

PRESS RELEASE
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STATEMENT BY A. PHILIP R. RICHMOND AT
YOUTH MARCH RALLY, HOTEL THOMAS,
BIRMINGHAM, SEPTEMBER 19, 1958

In the well known tradition of our American society, we have met here tonight for the purpose of giving expression to our burning indignation and unqualified condemnation of the reign of terror and police brutality visited upon our great leader, Dr. Martin Luther King, in Montgomery, and other Negroes, unknown, but whose spirits are unbowed, throughout the South.

It was not many months ago when the conscience of the nation was shocked by the murder of Emmett Till, a mere boy, by lawless white citizens of Mississippi. Last Saturday night in Atlanta the brutal slaying of a public housing maintenance man converted the northwest Atlanta area into a riotous frenzy. All of us remember the terrorism which struck Dawson, Georgia, with the brutal slaying of Negroes just a month or more ago. In fact, we are witnessing the use of violence and murder and physical intimidation by the frightened leaders of the White Citizens Councils and so-called responsible law enforcement officers as a method to break the spirit of the Negro, in order to halt his stride toward freedom, racial and social justice. Negroes are passing through an hour of trial of their faith by fire; the fire of persecution and lawless terror.

In order that the conscience of America may be shocked, awakened, aroused and made articulate against these incredible outrages against the Negroes of the South, Negro and white citizens of New York City are giving this public expression of unity in opposition to southern mob rule.

Negroes in every area of our national life have made the commitment to prevent the revival of the conditions which followed the Civil War when they were driven from the ballot box by the shotgun, tissue ballot, white primaries, poll tax, grandfather clauses and the Ku Klux Klan. At that time, Negroes were politically and legally defenseless. They were landless, they were moneyless, they were

voteless and friendless; they had no National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

But today it is different. While the Negro encounters great difficulty in exercising his right to vote in various areas in the South, he can vote above the Mason-Dixon line. He has an organization, the NAACP, which is ably leading the fight for civil rights in the courts. He is not friendless; he has as allies the organized labor movement and many white liberal friends. His cause of civil rights is supported by the Catholic and Protestant and Jewish churches. And, above all, the old plantation psychology of fear and submission and docility among Negroes has disappeared, even in the delta of Mississippi, and Negroes are determined to stand upon their feet and fight for first class citizenship, regardless of the fury and savagery of violence against them. They possess the faith that justice and right will ultimately triumph and that the movement of white supremacy, with its engine of violence and terror, will collapse if they keep up the struggle, undaunted and unafraid, for their human rights.

This meeting is intended to:

1. Show solidarity among Negroes in the nation against the reign of terror and police brutality in the South, against Rev. Martin L. King in Montgomery and Negroes in all parts of the South.
2. Demonstrate a symbol of unity to the nation and to the world against this small minority of racists who would sacrifice the honor and good name of our nation for the maintenance of segregation and suppression of Negro rights.
3. Show determination to support the Supreme Court decision of May 17, 1954, and to fight discrimination and segregation in all of its forms everywhere.

4. Indicate the unity of Negroes and white citizens against the closing of schools in Little Rock by Governor Faubus and the closing of the schools in Virginia by Governor Almond.
5. Register unqualified support of the Supreme Court decision of September 12, 1958, upholding the return of seven Negro children to Central High School in Little Rock without delay.
6. Arouse in the nation and throughout the world a sense of conscience that will give meaning, force and reality to our democratic values and the American dream of human equality, freedom and justice.

This rally will also serve as the beginning of the movement for an interracial Youth March for Integrated Schools in Washington, D. C., October 11, 1958.