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A Coalition of Interest: Black and White Together - Remarks of Senator Edmund S. Muskie at the NAACP Fighting for Freedom Annual Dinner

Edmund S. Muskie

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MUSKIE News

SUITE 1004

1660 L STREET, N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20036

TELEPHONE (202) 833-3850

FOR RELEASE:

CONTACT: Dick Stewart

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(202) 833-3850

NAACP FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM ANNUAL DINNER

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

"A COALITION OF INTEREST:

BLACK AND WHITE TOGETHER"

AFTER YEARS OF PRACTICE, WHITE POLITICIANS KNOW THE RIGHT THINGS TO SAY TO AN AUDIENCE OF BLACK PEOPLE. BUT WE CANNOT REALLY COMPREHEND THE DEPTH OF THE WRONG DONE TO BLACK AMERICA.

A WHITE POLITICIAN CAN SPEAK ABOUT THE SHAME OF SEGREGATED SLUMS. BUT HE CANNOT FEEL THE PAIN OF A BLACK FATHER LIVING IN A NEIGHBORHOOD OF BOARDED WINDOWS AND SAGGING BUILDINGS, FAR FROM A DECENT JOB OR A SAFE PLACE FOR HIS KIDS TO PLAY.

A WHITE POLITICIAN CAN TALK SCHOOL INTEGRATION. BUT HE CANNOT FEEL THE ANGUISH OF A BLACK MOTHER SENDING HER SONS AND DAUGHTERS OFF TO CLASSROOMS WITH TOO FEW BOOKS, TOO MANY PUPILS, AND TOO MUCH RISK OF FAILURE.

A WHITE SENATOR CAN VOTE AGAINST A MEDIOCRE APPOINTMENT TO THE SUPREME COURT -- AND HIS VOTE CAN DENY THE INSULTING CLAIM THAT THIS WAS THE BEST THE SOUTH COULD GIVE TO AMERICAN JUSTICE. BUT HE CANNOT FEEL THE INSULT IT WAS TO BLACKS TO EVEN CONSIDER THE NOMINATION OF A MAN WHOSE MOST FAMOUS PUBLIC REMARK WAS A RACIAL SLUR.

SO I DID NOT COME HERE TONIGHT TO LECTURE YOU ON THE WRONGS YOU HAVE ENDURED FOR SO LONG. YOU UNDERSTAND THEM IN A PERSONAL, EVERYDAY WAY, FAR BETTER THAN I EVER COULD. AND I DID NOT COME HERE TO TELL YOU AGAIN WHERE I STAND. I HOPE YOU ALREADY REALIZE THAT I AM WITH YOU NOW AS I HAVE BEEN IN THE PAST. I

-- more --

BELIEVE NOW MORE STRONGLY THAN EVER THAT THE FUTURE AND THE FATE OF AMERICA DEPEND ON OUR FIGHT FOR RACIAL JUSTICE. AND I BELIEVE IT IS TIME TO WIN THAT FIGHT.

PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSIONS AND SENATE COMMITTEES AND EXECUTIVE TASK FORCES HAVE ALREADY PARSED AND ANALYZED THE CRISIS. THEY HAVE STUDIED THE PREJUDICE WHICH SURROUNDS YOU. THEY HAVE DENOUNCED THE DISCRIMINATION WHICH DEPRIVES YOU. AND THEY HAVE POINTED THE WAY TO SOMETHING BETTER. THEY HAVE LEFT US WITH ELOQUENT PLEAS AND DETAILED PLANS FOR EQUITY IN AMERICA.

BUT DEFINING THE SOLUTION IS NO LONGER THE PROBLEM. IF WE DO NOT KNOW BY NOW WHAT MUST BE DONE, THEN WE WILL NEVER KNOW IT OR DO IT. THE CHALLENGE OF RACIAL JUSTICE IN 1971 IS NOT TO CONSTRUCT A STRONGER CASE FOR A CAUSE ALREADY SO CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY RIGHT. OUR REAL CHALLENGE IS TO CONSTRUCT A STRATEGY WHICH WILL PERMIT THAT CAUSE TO PREVAIL.

