigh that economic justice is at the basis of social and political equality. For instance, there is no organization of national prominence which ostensibly is working in the interest of the Negro which is not dominated by the Old Crowd of white people. And they are controlled by the white people because they receive their funds—their revenue—from it. It is, of course, a matter of common knowledge that Du Bois does not determine the policy of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People; nor does [Eugene] Kinkle Jones or George E. Haynes control the National Urban League. The organizations are not responsible to the Negroes because Negroes do not maintain them.

This brings us to the question as to who shall assume the reins of leadership when the Old Crowd falls. As among all other peoples, the New Crowd must be composed of young men who are educated, radical and fearless. Young Negro Radicals must control the press, church, schools, politics and labor. The conditions for joining the New Crowd are: ability, radicalism and sincerity. The New Crowd views with much expectancy the revolutions ushering in a New World. The New Crowd is uncompromising. Its tactics are not defensive, but offensive. It would not send notes after a Negro is lynched. It would not appeal to white leaders. It would appeal to the plain working people everywhere. The New Crowd sees that the war came and the Negro fought, bled and died; that the war has ended, and he is not yet free.

The New Crowd would have no armistice with lynch-law; no truce with jim-crowism, and disfranchisement; no peace until the Negro receives complete social, economic and political justice. To this end the New Crowd would form an alliance with white radicals such as [the] I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World, or “Wobblies”], the Socialists and the Non-Partisan League, to build a new society—a society of equals, without class, race, caste or religious distinctions.

SOURCE: *The Messenger* 2 (May–June 1919): 26–27.

The Failure of the Negro Church (1919)

Randolph's criticisms of the church early in his political career resulted in his being labeled an atheist for most of his life, but a close reading of this article suggests that what he really wanted was a transformation of the Christian churches in the African American community. Rather than eliminating religion, Randolph hoped that churches would assume a larger role in African American communities. In his view, the church could help workers by supporting unionization and sponsoring consumers' co-ops, taking a stand on civil rights issues, and empowering individuals so that they would have the wherewithal to work against the economic and political status quo.

Yes, the Negro church has failed. It has failed in a great crisis. Its failure is patent and apparent. The only question before us then is: why and how? The chief cause of the failure of the Negro church is economic. That is to say, the church has been converted into a business, and the ruling characteristic of a business is that it is run primarily for profits. The interest is focused upon debits and credits, deficits and surpluses. This has been the Scylla and Charybdis of the Negro church.

To the money power in the community and the country, the church has bowed. The trustee boards of the smallest and most humble are composed of the most prosperous of the church members, who are adjudged as competent to create a surplus by organizing rallies, and by devising other means that are effective in inducing the public to release the necessary moneys. Preachers break with denominations, and set up independent churches, on account of being removed from "fat charges." Collections occupy three-fourths of the time of most services. Sermons are usually selected with a view to impressing the members with the importance of the injunction that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

Then there is that class of Negro churches that is directly dominated by white capitalists. These are the Episcopal, Congregational, Presbyterian and Methodist Episcopal. Their policies are molded [by] and handed down from the white ecclesiastical oligarchy. This ecclesiastical oligarchy, in turn, is controlled by the "money power" of the country. It is a matter of common knowledge that Trinity Church, situated at the head of Wall Street, is one of the biggest corporations in America. It controls a large number of apartment houses from which it reaps blood money in the form of extortionate rents from the working people. Now, since the "money power" of the country which consists of the masters of the railroads, mines, factories, land, etcetera, receive their power from rent, interest and profits, and since the great masses of the people depend upon wages for a living, which are low when profits, rent and interest are high, and high when profits, rent and interest are low, it is plain

that the interests of the people and the interests of the “money power” which dominates the church are opposed.

Since it is beyond question that a servant will obey its master, that the power over a man’s subsistence is the power over his will, one is not surprised at the church’s obedience to the power that maintains it. The church split over the issue of slavery into the North and South. The Northern church, at the behest of the industrial power, condemned it; the Southern church, upon the order of the slave owners, blessed it. Thus, the church, now as then, is using its power to defend poverty, crime, prostitution, war, ignorance and superstition which are outgrowths of the system that allows one man to live off another’s labor.

So much then for the cause of the failure. Now, how has it failed? Briefly, it has failed to educate the people. Ministers are leading Negroes who are below in intelligence the lowest member of their church. The Negro ministry is ignorant of the modern problems of capital and labor. It is disinterested in unionism as a means of securing higher wages, shorter hours and better working conditions for Negro workers. It regards the discussion of politics in the church as sacrilegious unless some good, old, Abraham Lincoln Republican desires the vote of the Negro and is willing to pay for educational propaganda. It has failed to use its power to rouse the Negro against disfranchisement and lynching. No conference of Negro churches has ever gone on record as endorsing the principle of unionism.

But you ask, what constructive program do we offer? First, the Negro ministry must be educated. It must get the education of information instead of the education of inspiration. It needs less Bible and more economics, history, sociology and physical science. Second, the Negro church must be put to different uses. It must become an open educational forum where problems of hygiene, labor, government, racial relationships, national and international questions are discussed by specialists. [Churches] might also be used as places for the beginning of co-operative stores that will enable the Negro working-man to reduce the high cost of living.

In conclusion, the world has moved a long way forward since 1914. Times have changed, and institutions, if they would survive, must adjust themselves to the changed conditions. The New Negro demands a new ministry—an educated fearless and radical ministry. The New Negro demands a new church—a church that is the center of his social, economic and political hopes and strivings. The church must become something more than a temple of prayer to a people who are lynched, disfranchised and Jim-Crowed. Prayer has been tried for over fifty years. In short, the church must set its face against a philosophy of profits to a philosophy of service.

Segregation in the Public Schools (1924)

Randolph looks to historical context in this attack on segregation, and he sees linkages between slavery and contemporary Jim Crow practices. He assails the logic of racial segregation, arguing that keeping white and black separate is about power relations, not social equality. As Randolph saw it, segregation was designed to give whites political and economic advantages over blacks and to keep the working class divided. Indeed, if he had looked back on this essay three decades later, Randolph would not have been surprised by the school integration crises in Little Rock and other cities.

If segregation is a menace, it ought to be condemned and rejected; if it is a promise, it ought to be accepted and advocated. Before accepting or rejecting it, however, it is well to inquire into its nature, cause and effects, in order to determine just what it is, and how it functions; obviously one is unwise to accept or reject that which he does not understand.

What Is Segregation?

The word “segregation” comes from the Latin word *segrego*—a compound of *se*, aside, and *greg* or *greg*, flock—to flock aside. The Latin root derivation or the dictionary definition, however, is not adequate to explain the present meaning and significance of the term. Words, like everything else, undergo an evolution—through this process they take on new meanings. A conspicuous instance in point is: manufacture. Etymologically it means to make by hand, derived from the Latin words *manus*, hand, plus *facio*, make. It is the outgrowth of the pre-capitalist period of production when all commodities were made by hand tools in the home of the artisan. But the industrial revolution which gave the world labor-saving machinery, changed the method of production, and consequently the denotation and connotation of certain words, such as the word “manufacture,” which today, means to make by machine. Languages, like religions, ethics, education, law, literature and art, assume transformations in meaning in consequence of basic changes in the socio-economic modes of getting a living.

Historical Background of Segregation

From the beginning of the dawn of the systematic trade in Negro life and labor in 1517 [it] made possible, as well as profitable, by the cultivation of sugar, tobacco, cotton, rice, etcetera, in the Spanish, Portuguese, English and French possessions in North, Central and South America and the West Indies, the Negro was viewed as personal property, such as an ox, a plow or clock, subject to the whims of the owner. He was naturally set aside, at the convenience of his master, just as a hog or leper. The social attitude toward people of color in

these United States, entrenched and fortified by profit and privilege, persisted with legal sanction and religious justification, for approximately half a thousand years.

Now upon the abolition of our slave economy in America in 1863, the legal sanction of coercive segregation of Negroes as chattel property passed; but the economic need for cheap labor increased as a result of the demands of industrial and agricultural reconstruction. But cheap labor can be exacted only from docile, subservient human beings, beings who will not protest, organize labor unions and strike for a living wage, decent hours and conditions of work. Exploiting the labor of the newly emancipated slave, drunk with the red wine of freedom, was a big and difficult task, especially [for] the old slave masters, who, having recently fought to maintain slavery, were viewed as the devil incarnate. Their mental attitude toward the white ruling class was hostility personified. Such a spirit was economically unprofitable to the owners of lumber mills, turpentine stills, railroads, cotton plantations and the banking and commercial interests generally. For if Negroes didn't work, there was no production of goods; if there was no production, there was no sale; no sale, no profits. But the issue was not merely to get Negroes to work, but to get them to work cheaply. Hence the will to loaf or to demand a wage of a civilized human being must be broken upon the wheel of persecution, such as lynching, mob law, vagrancy laws, segregation and grandfather clauses. Now it was perfectly all right to maim or kill a Negro, since he was not owned by anyone, and hence would constitute no economic loss to anyone save himself. Thus [with] the end of the perpetuating [of] the moral and mental slavery of the Negro recently relieved from his physical chains of bondage, a hellish and vicious engine of persecution and terrorism was devised and set in motion, beside which the hateful Inquisition of the Middle Ages [looks like] a benevolent institution. In the unspeakable whirlwind of hate rising during the period of Reconstruction, thousands of Negroes succumbed though that was incidental to the process of reducing the Negro to the status of a mental slave. For the objective of the white South was not to kill off all Negroes, because that would mean the destruction of the chief source of the labor supply, which would be virtual economic suicide, but to kill his manhood, his spirit to resist economic subjugation.

