

ADDRESS OF

Rev. F. L. Shuttlesworth  
of Birmingham, Alabama  
Prayer Pilgrimage  
Washington, D. C.  
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I'm glad to be alive today, a follower of M. L. King, Jr., and a contemporary of Southern Leaders as Ralph Abernathy, C. K. Steele, T. J. Jemison, et al. I have been bombed, but I'm alive.

It is tragic that in this day of light, men in a Christian Democracy still find themselves groping in the darkness for these basic freedoms which are theirs by virtue of citizenship. But Freedom has to be continuously fought for and zealously guarded. Thus the great job for America in this perilous hour--at least as great as any task in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East--is to see to it that the Constitution of the U. S. is the Supreme law in the U. S., and that it means the same thing in the South as it does in the North, East, or West. All America's children must be fed from the same loaf; crumbs will suffice no longer. For it is written "What man is there among you, who, if his Son asks for a loaf of bread, would give him a stone?"

Yet the U. S. must face up to the problem that bombs are continually exploding in the South, men are being intimidated, threatened, or even murdered for trying to vote, go to school, or ride a bus. These questions must be answered: Can America forever give the bread of Charity to Hungarians, Jews, Europeans, and other oppressed people throughout the world, and throw bombs at her own Negroes? Is the great American ideal of fair play, equality and justice which even now holds Communism at bay in the four quarters of the earth to fall or fade from view when challenging the internal enemy of Segregation, and 2nd class citizens? Is the ringing Voice of Liberty which is beamed around the world from these shores to become hushed and silent within its own borders?

Unfortunately the present voice of power in the South is that of the Councils and the Klan. It is the voice of fear, suspicion, hate, and violence. The fact of it is that Southern Justice has almost become what the Councils and Klan want it to be. Our houses are being destroyed, our children injured, our churches are being bombed, and little or nothing is being done about it.

In Birmingham a city judge has ruled the 14th Amendment to the Constitution unconstitutional; and also took a slap at our highest legal body--The U. S. Supreme Court. Thus, Kindergarten is now taking precedence over the University.

When the NAACP was outlawed in Alabama last year, a very jubilant Klansman was said to have exclaimed, "Well, we got that old hen--the NAACP--at last!" We Negroes answer: "Yes, you got the old hen, alright, but before you got her, she had laid some eggs; and now they're hatching out all over. An what some biddies they're hatching!"

But a new voice is arising all over now--the voice of the church of a living and ruling God, unafraid, uncompromising, and unceasing. Led by her ministers, she cries out that all men are brothers, and that justice and mercy must flow as the waters. The Negro Church is taking the lead, and thank God, some in the White Church are at last pleading for justice and reason. We have arisen to walk with destiny, and we shall march till victory is won. Not a victory for Negroes, but a victory for America, for right, for righteousness. No man can make us hate; and no men can make us afraid. We know that the struggle will be hard and costly; some of us indeed may die; but let our trials and death--if come they must--be one more sacred installment on this American heritage for freedom and let History and they that come behind us, rejoice that we arose in strength, armed only with the weapon of Love, and stood where men stood, and moved from American society this cancerous infection of Segregation and 2nd class citizenship.

In closing may I say, this is the real battle for America. This is all our job--every American of whatever creed or color. Thank God for America, and ladies, and gentlemen, I'm glad I'm an American. Wake up oh blessed land! Be not forever guilty of walking in the shadows simply because you refuse to face the light. And though we walk and live in the midst of danger and death, and while threats and cross burnings go on by night and day, while the exploding bombursts in the South now match those which exploded in the Revolutionary war, we shall forever shout over the roar and din of battle "We have set our sails for freedom's shores, and there can be no retreat. Our course is charted as onward up. Give us, liberty--or give us death."