WE MUST BUILD A COALITION FOR CHANGE IN AMERICA -- A COALITION THAT REACHES BEYOND ONE RACE AND ANY SINGLE GROUP -- A COALITION WITH ENOUGH POWER AND ENOUGH VOTES TO MAKE THE AMERICAN DREAM A REALITY FOR EVERY AMERICAN.

I AM TALKING ABOUT A COALITION OF CONSCIENCE, COMMITTED TO CREATING A NATION WORTHY OF OUR HOPES AND OUR BOASTS. WHITE AMERICANS MUST ASK THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER -- AGAIN AND AGAIN -- THE SAME QUESTION PRESIDENT KENNEDY ASKED THEM EIGHT YEARS AGO: "WHICH OF US WOULD WILLINGLY TRADE PLACES (WITH A BLACK MAN)?" IN THE LAST DECADE, THE ANSWER WAS A STREAM OF CIVIL RIGHTS LEGISLATION WHICH LEFT OUR PEOPLE EQUAL IN LAW, BUT NOT IN LIFE.

NOW WE MUST ANSWER, NOT ONLY WITH A COALITION OF CONSCIENCE, BUT WITH A COALITION OF INTEREST. FOR WE ARE LEARNING THAT MILLIONS OF WHITES SHARE SOMETHING OF THE BLACK MAN'S FATE. WE ARE LEARNING, IN THE WORDS OF CONGRESSMAN WILLIAM CLAY, THAT BLACKS "HAVE NO PERMANENT FRIENDS AND NO PERMANENT ENEMIES -- JUST PERMANENT INTERESTS."

SINCE 1964, THE SOCIAL COMMENTATORS HAVE TRAFFICKED IN WORDS LIKE "BACKLASH" AND "HARDHAT." THEY HAVE IDENTIFIED THE WHITES WITH LOWER AND MIDDLE INCOMES AS A CENTER OF POPULAR RESISTANCE TO RACIAL EQUALITY. BUT THOSE SAME WHITE AMERICANS ARE ALSO DEPRIVED AND PRESSURED AND IGNORED. IN A VERY REAL SENSE, THEY HAVE THE SAME PERMANENT INTERESTS AS BLACK AMERICANS. AND I AM CONVINCED THAT IN A COALITION OF INTEREST, THE THINGS THAT UNITE US CAN OVERCOME THE THINGS THAT DIVIDE US.

A COALITION OF INTEREST, BLACKS AND WHITES TOGETHER, CAN FIGHT FOR PROSPERITY AND AGAINST POVERTY. AMERICANS OF EVERY RACE HAVE A VITAL STAKE IN THE OUTCOME.

WHEN A WORKER LOSES HIS JOB, THE LAY-OFF SLIP IS NOT WHITE. IT IS NOT BLACK. IT IS A COMMON GRAY COLOR OF TRAGEDY FOR THE BREADWINNER AND HIS FAMILY. TODAY, TEN PERCENT OF ALL BLACK WORKERS ARE LIVING THAT TRAGEDY. THEIR UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS NEARLY TWICE AS HIGH AS THE NATIONAL AVERAGE. BUT MILLIONS OF WHITE WORKERS ARE ALSO OUT OF WORK. AND MILLIONS MORE SEE THEIR JOB SECURITY THREATENED ON EVERY SIDE.

THEIR CONCERN IS NOT THE COLOR OF THE NEXT WORKER'S SKIN, BUT THE CHANCE TO WORK AT ALL. THEY WANT JOBS -- AND THEY WANT THEM NOW. THEY WANT FEDERALLY-FUNDED PUBLIC SERVICE JOBS -- TO PROVIDE AN ABSOLUTE AND CONSTANT GUARANTEE OF EMPLOYMENT FOR EVERY UNEMPLOYED BREADWINNER. THEY WANT FAR MORE SUMMER JOBS FOR THE YOUNG THAN THE ADMINISTRATIONS'S PROPOSAL OF A MERE 600,000 -- BECAUSE THEY WANT FAR LESS TEENAGE UNEMPLOYMENT THAN THE CURRENT RATE OF 40% FOR BLACKS AND 15% FOR WHITES. MOST OF ALL, THEY WANT TO RESTORE THE DIGNITY OF THE PRODUCTIVE ADULTS WHO ARE LOSING THEIR HOPE AND WASTING THEIR TALENTS ON ENDLESS WELFARE AND RELIEF LINES.