One of the most effective weapons in the hands of the white owning class of the South was segregation; the business of making the "niggers" know "their place." This policy of setting the negroes aside as a thing apart, an evil thing, an "untouchable," caused even the "white trash" to throw out its chest and look contemptuously upon the Negro as an inferior being, unfit to be admitted to the community of civilized society. The white working class assumed this arrogant attitude, despite their wretched and miserable poverty and ignorance, made possible by the same system of robbery practiced upon Negroes.

Hence the barrier of race prevented the unity of class. The god of segregation issued the commandment to both races: Thou shalt not commit the sin of contact, that is, in public where the equality of the races may be recognized. So insistent has been this decree of segregation that it has very largely secured the acquiescence of the victim—the Negro himself—who in many instances is wont to defend it as necessary and beneficent, an attitude which relieves the Lothrop Stoddards and the Ku Klux Klan of the necessity of continuing to use their time and energy in pressing segregation. In other words, the Negroes who defend segregation *ipso facto* become unconscious accessories to their own enslavement.

But this is the crux of the question. How do we know that segregation is a menace to the Negro?

The Reason for Segregation

From our survey of the social history of segregation, it is clear that it has now assumed an invidious connotation. Anyways, superiors segregate their inferiors, not inferiors their superiors. In the South, we never hear of Negroes segregating white people. It is explanatory of the social law that wherever two groups are in proximity, the stronger will subjugate or segregate the weaker group. The segregating, too, is usually done for the benefit of the segregator, not the segregated. Of course, the segregating group invariably suggests segregation presumable in the interest of the segregated, and then seeks, through subtle propaganda, to get the segregated to accept their lot as inevitable and just.

The Functioning of Segregation

Let us note how segregation functions. In our social life, the criminal is segregated, not the law-abiding citizens; the insane, not the sane; the diseased, not the healthy. In very truth the entire history of segregation carries with it the idea of people of social position, culture, wealth, power and refinement setting aside their alleged inferiors as outcasts, pariahs. I have only to mention the following instances in proof: The English segregate the Irish, not the Irish the English; the Japanese the Koreans, not the Koreans the Japanese; the white American the Indian, not the Indian the white American; the rich the poor, not the poor the rich.

Sociology and Psychology of Segregation

The social method of segregation which results in the deliberate perpetration of palpable injustices upon the weak by the strong, upon the ignorant by the educated, upon the laborer by the capitalist, grows out of the conception that mingling of groups savors of equality. It is as unnatural for equals to segregate

each other as it is natural for them to mingle together. Equals demand equal privileges and rights; unequals demand unequal privileges and rights. If John feels that he is equal to Jim, he will accept no less than Jim. But if Jim feels that he is inferior to John, he will demand and accept less than John. The former develops the superiority complex, the later the inferiority complex.

Now, in every community, the dominant propertied group seeks to keep up the fiction of inherent, inescapable, eternal fundamental difference between, and the inferiority of the non-propertied element and themselves, by enforcing segregation. The psychology of this method is that anything affirmed and repeated sufficiently long will come to be believed. The segregator and segregated will grow to believe and defend the principle of segregation. Generally the policy of segregation emanates from the economic masters of a community, realizing that the slaves or exploited group will revolt immediately they come to feel and think themselves the equal of the self-appointed master class, and that this belief will develop through contact, for contact tends to strip one of his self-acclaimed, godlike, superior attributes, to expose his weaknesses, his commonplaceness and similarities to the so-called common people, unless he be, indeed, intrinsically superior. Such is the reason for the hierarchical organization of monarchies and empires. The plain people are permitted only periodically, on some august or state occasion, to view the person of the King. It is ever shrouded in the halo of mystery, thereby investing the ruler with the power, authority and aspect of the supernatural. In democracies and republics, too, those who own for a living struggle to be worshipped and obeyed as little uncrowned kings by those who work for a living. In order to be so regarded, they avoid contact with the despised common herd. True is the old adage: familiarity breeds contempt. It is a fact of common knowledge to all students of the history of the slave regime that the slave owners prevented, upon pain and severe punishment, the association of free Negroes with Negro slaves. Labor history is replete with the brutal methods, legal and illegal, employed by the capitalists in order to prevent contact between union and non-union labor. Contact invites examination. Examination dissipates unreal differences. Common people clamor for the rights and comforts of kings when they know and realize that they are all human beings of common mud. Sweated non-union men will fight for a union wage when they are educated through contact with their union brothers. Negroes will not continue to accept the deserts of half-men when they awake, through contact, to the fact that they are no less than white men in body and mind.

Who Benefits from Segregation

It is obvious from the foregoing that segregation never originates in the interest of the segregated, but in the interest of the segregator. For instance, it is not

to the interest of criminals to be segregated. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that there are persons in society better than they, criminals undoubtedly could improve themselves through contact with the so-called “best people.” Imitation in society, according to [Gabriel] Tarde, is one of the greatest forces for modern progress. Certainly the association of criminals with their betters could not make them worse. The old saying “show me the company you keep and I will tell you who you are,” carries with it the idea that if one associates with criminals, he is a criminal; if he associates with respectable people, he is respectable. It goes further, and implies that if one is respectable and associates with bad people, he will become bad. But the reverse should also be true, viz.: that if the “no-good” associate with the good, they will become good. This principle of sociology is borne out by the entire body of literature on the subject of child psychology. Witness the institution for incorrigibles, the classes for mental defectives. No one without a sense of humor will contend that association between children of strong and weak minds will result in making the minds of the weak-minded children weaker, or that the insanity of the insane is accentuated by contact with the sane, or that the physically weak will be made weaker by contact with the physically strong, or that common people will be made more common by association with the kings and aristocrats, or that the ignorant will become more ignorant by contact with the educated. Now, granting that the theory of separating the bad from the good, the criminal from the law-abiding citizens, is sound, for the Negro or any other group to accept segregation is to acknowledge themselves inferiors and incompetents, and, therefore, entitled to inferior treatment. To illustrate: no one will maintain that a criminal ought to receive the same treatment as a law-abiding citizen, or that a diseased person should be allowed the same freedom as a healthy one. On the contrary, the current notion is that justice should punish the criminal in the interest of the law-abiding citizen. While this is a fallacy, it is, nevertheless, the custom.

Social Value

Upon close analysis, it will be found that the philosophy of social value arises out of certain conceptions of superiority and inferiority—with respect to persons and things. This element of relative worth is reflected in every aspect of our social life, especially the economic. Note the case of a Negro caught in a wreck. He will be awarded less damages than a white man similarly injured, of similar nature. Why? Because the social estimate of a Negro is that he is less valuable than a white man, even if certain Negroes, in material possessions and culture, are obviously greater than certain white men. As a worker, a Negro will be paid less wages than a white worker, because it is assumed that his standard of living is lower; that is, that he has less wants for higher good,

not that he consumes less. This is based upon the fact that the Negro worker is recognized as being able to produce less of value. It is idle and futile to expect an inferior person to produce as much of value as a superior one. But you say that a Negro worker can produce as much of value as a white worker. Of course that's true, but the question is not what is true but what is generally believed and felt to be true. Human beings act more strongly upon belief and feeling than they do upon thought and reason. To accept the status of an inferior and then cry for being denied the recognition of a person of superior worth is as childish as it is useless. Thus, the social evaluation of a people has definite economic significance. A powerful reason for opposing any measure that affixes the stigma of inferiority to the Negro.

Evaluation of Other Species

Proceeding with our train of reasoning. Let us apply this principle of evaluation to other species. A robin will not bring the price or get the treatment of a canary, because it is thought to be worth less. Nor will a common cur dog receive the attention of or fetch the price of a Newfoundland or English Bulldog, because of the conception of relative values. There is no market for a backyard cat, while a Maltese is highly prized. An ordinary cow will not secure the consideration of a Holstein or Jersey cow. These conceptions of worth grow out of the belief that one yields a larger measure of service, the other, of pleasure. The inference is that, in proportion as one is believed to be valuable, superior, competent, or valueless, inferior, incompetent, he will be treated and recognized as such. Hence the importance of social esteem. It does not matter that one is [actually] more or less valuable than he is believed to be, he will be appraised and treated according to the prevailing social belief of his merit or demerit. Now, if the social treatment of a person or group is based upon the social estimate of his or its value, how he or the group ranks in the social scale, it logically follows that it is always to the interest of the person or group to fix, in the mind of society, the belief that he or the group is as socially valuable, and is socially [the] equal of any other person or group in the community. Because as community thinks and feels, so it acts. Men and women only mob their supposed inferiors. White, Protestant, Nordic Americans mob and lynch Jews, Negroes, Catholics, foreigners and unionized workmen.

