What the Negro Wants in 1952

A Statement of Political Objectives
Meeting in New York City on May 9 on call of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, representatives of the leading national Negro organizations formulated this statement of political objectives. Keenly aware of the ill-concealed desire on the part of both major parties to tone down the civil rights planks in the party platforms, these organizations propose to rally their memberships and friends to avert such a step backward, and to move forward.

Negro voters are insisting that both the Republican and the Democratic parties pledge support to revision of the Senate Rules to permit stopping of the filibuster by majority vote, to enactment of an FEPC law with enforcement powers, and to the elimination of discrimination and segregation in all federally-aided developments and facilities.

In other words, Negro voters are asking for the removal of all the artificial barriers raised against them as a race and for the full enforcement of the constitutional guarantees of equality. Simply this — nothing more or less.

June, 1952.

Walter White, Executive Secretary,
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
The 1948 Experience

Contributing importantly to his triumph was the 70 per cent vote of Negro citizens in the key states of California, Illinois and Ohio. These votes were cast for the Democratic candidate on the basis of his firm stand for civil rights and the unequivocal advocacy of these rights in his party platform; and this notwithstanding the fact that his leading opponent was an able Republican whose civil rights record was well established, but who eschewed this issue in the campaign and whose party platform was less forthright.

In the light of the 1948 experience, Negro voters are amazed at the reluctance of all save one of the avowed candidates to take a forthright position on civil rights. Moreover, they are committed against any candidate who fails to speak up for this goal.

As representatives of 20 leading national Negro organizations, we affirm our essential Americanism and accept as minimum standards in the field of civil rights the historic report of the President's Committee on Civil Rights in 1947. Realization of the objectives set forth in that report will infinitely strengthen our democracy at home and immeasurably heighten our prestige abroad.

The Minimum Program

It is because of our great concern for the national welfare and our devotion to the cause of extending full democratic rights and privileges to all American citizens irrespective of race, color, religious faith or national origin that we present to both major parties our declaration of principles. Further, we ask that presidential and vice-presidential candidates chosen by the party conventions publicly affirm their active support of these principles.

1. The Filibuster: The Senate of the United States is plagued with the filibuster today because northern Senators refused to support the ruling of Vice President Barkley in 1949 which would have paved the way for a workable anti-filibuster rule. Instead, these same northern Senators, some of whom are up for reelection, helped to fasten an unworkable rule on the United States Senate. Therefore, we call upon the Republican and Democratic Parties to include a firm pledge in their National platforms that the first order of business in the 83rd Congress will be to curb filibusters through support of a new rule designed to provide clouture on a majority vote of the members present.

The Senate need only reassert the inherent right of any deliberative body to determine its own procedures. The newly-elected Senate of the 83rd Congress will be entirely free of any stifling precedents by refusing to adopt automatically the rules of previous Senates and by writing instead a new and efficient set of rules. Such a new set of rules can be and should be adopted on the opening day of the 83rd Congress, providing for clouture by majority vote. By taking such action in that way and at that time, the Senate can give timely burial to the present Rule XXII which sanctions filibusters.

2. FEPC: The practical demonstrations of effective FEPC legislation in the states show that those who oppose Federal legislation with enforcement powers either have neglected to take the time to study this legislation or are deliberately and dishonestly confusing the public. FEPC simply means that all citizens shall have an opportunity to obtain work on the basis of merit rather than on the basis of color or religion. Therefore, we call for endorsement of FEPC with enforcement powers as a legislative objective. We will not be satisfied with platform generalities on this subject.

3. Anti-Lynching Legislation: The decline in lynchings by rope and faggot and other public exhibitions of terror has lulled some of our citizens into the false belief that
this crime has disappeared. The death of Mr. and Mrs. Harry T. Moore by the bombing of their home in Mims, Florida; the destruction of Harvey E. Clark's apartment in Cicero, Illinois, by a mad mob; the floggings in North Carolina; death by shooting in Groveland, Florida—all of these incidents indicate that lynching is still with us. Thus, the bomb, the gun and the whip have been added to the rope and faggot, making the need for strong anti-lynching legislation greater than ever before. Federal legislation must also be strengthened to provide safeguards against police brutality, unconstitutional arrests, and other deprivations of civil liberties under the color of state law.

4. Voting: The Federal government must protect the right of citizens to vote. We call for the immediate and outright abolition of the poll tax by Congressional legislation. Intimidation in polling places must be outlawed. Such subterfuges as asking applicants for registration: “How many bubbles in a bar of soap?” for the purpose of depriving them of the right to vote must be ended.

5. Discrimination in the Armed Services: There has been a decline in practices of segregation in the Air Force and the Navy. There has also been some progress in the Army. This progress has been achieved by executive direction from the Commander-in-Chief. This Commander-in-Chief has already announced that he will not be a candidate for reelection. Progress must not stop when the new President takes office. Therefore, a commitment for complete elimination of segregation in all branches of the Armed Services is essential.

6. Segregation in Interstate Travel: There is at present a crazy-quilt pattern of segregation in public transportation in the United States that exists despite numerous court decisions that clearly show such segregation unconstitutional. The time has long passed for Congressional correction of the practice of segregation which harasses our own citizens and humiliates visitors from foreign countries, if they happen to be colored.

We call for legislation eliminating segregation in interstate travel facilities including those provided in railroad stations, bus terminals and airports.

7. Other Civil Rights: There must be Federal protection against peonage and violations of civil rights. There must be a halt to the spending of Federal money to support or extend the practices of segregation. We call upon both Parties to catch up with the great majority of the American people, and certainly a great majority of the people of the World, by proclaiming that as a condition of Federal assistance for housing, health, education or other programs, there must be firm guarantees from the states that this assistance will not be used for segregation.

We are for non-segregated housing. We recognize that housing is vitally important, but it is secondary to the complete abolition of segregation and discrimination based on color.

We ask that the major Parties pledge support to elimination of all segregation in the District of Columbia and in all other areas or facilities under Federal control such as the territories, parks, government hospitals, etc.

Our duty as American citizens imposes upon us the obligation to oppose actively any candidate of either party who is not explicit and uncompromising on the basic issue of civil rights.
Participating Groups

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity  Jawn A. Sandifer
American Council on Human Rights  Patricia Roberts
Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, AFL  Theodore E. Brown
Colored Methodist Episcopal Church, Social Action Department  Bishop William Y. Bell  Dr. Channing H. Tobias
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority  Bertell Collins Wright
Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity  Frank M. Summers
National Alliance of Postal Employees  W. C. Jason, Jr.  Ashby B. Carter
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  Walter White  Roy Wilkins
National Association of Colored Women  Dora Needham Lee  Ella P. Stewart
National Beauty Culturists' League  Cordelia Greene Johnson
National Council of Negro Women  Ruth Caston Mueller
National Dental Association  Leon W. Scott, D.D.S.
National Medical Association  Robert S. Wilkinson, M.D.
National Negro Funeral Directors  C. L. Dennis  Charles H. Chew, Jr.
National Negro Insurance Association  Charles A. Shaw
Negro Labor Committee  Arthur Chapin
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity  Grant Reynolds  Ted Poston  Clarence Mitchell
Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity  C. L. Townes, Sr.

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