A COALITION OF AMERICAN WORKERS CAN MUSTER THE INFLUENCE TO CREATE A PROSPEROUS ECONOMY -- WHERE PEOPLE OF EVERY RACE CAN BE PARTNERS IN PROGRESS INSTEAD OF RIVALS FOR SCARCITY.

RETURNING VETERANS SHOULD NEVER HAVE TO BE TOLD THAT BEING OUT OF

THE SERVICE MEANS BEING OUT OF A JOB. BUT THAT IS WHAT HAPPENED TO 60% OF THE VETERANS IN NEW YORK CITY WHO TURNED TO THE STATE EMPLOYMENT SERVICE IN 1970. THEY WERE BLACK AND THEY WERE WHITE. THEY DESERVED A BETTER RESPONSE THAN THE DISCOURAGING REPLY THAT NO HELP WAS WANTED. AND THEY MUST NEVER HEAR THAT REPLY AGAIN.

A COALITION OF AMERICAN WORKERS CAN ALSO MUSTER THE INFLUENCE TO INSURE A STABLE ECONOMY -- WHERE THIS YEAR'S HIGHER WAGES NO LONGER BUY LESS THAN LAST YEAR'S LOWER WAGES. IN 1970, THE AVERAGE FAMILY OF EVERY RACE ACTUALLY SUFFERED A DECLINE IN REAL INCOME OF OVER 1%. BREADWINNERS CARRIED A SANDWICH LUNCH AND GAVE UP A VACATION TRIP AND PUT OFF THE NEW CAR -- BUT IN THE END, INFLATION DRAINED THEIR SAVINGS AWAY. THAT, TOO, MUST NEVER HAPPEN AGAIN.

AND A COALITION OF AMERICAN WORKERS CAN MUSTER THE INFLUENCE TO BUILD AN ECONOMY OF OPPORTUNITY -- WHERE THE MAJORITY OF THE POOR WHO ARE WHITE AND THE MINORITY OF THE POOR WHO ARE BLACK CAN EARN THEIR OWN WAY TO A DECENT FUTURE. IN THE FIRST TWELVE MONTHS OF THIS DECADE -- FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE STATISTICS WERE KEPT -- THERE WAS A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AMERICANS WHO HAD TO SUBSIST ON LESS THAN SUBSISTENCE REQUIRES. IN 1970, OVER ONE MILLION MORE BLACKS AND WHITES FELL BELOW THE POVERTY LINE. THEY MUST NOT BE FORCED TO STAY THERE -- AND WE MUST HELP THEM HELP THEMSELVES UP.

SO THERE IS A SOLID AND PROMISING BASIS FOR A COALITION OF INTEREST ON THE ISSUE OF THE ECONOMY. WORKERS OF EVERY RACE CARE ABOUT JOBS, INFLATION, AND POVERTY. THAT CONCERN CAN BRING THEM TOGETHER. AND, TOGETHER, THEY CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT ECONOMIC DECLINE. THEY CAN REVERSE THE APPALLING RECESSION WHICH HAS HIT WHITES AS WELL AS BLACKS AND BLACKS EVEN HARDER THAN WHITES.

BUT ECONOMIC CONDITIONS ARE NOT THE ONLY TIE THAT CAN BIND A COALITION OF INTEREST. THE PLIGHT OF AMERICA'S GREAT

CITIES IS ANOTHER REASON FOR COMMON CONCERN -- AND ANOTHER INVITATION TO COMMON ACTION.

ACCORDING TO SOME OF THE EXPERTS, THE URBAN CRISIS IS A CRISIS OF MINORITIES -- OF BLACKS AND CHICANOS AND PUERTO RICANS. BUT THE URBAN CRISIS IS IN FACT A CRISIS OF THE MAJORITY. IT TOUCHES AND THREATENS CITIZENS OF EVERY RACE.

WHEN INDUSTRY FLEES OUR URBAN CENTERS, IT LEAVES THIRTEEN MILLION BLACKS BEHIND. BUT SUCH DEPARTURES ALSO ENDANGER THE FORTY-FIVE MILLION WHITES WHO HAVE MADE THEIR HOMES IN OUR CITIES. SOME OF THEM FOLLOW INDUSTRY'S EXODUS. BUT MANY OF THEM ARE LIKE MOST BLACKS -- THEY CANNOT AFFORD TO FLEE. BLACKS AND WHITES TOGETHER, URBAN AMERICANS BECOME VICTIMS OF URBAN DECLINE.