But, you say, while it is true that the social treatment of individuals and groups reflects the social estimate of them, which in turn reacts on their ability to earn a living, still opposition to segregation is tantamount to a demand for social equality. True. We plead guilty. But what of it? If a demand for social equality is equivalent to a demand for the right to live, then there is no sensible and logical alternative to a demand for social equality. This brings us to the

question: What is social equality? Suppose we listen to the definition of [its] most rabid Negro opponents. What say John Sharp Williams, Pat Harrison, Thomas Dixon and their ilk? With tongue and pen they cry out to the high heavens against the Negro aspiring to become educated, to vote, to do the most skilled work, work which they dub a “white man’s job”! It is clear, then, that to the Negrophobists, political opportunity is social equality; that educational opportunity is social equality; that economic opportunity is social equality. Hence to deny that you want social equality is to admit that you don’t want political, educational and economic opportunity. In other words, you admit you feel that you should apologize for living, for without the above-named opportunities, life is impossible. The logic of Cole Blease and the Ku Klux Klan is sound. You cannot educate a person or race in the same things in which you are educated and continue to convince him or it that he or it is inferior to you.

Social Contact

But it is further argued by our friendly enemies that educational, political and economic opportunity can only be achieved through contact, and contact is the essence of social equality. Here again our industrious detractors are on sound ground. But is contact, per se, objected to? No, not at all. Social contact is objected to—that is, contact with Negroes as ladies and gentlemen. There is contact a-plenty after dark. Witness the six million mulattoes in this country. They were not brought into being through the mystic magic of some Aladdin. Besides, the results of this twilight contact have progressively increased. Note that in 1850, there were 405,751 mulattoes in these United States. In 1910, there were 2,050,686, an increase of 9.8 percent. So much for biological contact.

Now as to the Social Manifestations of Social Equality

It is a matter of common experience that contact between Negro bellmen, waiters, Pullman porters, ushers in theatres, chauffeurs, cooks and nurses and their white employers as servants, obtains generally and daily. Contact in the capacity of a servant is not objected to. But there is objection to a Negro appearing in the same Pullman coach, theatre or hotel as a guest, as a gentleman or lady, being served as others are served. Still, there is obviously less contact with the white patrons when the Negro is in a dining room, a Pullman car or a theatre as a guest than when he is there as a servant. Because as a guest he occupies his own particular seat or berth as the other white guests do; whereas as a servant, he moves freely among all of the white patrons constantly. Again, the Negro may live under the same roof with the rankest Bourbon Southern Negro hater as a servant, but no Negro must buy a house beside him and live [there] as a neighbor, as an owner.

Nor is it a question of economic status here. The Negro who purchases a house in a white neighborhood would be objected to were he a millionaire doctor or a plain ash-cart driver. A white common workman who was able to buy in an exclusive neighborhood would not be objected to, however. Why? Because there is always a desire to see an evidence of inferiority on the part of the Negro, and the capacity of a menial servant is reckoned as such evidence. But again, why? The answer is simple. If the great laboring masses of people, black and white, are kept forever snarling over the question as to who is superior or inferior, they will never combine or they will take a long time to combine for the achievement of a common benefit: more wages, a shorter work-day and better working conditions. Combination between black and white working people in the South would mean the loss of millions in profits to railroads, cotton magnates, lumber barons and bankers. White railroad workers fear the Negro as a strikebreaker, but still refuse to take him into their unions because of the social pressure that decrees that Negroes are inferior to white men, and hence should be religiously denied contact. This is an instance of a direct blow at the very life of the race as a result of the mandate of segregation.

SOURCE: *The Messenger* 6 (June 1924): 185–88.

Randolph Defies Boss Crump (1944)

In November 1943, a group of African American residents of Memphis, Tennessee, invited Randolph to give a talk at a local Baptist church. City officials led by Edward Hull “Boss” Crump forced them to cancel the event. When the president of the American Federation of Labor, William Green, learned of the incident, he used the aegis of the AFL to reinvoke Randolph in March 1944. In his speech, which was reprinted in *The Black Worker*, Randolph argues for the centrality of free speech to a democratic society. The context of World War II was important, and Randolph identified First Amendment freedoms as a defining difference between the United States and its totalitarian enemies.

Mr. Chairman and Fellow Citizens of Memphis, Tennessee:

I have returned to Memphis because I consider it my Constitutional right, my democratic privilege and my moral duty. I am not here because of any belief that Memphis must hear me speak in order to be saved. I do not consider that I possess any unusual, extraordinary or cosmic wisdom that anybody else lacks. I am just a humble official of a trade union, The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, affiliated with the American Federation of Labor, which is

doing its best to improve the standards of wages and working conditions of its members, and to help advance the general cause of the Negro people, and all of the workers, regardless of race, color, religion or national origin.

Now, let me at this point express on behalf of myself, personally, and of the officials and members of my organization, the Brotherhood, and I think that I can also say on behalf of the Negro workers generally, our very great appreciation for the fine, forthright, timely and courageous position Brother William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor has taken on this controversial question of free speech and free assembly in Memphis.

I hail President Green because under tremendous pressure he remained firm, insisting upon the holding of this meeting without reservations or equivocation. He concurred with my opinion that the A. F. of L. was morally obligated to take a definite stand on the right of free speech for free men of labor in this city, and promptly appointed Brother George Gooze, able, fearless and aggressive Southern organizer for the Federation, to plan a public mass meeting under the auspice of the American Federation of Labor and the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and other sister unions of the city of the Federation, and invited me to address it. . . .

Hence, it is quite proper that such a meeting as this should be sponsored by labor, organized labor, under the banner of the American Federation of Labor, for it is labor which has waged the battles of the front-line trenches in every important historical period to uphold the Bill of Rights, guaranteeing these fundamental constitutional principles, namely, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, trial by jury, right of petition, right of habeas corpus and freedom of worship. Labor has led the fight for free public schools and also took its stand against the sinister institution of chattel slavery.

It is because the American Federation of Labor is unalterably committed to free speech, free assembly and free press, the cornerstones of our democratic system and traditions, that the Federation rejects the totalitarian doctrines of Germany's Nazism, Russia's Communism, Italy's Fascism and Japan's Militarism. All of these systems of state power have banned and destroyed the freedom of the press, speech and assembly. Thus, the avowed purpose of this war by the United Nations is to uphold, preserve and maintain the democratic principles, ideals, heritages, values, and faiths expressed and symbolized in the right of free speech and free assembly. Labor is conscious of the fact that its cause involving wage levels that insure decency, comfort, health, and a cultural development, the right of self organization, collective bargaining and the selection and designation of representatives of its own choosing, could never have been attained if labor had been denied the right of free speech and free assembly. It is a matter of common knowledge that public opinion is the

most powerful force in the world today, and this force is primarily molded and shaped through the freedoms of speech, press and assembly.

But, men must not only have the right to say that which may be right, but also the right to say that which may be wrong. It is only through the interplay of different, varied and opposed opinions and ideas in the arena of public discussion that truth emerges. Some opinions that were accepted as wrong yesterday are regarded as right today, and some ideas that were looked upon as right yesterday are rejected as wrong today. Who is to serve as the infallible judge of right or wrong opinions? There is none so wise or so just to serve in this role. The history of the progress of civilization is the story of the clash of opinions. Wherever anyone sets himself up as possessing a monopoly on truth, he stands across the path of human advancement. This has been true from the days of Caesar to Hitler. A government of law and free men could not either come into existence or long endure were men not free freely to express their convictions concerning men and measures. Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, and Lincoln upheld the freedoms of free expression in speech and press. . . .

Needless to say, the idea of a speech of mine provoking a race riot is unthinkable in my own mind, but I am not going to permit Crump or anybody else to curb my right of free speech or tell me what to say merely because he predicts all sorts of dire and dreadful happenings from it. If E. H. Crump's policy on free speech was permitted to prevail, one could only exercise the right of free speech when he said what Crump wanted him to say. This is dictatorship with a vengeance. Indeed, the Memphis political boss out-Hitlers Hitler.

Because of the great gravity of this issue of free speech in Memphis and the attitude of the city officials and Boss Crump on the question, I want to discuss some basic fallacies of thought that are responsible for this anti-free speech position, and also the stake of labor in this issue. To begin with, all is not well in Memphis so far as the races are concerned, or so far as organized labor is concerned. If all were well, white people would not have called up the police commissioner stating that they were buying guns to start a race riot if the meeting was held. No such thing has occurred in any other Southern city where I have spoken or in any other section of the country. . . .

SOURCE: *The Black Worker* 16 (April 1944): 4; (May 1944): 4; and (July 1944): 4.

Keynote Address at Negro American Labor Council Convention (1962)

This address before the 3rd Annual Convention of the Negro American Labor Council was one of Randolph's longest. It ranges from the history of the labor movement to an analysis of the schisms between the modern labor and civil rights movements. One can see how the latter issue, combined with the growing disconnect between established leaders like Roy Wilkins and younger militant leaders, troubled Randolph. He envisioned the NALC as a kind of glue that would hold these movements together.

Black America has been thrust into a job rights and civil rights struggle. It is not an accident or an incident; it is a massive event. It bodes danger and opportunity. There is danger that black America may be blocked and thrown back[ward] in the fight for job rights and civil rights, and there is opportunity to accelerate the struggle for the conquest of job rights and civil rights and human dignity. Which of the two paths it takes depends upon the principles, programs and practices it adopts. But the principles, programs and practices considered will only have reality in relation to the nature and origin of the crisis.

Thus, while Negro workers have made progress their economic status is still low. They exist within the shadow of poverty. Yes, they are virtually locked up in a socio-economic, poverty-structured system. Not only are Negro workers a hundred years behind their white brothers but their relative pace of progress is stretching the distance between them, with black workers, under the advance of radical technology, falling further and further behind with no visible prospects, given the continuance of present policies and attitudes of trade unions, industry and government, of ever catching up.