AS JOBS SHRINK AND WELFARE ROLLS SOAR, SO DO THE RENTS THAT REFLECT PROPERTY TAXES -- AND THE TAX BILLS OF THE SMALL HOMEOWNER. AND IN RETURN FOR PAYING MORE, THE CITIZENS OF MOST CITIES ARE NOW RECEIVING LESS. BASIC SERVICES LIKE POLICE AND FIRE AND SANITATION FACE CUTBACKS, WHILE BASIC PROBLEMS ARE GETTING WORSE INSTEAD OF BETTER.

NEXT YEAR, TAXES IN NEW YORK CITY WILL GO WAY UP -- WHILE THE QUALITY OF LIFE WILL PROBABLY GO WAY DOWN. ACROSS THE COUNTRY, OVERCROWDED SCHOOLS, DETERIORATED HOUSING, AND OBSOLETE TRANSPORTATION ARE SHORTCHANGING URBAN BLACKS AND URBAN WHITES. BY CIRCUMSTANCE IF NOT BY CHOICE, THE RACES ARE UNITED IN A COALITION OF FRUSTRATION ABOUT THE CITIES THEY INHABIT.

AND THAT FRUSTRATION CAN INSPIRE A NEW COALITION OF INTEREST ON THE URBAN ISSUE. AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL, THE COALITION CAN WORK FOR MODERN AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT -- SO CITIES CAN GET THE MOST OUT OF THE RESOURCES THEY ALREADY HAVE. AT THE STATE AND FEDERAL LEVELS, THE COALITION CAN USE ITS VOICE AND ITS VOTES TO INSURE A SENSITIVE, RESPONSIVE POLICY TOWARD URBAN AMERICA.

THERE IS NOTHING IN PUBLIC LIFE MORE POWERFUL THAN FIFTY-EIGHT MILLION URBAN CITIZENS OF EVERY RACE DEMANDING THEIR DUE. ALMOST ALONE, THEIR POWER COULD SECURE REFORMS TO KEEP INDUSTRY

IN OUR CITIES -- AND FAST PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION TO CARRY PEOPLE FROM THE CITIES TO JOBS IN THE SUBURBS. BUSINESS MUST STOP RUNNING AWAY FROM URBAN CENTERS. AND WORKERS MUST HAVE REAL ACCESS TO AVAILABLE EMPLOYMENT.

OUR NATION'S CITIES ARE FAR FROM FINISHED. THEY CAN ENDURE -- AND THEY CAN FLOURISH AGAIN. THE REMARKABLE RENAISSANCE OF DOWNTOWN CHICAGO IS PROOF OF THEIR ESSENTIAL VITALITY. BUT SO MUCH MORE MUST BE DONE -- FOR URBAN AMERICA -- AND FOR THE BLACK AMERICANS AND THE WHITE AMERICANS WHO LIVE THERE. IT CAN BE DONE BY THEM -- AND ONLY BY THEM -- IN A COALITION OF INTEREST AMONG ALL THE RACES.

I THINK THE BLACK PEOPLE AND THE WHITE PEOPLE OF OUR CITIES CARE ENOUGH ABOUT URBAN SURVIVAL TO DO ENOUGH ABOUT IT TOGETHER. AND I THINK THEY ALSO CARE ENOUGH ABOUT THEIR OWN SURVIVAL TO FORM A COALITION OF INTEREST ON A THIRD VITAL ISSUE, THE FUTURE OF HEALTH CARE IN AMERICA.

EVEN IN THE DISTANT DAYS WHEN INEQUALITY WAS AN ACCEPTED PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE IN OUR LAND, THERE WAS ONE INESCAPABLE EQUALITY. IT IS WITH US NOW AND WILL BE WITH US ALWAYS. IT IS OUR MOST BASIC COMMON LINK -- THE SIMPLE FACT THAT WE ARE ALL MORTAL.

AND IN 1971, THE SAD TRUTH IS THAT AMERICA'S FAILING MEDICAL CARE SYSTEM IS HELPING OUR MORTALITY ALONG.