The Negro's struggle for equal employment opportunities over the past one hundred years is of more than historical or commemorative interest. The crises of the present are rooted in the failures of the past, and lessons unlearned are tragedies prolonged. In our own time the prolonged tragedy of black labor weighs heavily upon all Americans. It is becoming increasingly clear that no lasting political freedom or social equality is conceivable without the integration of the Negro into the economic life of the nation. How far have we come, and how far have we to go?

The Emancipation Proclamation not only freed the slaves but, in doing so, made the question of equal job opportunities a major social problem. Even before the Civil War the question had arisen, though in less pressing form, with regard to the half million free Negroes. Generally, those free Negroes who lived in Southern cities, where Negroes often had a monopoly on mechanical skills, fared better economically than those who lived in the

Northern cities, where they faced competition from skilled immigrant labor. So serious was the economic discrimination against free Northern Negroes that in Philadelphia, for example, Negroes in 1837 comprised 14 percent of the poorhouse population, though only 7 percent of the population at large. This dusty statistic is an early example of a 2-to-1 relationship that has shown remarkable persistence down to the present.

During the 1830's many free Negroes organized the so-called Conventions Movement, of which Frederick Douglass was eventually elected president. It is of immense interest that this movement, in 1855, adopted an economic program calling for the establishment of an industrial college and for a type of apprenticeship training program for Negroes. Thus, even before the Civil War, Negroes, feeling the squeeze of job discrimination and segregation, organized to fight for economic security and advanced programs that have a familiar ring today.

The slaves freed on January 1, 1863 were liberated not only from their masters but from their livelihood as well. Thaddeus Stevens, looking toward the transformation of the former slaves into a class of small independent farmers, advocated the government's giving them "forty acres and a mule." The Northern industrialists, however, who had gained control of the Republican Party, could not countenance the confiscation and division of large plantations. Many of the Negroes who did secure homesteads were driven off under President Johnson's program of restoring the land to white planters. Homeless and property-less, the great mass of Southern Negroes had no alternative but to return to the plantations, this time as tenant farmers and sharecroppers.

The failure of Reconstruction to provide Negroes with an economic base—the tragedy of the period—foredoomed all efforts at [achieving] political democracy in the South. Even as the Negro was enjoying the fullest participation in political life, helping to maintain Republican power in the South, the stage had been set for the time when, a score [of] years after Reconstruction, his landlord would march him to the polls with voting instructions, and later disfranchise him altogether. Few examples in history so vividly illustrate the fragility of political freedom unmoored in economic security.

Thus the Negro found himself cut adrift into the Gilded Age, the nadir of Big Business morality, the pinnacle of its speculative and exploitative irresponsibility. From the industrial revolution that was sweeping the country the Negro was excluded North and South. In the South the Negro had never really competed with the poor white for land, having been reduced almost immediately to sharecropping, but he had offered competition in mechanical skills. In fact, at the end of the Civil War, 100,000 of the 120,000 artisans in the South were Negroes. By 1890 the skilled Negro worker had virtually ceased to exist. The mania for textile mills and tobacco factories . . . gripped the South in

the last decades of the nineteenth century . . . plant managers promised poor whites industrial salvation in the new white-only enterprises. In the North, which claimed 10 percent of the Negro population in this period, Negroes were systematically barred from all but the most menial tasks in the burgeoning mass industries.

To what extent the denial of equal job opportunities to Negroes in both the North and South “stemmed from interlocking control or management” is “difficult to determine,” as the historian Rayford W. Logan points out in *The Negro in American Life and Thought*. Nonetheless, after the famous Compromise of 1877, “Big Business continued to constitute the principal force for peace at almost any price, for ‘leaving the South alone.’ Further investigation may reveal close links between Northern capital and management and the supposedly predominantly Southern enterprises of cotton and tobacco factories.” In any case, the Southerners had their own reasons for keeping these factories white. Whatever the motives of the Northerners, their policy was deliberate, and it is clear that Northern capital made ample and profitable use of Negroes as strikebreakers.

Not only the federal government (through its Reconstruction and post-Reconstruction policies) and Northern and Southern capitalists were responsible for the deterioration of the Negro’s economic condition; the unions were also to blame. It is not entirely coincidental that the surge of American capitalism, the freeing of the slaves, and the formation of the first national labor organization should occur almost simultaneously. Yet the confluence of these events was significant for the future of the Negro. The National Labor Union, formed in 1866, was a weak counter-weight to the power and influence being wielded by the industrialists [who were] backed up by the Supreme Court and other agencies of government. Before its destruction following the panic of 1873, the National Labor Union had recognized the danger posed by Negro strikebreakers and decided to organize black workers, but into separate locals. The reaction of Negro workers was the formation, in 1869, of the National Negro Labor Union.

The fate of the National Negro Labor Union was predictable. Although Negroes had successfully established independent churches in the eighteenth century, inexorable economic laws militated, then as now, against the organization of workers along racial lines. Efforts of the National Negro Labor Union to affiliate with white labor were unsuccessful. Negro workers remained isolated and were increasingly used as strikebreakers.

The Knights of Labor, founded in 1869, was more anxious to recruit Negroes. Aiming at unskilled as well as skilled workers, the Knights brought Negroes into some all-black locals and also some mixed ones. In 1887 it may have had as many as 90,000 Negroes out of a total membership of a half million.

Many of its organizers played courageous roles in the South, braving terrorist anti-labor tactics of a sort all too familiar to students of the CIO drives in the Thirties. The decline of the Knights following the Haymarket Riot of 1886 was paralleled by the rise of a new union and a new labor philosophy.

Unlike the Knights, the American Federation of Labor, founded in 1886, had a decentralized structure consisting of essentially autonomous craft locals. Because of its disinterest in unskilled workers, the AFL could attract few Negroes; at the same time, various unions that constitutionally excluded Negroes from membership could not be curbed because of the federation structure of the national body. Structural questions aside, however, the AFL lacked the broad idealistic spirit of the Knights of Labor, and for the latter's crusading spirit substituted a more narrowly economic and "practical" program. Still, the Federation's 1893 and 1894 conventions stated: "We here and now reaffirm as one of the cardinal principles of the labor movement that the working people must unite and organize, irrespective of creed, color, sex, nationality, or politics." The resolution was not binding, only a request. But consistent discrimination by its affiliates whittled away at even this principle, so that by 1901 the federation gave ground on the issue of social equality and approved the organization of separate locals. It also scolded Negro workers for strikebreaking, as if the AFL's exclusive policies were unrelated to that practice. . . .

Whoever was most to blame—government, management or labor—the results were clear. Despite the march of the nation from agrarianism to industrialism in the second half of the eighteenth century, 88 percent of all Negroes in 1890 remained in agriculture and domestic service. By 1900 the figure had dropped only to 86.7 percent. To describe this phenomenon as a pattern of unequal employment opportunities is euphemistic. Only when viewed as an almost total exclusion from the national revolution in technology and economic organization can the Negro's experience prior to World War I be understood in terms of the lack of skills with which he met the Twentieth Century. This economic alienation of the Negro was of course paralleled by his deepening social and political alienation. . . .

In withdrawing its support of the equal opportunities principle, Congress paved the way for the inevitable decline of skilled Negro craftsmen and foremen. Having won the war against racism abroad [during World War II], with the help of her thirteen million Negroes, the nation apparently no longer felt constrained to continue that war at home. Once again the federal government had abandoned the Negro to economic oppression.

Certainly recent years have seen progress in the Negro's struggle for equal opportunities. In the absence of federal legislation, a score of states and numerous cities have enacted their own Fair Employment Practices pro-

grams, varying in scope and enforceability. Direct action by Negroes at the 1948 Democratic Party convention was largely responsible for President Truman's Executive Order 9981 ending segregation in the armed forces. President Kennedy's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunities, established in March 1961, is a considerable improvement over its phlegmatic predecessor, though it still lacks some of the powers of Roosevelt's FEPC. That discrimination persists in employment created by federal grant-in-aid and loan programs, as in National Guard and reserve units, is documented in the 1961 Civil Rights Commission Report. Moreover, the Commission has reported that: "Efforts of the federal government to promote nondiscriminatory employment by government contractors and federal agencies have not generally been effective in overcoming resistance to hiring Negroes in any but the lower categories."

The labor movement has made welcome advances. During the forties, there were still twenty-six AFL affiliates whose constitutions barred Negroes from membership—and thus from fruitful employment. Today only the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Enginemen explicitly excludes Negroes. Twenty-six international unions and seventeen state central bodies have established civil rights committees. One and a half million Negroes now reside in the house of labor and they have won increasing representation in labor's governing councils, even in the South. The 1961 AFL-CIO Civil Rights Resolution forthrightly proclaimed: "The AFL-CIO is in the forefront of the civil rights revolution in our land. It is a foremost force in the drive to eliminate and prevent every form of race discrimination and race injustice in the American community." It is not without interest that no comparable statement has come from any national manufacturing organization.

Still, resolutions are not enough. In apprenticeship training, hiring policies, seniority lists, pay scales, job assignments and the like, discrimination persists in too many locals, especially in the building trades. Negroes continue to be barred from some unions, segregated in others. To combat these evils, hundreds of Negro trade unionists banded together in 1959 to found the Negro American Labor Council. Loyal to the labor movement and recognizing it as the most progressive institution in our society, the NALC has fought vigorously to cleanse the trade unions of every vestige of Jim Crow. Racism, we have insisted, is uniquely incompatible with labor's needs and aspirations; it is no less an evil than Communism and corruption and must be met with equal severity. . . .