IN THE LAST DECADE, HOSPITAL CHARGES INCREASED SIX TIMES MORE THAN OTHER PRICES -- AND DOCTORS' FEES CLIMBED TWICE AS FAST. THE TRAGIC RESULTS ARE VISIBLE EVERYWHERE IN AMERICA.

POOR BLACKS ARE ABANDONED TO UNEVEN AND OFTEN INHUMAN PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES. THEIR BABIES DIE TWICE AS FREQUENTLY AS WHITE INFANTS. THEIR WIVES DIE FOUR TIMES AS FREQUENTLY IN CHILD-BIRTH. AND THEIR LIFE EXPECTANCY IS SEVEN YEARS SHORTER. BLACK AMERICANS ARE THE WORST VICTIMS OF THE SYSTEM'S FAILURE -- AS THEY ARE SO OFTEN AND IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. BUT THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY VICTIMS.

POOR WHITES SUFFER, TOO. AND THE MIDDLE CLASS IS CAUGHT SQUARELY IN THE MIDDLE -- TOO WELL-OFF TO QUALIFY FOR GOVERNMENT HELP -- TOO PRESSURED TO HELP THEMSELVES WITH COMPREHENSIVE INSURANCE. THEY OFTEN END UP WITH AN EXCRUCIATING CHOICE BETWEEN LOSING THEIR HEALTH AND LOSING THEIR SAVINGS. AND THAT IS WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS ENDED UP WITH AN INFANT DEATH RATE HIGHER THAN FOURTEEN OTHER COUNTRIES -- AND A MALE LIFE EXPECTANCY LOWER THAN NINETEEN OTHERS. THAT IS WHY YOUNG PEOPLE IN AMERICA ARE DYING BEFORE THEIR TIME AND OLD PEOPLE ARE DYING WHEN THERE IS SOME PRECIOUS TIME LEFT. THAT IS WHY THE NATION WHICH IS FIRST IN THE WORLD IN WEALTH IS NOT FIRST IN THE WORLD IN HEALTH.

IF THERE IS ANY PLACE FOR A COALITION OF INTEREST, THIS IS SURELY IT. WHAT HANGS IN THE BALANCE IS NOTHING LESS THAN LIFE ITSELF -- AND SKIN COLOR WILL PROTECT NO ONE FROM SICKNESS OR DEATH. A COALITION OF BLACKS AND LOWER AND MIDDLE INCOME WHITES CAN INSIST ON A MEDICAL BILL OF RIGHTS FOR THEMSELVES -- AND FOR EVERY AMERICAN OF EVERY RACE.

THEY CAN INSIST ON THE RIGHT TO CARE WITHIN THEIR MEANS -- FEDERAL HEALTH INSURANCE THAT TAKES THE DOLLAR SIGN OUT OF MEDICAL SERVICES. THEY CAN INSIST ON THE RIGHT TO CARE WITHIN THEIR REACH -- FEDERAL SUBSIDIES TO TRAIN ENOUGH DOCTORS AND NURSES AND THEN TO LOCATE THEM WHERE THE PEOPLE AND THE PROBLEMS ARE. AND THEY CAN INSIST ON THE RIGHT TO CARE WITHIN THEIR NEEDS -- MEDICAL ATTENTION WHICH IS COMPREHENSIVE IN SCOPE, PREVENTIVE IN EMPHASIS, AND RESTRICTED ONLY BY THE RANGE OF SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE.

AMERICA'S CONCERN OVER HEALTH SERVICES HAS REACHED A HIGH WATER MARK IN 1971. A COALITION OF INTEREST CAN MAKE CERTAIN THAT SOMETHING COMES OF THAT CONCERN -- A NEW HEALTH CARE SYSTEM FOR BLACKS AND FOR WHITES -- AND FOR EVERY MEDICALLY DEPRIVED AMERICAN.

IN THE ECONOMY, IN OUR CITIES, AND IN MEDICAL CARE, A COALITION OF INTEREST COULD TRANSFORM OUR LIVES AND OUR POLITICS. OBVIOUSLY, ITS SWEEP WOULD BE POTENTIALLY FAR BROADER THAN THIS

SPEECH. EDUCATION AND BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES AND A HOST OF OTHER CRITICAL ENDEAVORS COULD COMMAND ITS ATTENTION AND ITS EFFORTS.

AND IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, A COALITION OF INTEREST WOULD BE OUR SINGLE BEST HOPE FOR RACIAL JUSTICE -- BECAUSE IT WOULD ALSO SERVE THE VAST MAJORITY OF OUR PEOPLE. THE LEGAL GUARANTEES OF EQUALITY WILL BECOME AN EVERYDAY REALITY ONLY WHEN BLACKS AND WHITES HAVE EQUAL RIGHTS TO AMERICAN PROSPERITY AS WELL AS EQUAL RIGHTS IN AMERICAN LAW.

BUT SOME AMERICANS ARE PULLING AGAINST A COALITION OF INTEREST. THEY ARE WORRIED ABOUT THE BREADTH OF THE CHANGES IT WOULD BRING. THEY SUSPECT THAT IT WOULD DISTURB ESTABLISHED POWER AND PRIVILEGES -- AND THEY ARE RIGHT. WHERE THEY ARE WRONG IS IN THEIR CONFIDENCE THAT RACIAL AND ECONOMIC RIVALRY WILL INEVITABLY DESTROY THE COALITION FROM THE START.

IN RECENT YEARS, WE HAVE SEEN REPEATED ATTEMPTS TO DIVERT OUR PEOPLE FROM THE PURSUIT OF COMMON INTERESTS BY APPEALING TO GROUNDLESS FEARS. PERHAPS THE MOST VICIOUS IMPLICATION WE HAVE HEARD IS THAT BLACK AMERICANS ARE AGAINST LAW AND ORDER. NO ONE QUITE SAYS IT THAT WAY -- BUT THERE ARE VOICES WHICH CONVEY THAT MEANING -- VOICES WHICH USE LAW AND ORDER AS A CODE WORD FOR PREJUDICE INSTEAD OF A KEYNOTE FOR CRIME CONTROL.

BUT BLACKS SUFFER MORE FROM CRIME THAN MOST OF OUR SOCIETY. IN OUR CITIES, THEY ARE THE VICTIMS OF A MAJORITY OF ALL RAPES AND HOMICIDES AND A NEAR MAJORITY OF ALL ROBBERIES. AND LONG BEFORE DRUGS TOUCHED WHITE AMERICA THEY WERE PREYING UPON THE DESPAIR IN BLACK AMERICA.

NO WONDER EVERY INDICATION WE HAVE TELLS US THAT BLACKS OVERWHELMINGLY SUPPORT OUR POLICE -- TO MAKE THEM AS EFFECTIVE AS THEY CAN BE -- AND AS FAIR AS THEY SHOULD BE. NO WONDER BLACK LEADERS HAVE SPOKEN UP FOR COURTS WHICH SWIFTLY CONVICT THE GUILTY AND SWIFTLY RELEASE THE INNOCENT. NO WONDER THEY HAVE ALSO DEMANDED REFORMS THAT WILL MAKE OUR PRISONS PLACES FOR REHABILITATION INSTEAD OF SCHOOLS FOR CRIME.

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THOSE WHO ARE BANKING ON BLACK OPPOSITION TO LAW AND ORDER TO BREAK UP A COALITION OF INTEREST SHOULD REMEMBER WHAT CRIME HAS DONE TO BLACK PEOPLE. AND THEY SHOULD RECALL THE REACTION OF HARLEM WHEN TWO POLICEMEN -- ONE BLACK AND ONE WHITE -- WERE BRUTALLY GUNNED TO DEATH ONLY WEEKS AGO ON A PUBLIC STREET. MINISTERS PREACHED FROM THEIR PULPITS AGAINST TERROR AND VIOLENCE. CITIZENS CO-OPERATED WITH THE POLICE IN THE SEARCH FOR THE KILLERS. AND HARLEM SHOWED US ALL WHAT LAW AND ORDER REALLY MEANS. HARLEM SHOWED US THAT A COALITION OF INTEREST CAN BE STRENGTHENED RATHER THAN SUBVERTED BY THE RISING THREAT OF CRIME.