The crisis confronting the Negro worker today can be summed up in one word: Automation. The displacement of men by machines hits the unskilled and semiskilled workers first and hardest, and these are the jobs to which Negroes have been relegated. As late as 1955, only 12 percent of the Negro

workforce had risen into professional, technical, managerial, and white-collar clerical and sales jobs (as opposed to 42 percent of the whites). 47 percent of the Negroes were in service and other unskilled (nonfarm) jobs. Another 15 percent were in agriculture. At present there is no single skilled craft in which Negroes constitute even 2 percent of the total! More ominous than the figures themselves is the fact that the elevation rate of the Negro into more skilled occupations has fallen behind the rate of automation displacement.

Nowhere is the crisis more starkly revealed than in the unemployment figures. Far from indicating progress, they point to an almost steady deterioration in the position of the black worker. Whereas the unemployment rate during the years 1947–1955 did not exceed 8.9 percent for Negroes and 4.6 percent for whites, the rate in 1958 was 12.6 percent and 6.1 percent respectively. The Bureau of Labor statistics for August 1962 show 11.4 percent of the Negro workforce unemployed as against 4.6 percent of the white. Thus, despite all progress, the black unemployment rate has remained double that of whites for decades, and at the moment is two and one-half times that of whites. A recession for white workers is a depression for black workers. The extent to which the Negro unemployment rate is due to automation is suggested in the statistic on chronic unemployment. Most of the chronically unemployed are victims of technological displacement. At present, among those unemployed for more than fifteen weeks, 2.8 percent are nonwhite. Statistics can be endlessly elaborated. Their meaning is plain: the relative position of the Negro in the economy has remained astonishingly static over the years and the future threatens even that woeful position. The Negro is not the only loser. Automation is likely to create more skilled jobs than men to fill them, according to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission. Yet, as a nation we passively observe the languishing of untapped talent in stagnant pools of unskilled labor continuously drained by automation into the sewers of unemployment. . . .

What Is To Be Done?

The first step is to awaken, inform, arouse and mobilize Negro workers in and out of the unions, and transform them into a militant and massive movement, since history is full of lessons to the effect that it is virtually impossible to move the labor movement, or the business movement, or the government without a movement. Moreover, our pluralistic democratic society, with [its] many varied and various segments of the population, with their specific interests and concerns, invariably encounters, if not provokes, opposition from a particular group or groups of the population with adverse interests and concerns. Such is the case with such major groups as capital and labor, as represented by the National Association of Manufacturers and the AFL-CIO; the Negro and the South, as represented by the NAACP and the White Citizens Councils and its

allies. There are also numerous sub-groups of citizens that organize to protect their interests, such as the senior citizens movement that fights for legislation for medical care within the framework of Social Security, which was bitterly attacked and defeated by the American Medical Association. And in the long run, the group wins out and achieves its goals, not always because its cause is right, but because it possesses the more effective leverage and can bring the more pressure to bear upon, and constitutes the greater threat to, the power and stability of the government. Of course, it is an advantage when a group can claim moral grounds for its cause, which, interestingly enough, no group is willing to admit is not the case. Thus the awakened oppressed ever disturbs their oppressors.

Note the long struggle against slavery in the United States. It was the insurrections led by black revolutionists under the valiant Toussaint L'Ouverture in Santo Domingo in 1793, the slave revolts led by Gabriel that alarmed the masters of slavery in South Carolina in 1800, the uprisings in Virginia by Denmark Vesey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831 that shook, shocked and frightened the daylights out of the pompous slave masters. Such are the mechanics and dynamics of the struggle of the oppressed against their oppressors, not only in the United States but also in Africa and Asia against Western colonial tyranny and terror, as well as revolts in Eastern Europe under Communist savage oppression and violence.

Many proposals have been made. Perhaps the most pretentious is the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity "Plans for Progress" program, the purpose of which is to secure the large employers and the national and international trade unions of the AFL-CIO to sign with Vice President Johnson, at the White House, a "Plans for Progress" for equal employment opportunity. This strategy may be immensely helpful only if the government does not leave compliance upon a voluntary and permissive basis, but takes firm positive action to compel some 38,000, more or less, contractors operating 50,000 or more facilities and 100 national and international unions to abolish race bias or accept the penalty of the cancellation of contracts and the elimination of jobs. . . .

Before we in the Negro American Labor Council ask ourselves whether there will be jobs for all, black and white, and what kind of jobs will be available, let us take a look into the future, or as early as 1965—three years from today. According to estimates of population projections, the 1.9 million graduates of 1962 will become 2.5 million, an increase of 600,000, 60,000 of which will be Negroes, by 1965. If the ratio remains constant, practically 800,000 will seek college training while 1,500,000 will enter the labor force. Their dropout counterparts will increase this number to approximately 2.3 million new workers. The large number of youth reaching the age of 18 will increase

from 2.6 million in 1962 to 3.8 million in 1965, approximately a half million of whom will be blacks. These youth will enter a rapidly changing world, with technological improvements in industry making it possible to produce more units of goods and services in less time, and liquidating, as it were, some two million unskilled and semiskilled jobs annually.

The question might well be raised: can our black youth survive and move ahead in a highly competitive, racially prejudiced labor market, in view of an increasing demand for skilled, technical, professional training which they possess but sparingly? This question must be met.

Moreover, without access to unlimited areas of vocational and scientific education, reinforced by on-the-job apprenticeship training (which is only possible in industry), schools and trade unions completely free from race bias, Negro youth will be trapped in a dilemma of job impermanency, a trade or skill acquired today becoming obsolete tomorrow as a result of the bewildering sweep of change incident to the revolution of automation. This is why, my dear brothers and sisters, the presence and role of the Negro American Labor Council is so grave, urgent and imperative.

Youth of minority groups, and especially Negro youth, have particular problems that must be realistically met. They include:

1. Development of a creative and constructive self-image which is in consonance with the universal image of forward-moving youth of America.
2. Identification of the needs, responses, aspirations, yearnings and rising expectations with the militant march of disadvantaged youth under the yoke of colonialism and imperialism of world capitalism and Communism in Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe.
3. Inspiration and motivation from status symbols of accomplishment of black leadership in the skilled trades, technical, professional and scientific fields.
4. Development of adequate personality mechanisms to deal with hostility and rejection on ethnic grounds.
5. Development of constructive personal attitudes towards work and achievement.
6. Belief in his personal worth as a human being, regardless of race or color.

The Negro American Labor Council must formulate and evolve ways and means of helping black youth find their way, not only to economic success, but to moral and spiritual service to the black community in particular, and the entire city, state and nation in general. Breaking through ethnic marginal economic opportunities cannot occur in a vacuum, it can only develop in a

community context in which indigenous community leaders and institutions play a key role. Many significant jobs are not filled or even found on the basis of merit, but on the basis of a complicated system of community and personal connections and pressures. The opportunity available to a Negro youth must be construed as the function of the total community and not the sole personal responsibility of the individual youth or of his parents. The use of all the devices for breaking down barriers to employment and job mobility and progression upward in wage rates and status is a personal responsibility that falls on the leaders of community institutions and movements—religious, labor, business, educational, fraternal, political and civic.

I am sure the leaders and members of NALC share with me a sense of the tremendous magnitude of the problem of the job and skill training crisis of Negro youth, as well as a sense of the great inadequacy which now exists in our general efforts to cope effectively with the dimension of the issue of job insecurity. Whether it is the part-time and occasional effect of private agencies and voluntary groups, or the more systematic programs of public schools and public institutions which have direct contact with large numbers of Negro youth, I think there is little doubt but that these programs fall desperately short of filling the vacuum which exists in this area. The problem increases both in magnitude and complexity year after year and with each generation of Negro youth. We have only to show on the favorable side of the ledger a few individual success stories which circumstance has accidentally placed in our hands, and on the negative side the mounting delinquency and jobless rate, with their attendant psychological costs to the youth involved and the staggering social losses that cannot be reclaimed. . . .

What Is NALC?

First of all, let it be understood that NALC is not a trade union. It is a labor organization committed to fighting for equality and civil rights for black workers in the house of labor, and also to the philosophy of free, democratic trade unionism. Therefore, it negotiates no contracts concerning rates of pay or rules governing working conditions, nor does it seek to adjust grievances or claims. Nor is NALC a civil rights movement, although it supports civil rights movements like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, the Congress of Racial Equality, and the Non-violent Student Movement, as well as other bona fide civil rights organizations. . . . We are a specialized movement with a clear objective; namely, the abolition of race bias against black workers in trade unions, industry and government. It is a big enough task for any one movement. In very truth, it is big and difficult enough to engage the interest and concern of every Negro, labor, and liberal movement in the country if

we hope to win our goal in time for it to be meaningful to the black laboring masses. Moreover, NALC is not equipped with the requisite training personnel and experience to enter into the civil rights field. Nor is it equipped with the requisite training, personnel and experience to negotiate or evaluate contracts. This is the function of a trade union. We are only concerned with inquiring into the nature of a contract of a union when it involves race bias. NALC is non-partisan, but not non-political. It is primarily concerned about increasing registration among Negro workers, and the use of political action to secure executive and legislative measures for labor's rights and civil rights. NALC is not anti-white, but it is pro-Negro. NALC is not anti-AFL-CIO or any bona fide trade union. It is pro-AFL-CIO.

NALC Objectives

1. The complete abolition of race bias in trade unions, industry and government.
2. Integration of Negro trade unionists into the policy-making bodies of unions, local, national and international, city central labor councils and state AFL-CIO federations.
3. Integration of Negroes into the staff structure of unions.
4. Desegregation of southern city central labor bodies and state AFL-CIO federations.
5. Establishment of civil rights committees in national and international unions, city central labor councils and state AFL-CIO federations.
6. Negotiation of non-discriminatory clauses in union contracts.
7. Abolition of Jim Crow local unions.
8. Elimination of exclusionary membership clauses, based upon race or color, or by tacit consent. . . .

NALC is the only area of dialogue, though quite inadequate, between Negro and white trade unionists, upon a basis of equality, in the country today. While a Negro staff person for a union may, and does, have dialogue with his boss, it is an employer-employee sort of thing, which is hardly the same as when Negro and white trade unionists have dialogue upon a basis of quality. But, in order for Negro and white trade unionists to have fruitful dialogue there must be an area of consensus. What could this be? It could be:

1. Common commitment to free, democratic trade unionism.
2. Commitment to a democratic form of society within the framework of which alone can free democratic trade unionism survive and develop.

3. Opposition to the totalitarian Communist or Fascist form of society under which the trade union is an organ of the state without the right to bargain collectively on a basis of equality with management, and without the right to strike.
4. Commitment to civil rights, which is an attribute of a free and independent citizen.
5. Commitment to the spiritual and moral values of the Judeo-Christian tradition that emphasize the worth of every human being and the sacredness of the dignity of the human personality.
6. Commitment to first-class citizenship in the house of labor of all workers, regardless of race, religion, color, national origin or ancestry.
7. Commitment to the principle of any worker, white or black, Jew or Gentile, Protestant or Catholic, to equality of opportunity to learn in order to earn.
8. Commitment to union and ethnic democracy.

If we fight and faint not, we shall win.

SOURCE: Box 36, folder: Speeches, January 17, 1962–July 15, 1962, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Library of Congress.

African Methodism and the Negro in the Western World (1962)

In this speech commemorating the Diamond Jubilee of the Bermuda African Methodist Episcopal Conference, Randolph expresses his appreciation for the importance of religion in black life. He places the audacity of Richard Allen, a Revolutionary-era African American religious leader, in the context of Martin Luther and other Christian heroes. Randolph grew up in the AME tradition, and his reverence resonates throughout these remarks. His familiarity with religious doctrines is equally impressive, as he shows a mastery of both church history and biblical scriptures.

Being one of the sons of African Methodism I am honored to share in the fine fellowship spirit of this celebration of the 75th anniversary of this great church in Bermuda. Many periods of history bear a distinguishing imprint of some dominant idea, philosophy, personalities, movement or event. One such period was the age of the Hebrew prophets, thirteen centuries before the Christian era. These mighty men of Israel—Isaiah, Amos, Hosea and Micah—preached the supremacy of moral values and the importance of

social righteousness, and thundered their wrath against rituals and sacrifices as substitutes for right and justice. Thus spake Amos to the wealthy and nobility: "I hate and despise your feast days and I will not delight in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them; neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts . . . but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream."

Five thousand years ago the image of the ancient world was largely determined by two giant empires, Egypt and Babylon. Egypt, with its Nile Valley, the cradle of human culture, enslaved the Children of Israel, while the Babylonian kings crushed the Kingdom of Judah. Twenty-five hundred years after the ancient nations of despotism had perished and had been swept away, and five hundred years before Christ, Athens, described by anthropologists and archeologists as a veritable miracle, moved upon the stage of history with its unexampled passion for truth, beauty, simplicity and freedom, developed in a rocky little seaport in the midst of barbarian superstition, despotism and splendor. There a light was lit that will never go out. In those brief centuries Athens reached its summit in the few years of the Golden Age of Pericles of literature, science, philosophy, art, democracy, religion, the main achievement of the modern world, with the greatest constellation of luminaries of the book, the mind and the spirit yet known to mankind. The magnificent flowering of the genius of Athens is reflected in her honored sons: In philosophy, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle; in drama, Aeschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; in history, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon; and the odes of Pindar, the epic *Iliad* of Homer, and the sculpture of Phidias.

In the upward climb of man to higher levels of ethical and spiritual consciousness, God sent his son, Jesus Christ, who became the leader of a little band of Christians in Judea in the first century, to become the Messiah of mankind under the banner of the One and the True and the Living God, which was in sharp conflict with the polytheism of the Roman Empire of the Caesars and the religions of the ancient world.

In the ancient world (except Athens) where only the kings, the priestcraft and the great warriors were free, where dreadful human wretchedness and unspeakable fear and cruelty tended to transform the great laboring masses into cringing and hideous mindless human beings, Jesus, the lowly Nazarene, in perhaps the most revolutionary declaration made in those days of darkness and damnation, said to the multitude: "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest; take my yoke upon you and think of me for my yoke is easy and my burden is light, and ye shall find peace unto your soul."

And in reaffirming his deep concern about the people, Jesus said: "I have

compassion on the multitude because they have now been with me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I sent them away fasting to their own houses they will faint by the way, for divers of them came from far.” And he blessed a few loaves of bread and fishes and fed them. This strange witness of the will of God startled his followers, when he observed: “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it, but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it.” He shocked the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes, as well as his own disciples, when he declared: “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.”

Jesus continued to confound his followers and the high priests. It is written (Luke 4:16–18): “And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, He found the place where it was written: The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

The revolutionary ministry of the brotherhood of man of Jesus Christ was made increasingly challengingly dramatic when he said: “woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretense make long prayer; therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” And with a universal injunction of Christian humanism, he gives this injunction: “But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.”

Jesus Christ, unlike the religious leaders of Egypt, India and China, brought hope to the multitudes with the things of the body, as well as the things of the spirit. The priests of Buddhism and Hinduism found strength to endure by denying any meaning and any importance to what they could not escape. The Egyptian world, where dead men walked and slept and feasted, was transmuted into what had always been implicit in its symbolism, the world of the spirit. In India, for centuries the leader of thought to the East, the world of reason and the world of the spirit were divorced and the universe was handed over to the latter. Reality—that which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes—was construed as vague and unsubstantial and forever passing, the shadow of a dream. Only that was real which was of the spirit. This is always man’s way out when the facts of life are too bitter and too black to be borne, and where there is little faith.

When conditions are such that life offers no earthly hope, somewhere, somehow, men must find refuge. Then they fly from the terror without to the

citadel within, which famine, pestilence, fire and sword cannot shake. What Goethe calls "the inner universe" can live by its own laws, create its own security, be sufficient unto itself, when once reality is denied to the turmoil of the world without. . . .

Richard Allen, a black slave, aroused, angered and awakened by the manifestation of racial discrimination while at worship in Old St. George Methodist Church in Philadelphia, rejected, resented and resisted the affront, and walked out of the Jim Crow gallery on the Lord's Day, to breathe the air of religious freedom. By this expression of his wrath against religious Jim Crow he, like Crispus Attucks (a black man, and the first to fall in 1770 in the Revolutionary War of Independence for the thirteen American colonies), struck a blow for civil rights and first-class citizenship. Inspired by the sacred soil of Independence Square, where stood the Hall in which the Liberty Bell sounded the call to freedom and equality for all mankind, he purchased an abandoned blacksmith shop nearby and hauled it with his team to Sixth and Lombard Streets and established the first African Methodist Episcopal Church.

During these eventful times the fires of freedom and independence were burning down the rotten temple of British colonial tyranny which had been denounced and condemned in the Declaration of Independence by Thomas Jefferson. These struggles on the part of Samuel Adams, George Washington, Jefferson, Alexander Hamilton, [James] Madison, Benjamin Franklin and Tom Paine against colonial slavery stirred the Negro, slaves and free Negroes to strike a blow against chattel and religious slavery. Verily, this was the beginning of the independent church movement. And it was essentially a blow struck for racial church integration, not separation or segregation.

The growth of the A.M.E. Church is a significant and glorious tribute to the Negro's genius. It has given him a sense of his potentiality and promise. Its institutions and laws, its distinguished bishops and ministers, are the result of Negro initiative, courage and venture, wisdom and vision. African Methodism was a religious reflection of the deep revolutionary currents set in motion by the French Revolution which had given rise to the doctrine of the Rights of Man. African Methodism struck at white religious royalty and aristocracy and unfurled and held aloft the banner of *Liberté, Egalité* and *Fraternité*. . . .

Richard Allen was one of those rare spirits which opposition cannot quell. When the attempt was made to pull Absalom Jones from his knees, Allen and his friends walked out of the church, then and there. This action had greater nobility of spirit and entailed more personal sacrifice than that of Martin Luther who nailed his ninety-five theses to the church door at Wittenberg or when he stood before the Diet of Worms. On that day, and by that deed, Richard Allen broke down the iniquitous partition wall of racial proscription and segregation in the Christian Church, not only in the United States but

throughout the world. Verily, the test of Christianity is the test of the color line, as the test of democracy is the test of the color line. Well might Richard Allen have exclaimed, “I called to the Eternal in my plight, I cried to my God for aid. . . . He heard my voice.”