BUT THERE IS ANOTHER OBSTACLE TO ANY NEW COALITION -- THE ECONOMIC RIVALRIES WHICH HAVE BEEN USED AGAIN AND AGAIN TO DISSOLVE AN ALLIANCE OF BLACKS AND WHITES. THE WHITES WHO ARE LEAST ABLE TO PAY ARE OFTEN TOLD THAT THEY MUST BEAR THE SOCIAL COSTS OF RACIAL JUSTICE. A BLACK WORKER'S ADVANCE COMES TO BE SEEN AS A WHITE WORKER'S SETBACK. AND SHARED CONCERNS ARE LOST IN A TIDE OF MUTUAL SUSPICION.

TO SURVIVE, A COALITION OF INTEREST MUST STAND AGAINST THAT TIDE. PROGRESS FOR THE POOR FINANCED ON THE BACKS OF THE NEAR POOR WOULD MOCK ITS OWN PURPOSE. IT WOULD DESTROY THE CHANCE FOR COALITION AND THE CHANCE FOR CHANGE. SO OUR FIRST PRIORITY -- THE PRIORITY UPON WHICH ALL THE REST DEPENDS -- IS TO PUT THE BURDEN OF REFORM WHERE IT BELONGS -- ON THE INDIVIDUALS AND THE INSTITUTIONS WHICH CAN AFFORD TO PAY THE BILL. WHEN MILLIONAIRES ARE PAYING LOWER TAXES THAN THEIR SECRETARIES OR NONE AT ALL -- WHEN GREAT FORTUNES ARE PASSED THROUGH TAX LOOPHOLES VIRTUALLY INTACT -- WHEN GIANT CORPORATIONS SPEND MILLIONS LOBBYING FOR TAX PREFERENCES AND SAVE BILLIONS FROM THEM, IT IS TIME FOR THOROUGH AND TOTAL TAX REFORM. THEN WE CAN FINANCE GUARANTEED JOBS, DECENT SCHOOLS AND CITIES AND NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE WITHOUT TELLING LOWER MIDDLE AND MIDDLE INCOME AMERICANS TO SACRIFICE BEYOND THEIR MEANS. THAT IS THE WAY TO BUILD AND SUSTAIN A COALITION OF INTEREST.

I HAVE TALKED WITH YOU TONIGHT ABOUT THE COMMON NEEDS OF YOUR RACE AND MINE BECAUSE I AM CERTAIN THAT THE SUCCESS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT -- NOW AND IN THE YEARS AHEAD -- REQUIRES OUR COMMON COMMITMENT TO COMMON GOALS.

AND I DO NOT THINK THAT WHITE RACISM IS THE GREATEST STUMBLING BLOCK TO JUSTICE IN AMERICA.

I THINK THE BARRIER IS SUSPICION AND FEAR, SOME OF IT ACCIDENTAL, SOME OF IT PURPOSEFUL, AND NONE OF IT FOUNDED IN FACT.

BUT THE BARRIER CAN BE OVERCOME BY HELPING PEOPLE ON BOTH SIDES TO PERCEIVE THEIR SHARED INTERESTS.

YOU CAN SEE ENCOURAGING SIGNS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. IN DETROIT, A BLACK-POLISH CONFERENCE HAS ENLISTED THE LEADERSHIP OF THE POLISH AND BLACK COMMUNITIES. IN THE NEW SOUTH, BLACKS AND WHITES TOGETHER HAVE ELECTED GOVERNORS AND SENATORS WHO ARE PLEDGED TO SERVE ALL THE PEOPLE.

OUR TASK -- YOUR TASK AND MY TASK -- IS TO TURN THOSE BEGINNINGS INTO A LASTING COALITION OF INTEREST.

NOTHING COULD BETTER FULFILL THE TRADITION OF THE NAACP -- OR THE IDEALS OF AMERICA.

NOTHING COULD BRING US CLOSER TO WHITNEY YOUNG'S HOPE FOR AN "OPEN SOCIETY" -- WHERE ANYONE CAN LIVE ANYWHERE AND EVERYONE WILL HAVE EVERY CHANCE.

LIKE YOU, I AM FRUSTRATED BECAUSE WE WILL NOT GET THERE TOMORROW. BUT I AM HOPEFUL THAT WITH LEADERSHIP LIKE YOURS WE WILL GET THERE IN THE 1970S. AND I AM CONVINCED THAT WHATEVER WE CAN DO, AND WHATEVER WE DREAM WE CAN DO, WE MUST BEGIN NOW.

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