Richard Allen died in 1831, the year of the insurrection of the slaves of Virginia under the leadership of the slave, Nat Turner. The manifestation of a burning passion of Negro slaves for freedom shook the American white society to its very foundation. Stringent laws against the slaves followed, but slave insurrections continued in every colony and, finally, in every state in the Union. Millions of slaves preferred to die on their feet fighting for freedom than to exist on their knees begging for life. Thus, the refrain of the slaves:

*Before I'd be a slave
I'd be buried in my grave
And go home to my God
And be free. . . .*

African Methodism inspired and stimulated Negro leadership to action for abolition and to fight for political progress. During the twelve Reconstruction years, 1865 to 1877, two Negro senators from Mississippi were seated in the Congress, and fourteen Representatives in the House. Some of these men came out of the African Methodist Church. And let us not forget Abraham Grant, Benjamin W. Arnett, Benjamin Tucker Tanner, Wesley J. Gaines. And there were Bishops Lee, L. J. Coffin, Parks, Heard Flipper, John Albert Johnson, Carey Becket, Tyree, Ransom, Fountain, Gaines, and Green. These great leaders of African Methodism might well exclaim: “Upon this rock we have built this Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against [it].”

Today, Negroes in the United States represent twenty billion dollars in wealth annually. They lose thirty billions because of race bias. Their economic problems are grave because they are the first fired and the last hired and their rate of unemployment is twice as high as the unemployment rate of white workers. Their average annual median wage is 58 percent of the annual average median wage of white workers. Because Negroes, on account of race bias, have been deprived of opportunity to acquire craft skills, they are disproportionately concentrated in unskilled and semi-skilled categories of industry. They are the hardest hit by the revolution of automation.

But Negroes are awakened and aroused to the realization of the fact that “he who would be free must himself strike the first blow,” and hence young college Negro boys and girls are demonstrating against race bias by “sit-ins” and “freedom rides” and, when arrested, they express their desire to go to jail and not accept bail, which is in the great tradition of lovers of liberty all

over the world. With this militant spirit the future of Negro citizens' fight for first-class citizenship is promising and they will, undoubtedly, eventually get a Negro on the Supreme Court and there is a possibility and probability that a Negro will some day sit in the White House as the President of the United States, but only if Negroes continue to fight for their rights.

SOURCE: Box 36, folder: Speeches, January 17, 1962–July 15, 1962, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Library of Congress.

Lincoln University Commencement Address (1967)

A. Philip Randolph's address to graduates at Lincoln University, the flagship of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities in Missouri, hints at the fissures that were threatening the civil rights movement in the mid-1960s. Ideological differences about the wisdom of Black Power, local squabbles over control of schools, and the ongoing war in Vietnam all generated intense debate within the ranks of civil rights movement organizers and tacticians. In this speech Randolph argues that conservatives would be elected in 1968 if the progressive coalition continued to splinter, and he warns that the gains made by the movement thus far would disappear, just as they had during the collapse of Reconstruction nearly one hundred years earlier.

Permit me to express my pleasure and delight to have been honored with the opportunity to share in the fine fellowship spirit of this Commencement of this great institution of learning. It has given us some of the distinguished leaders of our country. I have come to reflect, with the faculty and students, upon the rise, struggle and promise of the Negro Freedom Movement.

We live in an age of revolutions. There is the revolution of science, technology and industrialism, revealing the new and bewildering phenomena of special explorations and nuclear fission; and the revolutions of civil rights and nationalism, with the restless and challenging mood of rising expectations, the fires of which have swept over the great continents of Asia and Africa, and the areas of Latin America and the Caribbean, leaving in their wake the ashes of the old hated and hateful empires of colonialism.

Nor is the Church and religion, as shown by the spread of the spirit of ecumenism initiated by Pope John XXIII, Protestant and Jewish religious leaders, untouched by the winds of revolutionary change.

After nearly 300 years of exploitation and humiliation, the thunder of the protest of the Black Revolt has shaken America to its very foundations. Perhaps the most stirring and dramatic event of modern times is the great world of color, two-thirds of mankind, on the march to freedom and human dignity.

This manifestation of unrest and discontent, if not wrath, of the peoples of color against rejection, oppression, alienation and apartheid is a dynamic upward thrust of the so-called undeveloped areas in an essentially new and potentially revolutionary attack upon the decadent and mythical concept of white supremacy. Having stepped out of the long night of slavery and serfdom of the past into the bright light of the present struggle for nationalist independence and racial justice, millions of men of color, with heads bloody but unbowed, souls uncurbed, are marching into the future for a better tomorrow and the fellowship of man.

But while colonialism has been swept from the continents of Africa and Asia, the baffling socio-economic problems of poverty, illiteracy and disease remain. The fact is, lessons of history teach that economic and political democracy and social well-being do not automatically follow nationalist or civil rights revolutions. More profound social change is imperative to lift the people to higher levels of life and living. Social revolutions must inevitably follow hard upon the heels of the development of a self-governing state and the triumph of a revolution for civil rights. A self-governing state has the task of developing a viable economy which must rest upon the modernization of agriculture and advancing industrialization. Such has been the behavior pattern of the transition of a colony from a sort of imperialistic mercantilist status to an independent nation-state. And American Negroes, while members of a free, powerful nation-state, are far from free. Of course this political and social change is not simple or easy, for the developing countries never had a chance, under the mercantilism of colonialism, to achieve any considerable capital formation, mechanical or social technology. This is understandable, since the colonial powers were fearful lest too much self-development of colonial subjects might encourage the spirit of independence and threaten continued colonial rule. In the South, Negroes have been and even are now brutally subjugated by white rule which stems partially from fear of a black revolt.

In fact, the rise and development of world racism is contemporaneous with the rise and development of world colonialism and imperialism. The reason being that subjugation, domination and exploitation of peoples of color in Africa and Asia, the United States, the Caribbean and Latin American countries, required pseudo-moral justification and social and political explanation for the material gain or economic profit out of the human misery of colonialism. Hence, racism had to be invented.

With a profound sense of prophecy the late and lamented William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, in his *Souls of Black Folk*, stated: "Herein lie buried many things which if read with patience may show the strange meaning of being black here at the dawning of the Twentieth Century. This meaning is not without interest to you, gentle reader, for the problem of the Twentieth Century is

the problem of the color line. Verily, the history of the American Negro is the history of this color line.”

Of the black slaves’ fighting faith in freedom, Du Bois continues: “Away back in the days of bondage they thought to see in one divine event the end of all doubt and disappointment; few men ever worshipped Freedom with such unquestioning faith as did the American Negro for two centuries. To him, so far as he thought and dreamed, slavery was indeed the sum of all villainies, the cause of all sorrow, the root of all prejudices; emancipation was the key to a promised land of sweeter beauty than ever before the eyes of wearied Israelites.

“In song and exhortation swelled one refrain, Liberty; in his tears and curses the God he implored had freedom in his right hand. At last it came—suddenly, fearfully, like a dream. With one wild carnival of blood and passion came the message, in his own plaintive cadences:

Shout, o children!
Shout, you’re free!
For God has bought your liberty!”

But had the dawn of the morning of freedom really come? While the Reconstruction Revolution was celebrated by the enactment of the famous War Amendments—the Thirteenth of 1865 abolished slavery; the Fourteenth of 1868 made the Negro a citizen; and the Fifteenth of 1870 gave him the right to vote—reinforced by the Civil Rights Act of 1876, it is a notorious fact that neither of these measures was ever fully enforced.

Why? There were four major reasons:

One, the reconciliation of the old ruling slave oligarchy with former liberals, with some prominent abolitionists. Even such former anti-slavery publications as the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Harper’s*, *The Nation*, *North American Review*, resorted to the use of such myths as the hereditary racial inferiority of the Negro.

Two, the desertion of the Republican Party. This was evident when following the Hayes-Tilden election of 1876, President Hayes, Republican, who won as a result of highly questionable political maneuvering, withdrew the federal army forces from the South, leaving the Black Freedmen to the tender mercies of their former slave masters. Of course, this deal was mutually beneficial to the North and South. The former needed control of the federal government power of taxation to protect and advance rising industrial capitalism, and the latter, completely bankrupt, needed cheap labor to rebuild the cotton plantations.

Three, the rise of the Confederate Counterrevolution following the end of

the war. Mounted by the terror and violence of the Ku Klux Klan and the U.S. Supreme Court decision of *Plessy vs. Ferguson* in 1896, which propounded the doctrine of separate but equal, the legal foundation for the American system of racial segregation and discrimination—the Confederate forces drove the Freedmen from the ballot box, and with the poll tax, white primaries, grandfather clauses and literacy tests, banished the Negro from the political and civic life of the South.

Fourth, labor and farmers' revolts. And, finally, the Freedmen were soon forgotten by the American public. This was due largely to violent nation-wide strikes and farmers' rebellion against the Gilded Age, which denied the workers decent wages and the right of union organization, and the farmers profitable prices for their products. This upheaval resulted in pushing the Black Freedmen from the center of the stage of American history.

Negroes emerged from this dreadful crisis landless, voteless, moneyless and friendless, if not hopeless. Though the march of the Black Americans to Canaan, the Promised Land, was stopped dead in its tracks by the fires of hate and terror, there was no turning back. The seeds of the Civil Rights Revolution had been planted by the slave insurrections of Cato in 1739, Gabriel in 1800, Vesey in 1822 and Nat Turner in 1831. Black slaves were striking hard to break the system of slavery itself through violent group insurrections, flight from the land of Pharaoh and suicide. Thus, Hugh McCall, one of the earliest historians of Georgia, remarked that "the Negro could not be supposed to be content in slavery, and would grasp with avidity at the most desperate attempts which promised freedom."

In 1910, Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, together with a few dedicated white liberals, formed the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. A long chain of battles have been fought, won and lost for Negro freedom. In 1954 the U.S. Supreme Court handed down the momentous *Brown* decision for the desegregation and integration of public schools, as a result of legal action of the NAACP. In 1955 there was the famous boycott of Jim Crow buses in Montgomery, headed by Dr. Martin Luther King, followed by a rash of demonstrations in the form of lunch counter sit-ins, freedom rides, the fight against segregation and police-dog brutality in Birmingham, Alabama, the Big March on Washington of August 28, 1963, the Montgomery-Selma, Alabama march; school boycotts, marches for jobs, marches against ghettos, marches to strengthen the war on poverty, and highlighted by the racial explosions in Watts, Harlem, Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, and many other areas.

With the vigorous leadership by President Johnson of civil rights legislation in the Congress, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were enacted into law. This was a major victory of Civil Rights Revolution because it enabled Negroes to enjoy public accommodations in southern

cities hitherto denied them, and made possible widespread and extensive voter registration in the South. The first impression in many areas was that the battles of the Negro freedom movement were over.

While federal civil rights legislation had established the illegality of discrimination and segregation based upon race or color, in public schools, industry, and labor unions, the big problem, yet unsolved, was implementation. Because of the obvious progress of the Civil Rights Revolution, Negroes today, as they did at the end of the Civil War, paradoxically face an uncertain future. When emancipation was proclaimed in 1863, Negroes were no longer slaves, but they were not yet citizens legally. So, today, Negroes are legally free American citizens, but they cannot yet completely act like it because the legality is still questioned by the diehard segregationists. But while the implementation of existing civil rights legislation and the enactment of a Federal Fair Housing Act are not less difficult than enactment of primary civil rights legislation, the basic fulfillment of the mission of the Civil Rights revolution has been achieved.

Thus, Negroes face the challenge of effecting a transition from, or a transformation of, the Civil Rights Revolution into a Social Revolution, which alone can solve the problem of joblessness and poverty, slum housing, ignorance and disease for the black and white working poor. This will require a struggle to achieve profound social change in the institutions of our American society, involving a more equitable redistribution of the abundant wealth of our affluent economic order, the National Gross Product of which today is some seven hundred billion, five hundred million dollars, and in the Seventies will no doubt reach a trillion dollars. Thus, the Social Revolution requires a base for an effective powerful thrust toward economic and social objectives wider than the Civil Rights Revolution of black Americans can provide.

Since the Social Revolution envisions new and different goals from the conventional civil rights objectives, new tactics and strategies, or tools with which to build and advance social change, must be developed. This will be the task of the workers in the trade unions, the black and white unemployed, brutally exploited migrant farm laborers, and the enlightened and liberally oriented members of the religious faiths—Jews, Catholics and Protestants—and the intellectual, liberal and student forces, committed to a free, democratic society.

Apostles of Black Power (a more dramatic term for Black Nationalism or Black Garveyism) and White Power (another term for Nazism and apartheid), magnificent delusions of racial grandeur, are committed to a reversal of an irreversible world view and trend of science and technology toward integration and cooperation. It represents a futile hope for and belief in racial salvation through isolation and separation, a policy long advocated by

segregationists in the United States and propagandists of apartheid in South Africa.

But this is not to suggest that Negroes should not work to develop power. They need to build political power through the ballot; economic power through labor unions and all forms of business enterprises, cooperatives and credit unions; and social power through community organizations. Practically all ethnic groups—Jews, Irish and Italians—and trade union workers have proceeded along this path. But the doctrine of black power or white power has overtones of racism which tends to propel the poor of ethnic groups into confrontation[s] of violent conflict instead of mutual cooperation for social progress.

But while I reject the implications of black power, its advocates must be free to be heard in a free society. The right to be wrong is as sacred as the right to be right. Any ideology or schism should be permitted to stand or fall in the free market of discussion. However, black or white racism, or anti-Semitism, is a menace to a free community and a free world, and it must be opposed.

While Negro youth can secure inspiration and motivation from the identification with the glorious ancient aboriginal African cultural endowment and heritage, the deification of a race tends to become antisocial and eventuates into racial extremism such as white supremacy, Nazism, anti-Semitism and black nationalism, which can become a danger to freedom, democracy, racial and social justice.

Fearful and disturbing adumbrations of a racist doctrine are already manifesting themselves in the increasing well-meaning, but misguided, demand of some Negroes in some communities for Boards of Education to surrender to them the right to determine curricula and select principals and teachers of public schools, on the grounds that Negro youth need the inspiration of Negro educational leadership. Though Negro youth can benefit from Negro symbols of educational progress, it is unwise and a distinct disservice to Negro youth for their parents to possess such power, since most of the Negro parents, like white parents, lack the professional education to equip them to evaluate, for instance, a prospective teacher of mathematics or physics, chemistry or languages. Some agitation has developed against white teachers, per se, in Negro communities, and even the ugly head of anti-Semitism has been raised. No teacher should be assigned to teach in any public school on a basis of race. While, no doubt, this has been done, such a policy must not be supported.

Relative to the Civil Rights Revolution and the Peace Movement, permit me to observe that I, too, am committed to the Peace Movement although I am not a pacifist. I opposed the First World War because of its hypocritical slogan of “making the world safe for democracy” while Negroes were being mobbed and lynched and denied the right to vote though they were fighting

and dying overseas. However, I supported the Second World War because of Nazi racism and anti-Semitism. I also supported the Korean War, which was waged to arrest the expansion of communism. Of course I should like to see the United States stop the bombing of North Vietnam and avoid further escalation of the war, and effect a disengagement of its military force's involvement in Southeast Asia at the earliest possible date, which I feel certain President Johnson also wants and seeks to achieve. But I would not advocate the unilateral withdrawal of the United States Army, nor do I place all the blame for the continuance of the war on the United States, for there is no doubt about the repeated efforts of the President to take the war from the battlefield to the conference table.

I am not for or against the war in Vietnam, since taking sides would only serve to help plunge the Civil Rights Freedom Movement into the raging war-peace controversy. But this is not to suggest that Negro boys should refuse to answer the call of their country to serve along with white boys in this war. And, of course, I am unequivocally opposed to the burning of draft cards, and especially do I condemn burning the flag of our country. In relation to the civil rights and peace movements, I consider it tactically unsound for a civil rights leader, or a leader of the peace movement, to attempt to assume a position of leadership in both movements at the same time.

Either the civil rights Alabama-Mississippi front or the Vietnam War front will receive primary consideration. Up to this day, the Vietnam War has received national focus and has practically pushed the Civil Rights Revolution off the center of the stage of contemporary American history. The white liberals and students, while no doubt are still for civil rights, are marching for peace in Vietnam, not for civil rights in Alabama and Mississippi, where Negroes are still exposed to the propaganda fire power of the segregationists and civil rights workers are still victims of violence and murder.

Because of the crisis in the Civil Rights Revolution which has been deepened by the peace movement against the war in Vietnam, civil rights leaders need to come together oftener for consultation on tactics and strategy, and even goals. There is practically no consultation among civil rights leaders during this crisis. Since tactics and strategy are the tools with which movements are advanced, they must be developed and evaluated in response to existing social and racial realities, with relevance to time and locale, from time to time. I raise this question because probably the most costly of political casualties to the Civil Rights Revolution was the defeat of Senator Paul H. Douglas of Illinois, a liberal of towering moral and political strength in the Senate. Consultation by civil rights leaders on tactics and strategy, involving the marches in Chicago and Cicero during his campaign for his political life, might have saved this champion of racial and social justice.

Now, one of the most vital and significant Presidential elections ever held in the United States is coming in 1968. Civil rights leaders face an urgent call, implicit in the rapidly shifting political spectrum, to foregather in a closed conference for consultation on political trends toward the approaching Presidential election. Even without proclaiming collectively any choice of a candidate, they should ponder the future fortunes of the Civil Rights Revolution and the fate of the black and white working poor which will inevitably be involved in the question: which American shall direct the political destinies of our nation from the White House? If Negro Americans lose this election it may result in their losing not only the Civil Rights Freedom Movement, but they may be alienated from the center of federal power for a generation; a situation comparable to the collapse of the Reconstruction movement following the withdrawal of the federal army from the South by President Rutherford B. Hayes in 1877. Hence, the time is rapidly approaching when civil rights leaders will be expected to tell the Negro masses where they stand.

To the graduates and students, may God give you the courage, strength and faith to serve, with your knowledge and understanding, as a mighty fortress of moral commitment and dedication to the sacredness of the dignity of the human personality, democracy and freedom, racial, social justice and peace for all men everywhere, and may you never falter.

Let me close with a priceless gem from the great American poet, the lamented Langston Hughes:

*Hold fast to dreams
For if dreams die
Life is a broken winged bird
That cannot fly.*

SOURCE: Box 37, folder: Speeches, 1967, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Library of Congress.